

Marilyn Bridges

American, b. 1948, lives and works in New York

Blythe Site #2, Blythe, California, 1983

gelatin silver print

Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art,
The Altered Landscape, Carol Franc Buck Collection

Marilyn Bridges's *Blythe Site #2* is an aerial image of anthropomorphic geoglyphs outside the town of Blythe near the California–Arizona border. The so-called Blythe Intaglios date back one thousand years or more and were created when Indigenous inhabitants scraped away dark gravel to reveal the lighter strata. The figures they fashioned are so large—nearly 170 feet in length—that they are best seen by plane, and in fact were not “discovered” by non-Native people until 1932 when a pilot observed them as he flew over the area, which led to a scientific survey of the site. Bridges's image speaks to the unfathomable mysteries of ancient life and survival in the Greater West, and the peoples who first settled this super-region.

Paul Kos

American, b. 1942, lives and works in San Francisco

Roping Boar's Tusk, 1971

DVD

duration: 1 minute loop

Collection of Deborah and Andy Rappaport, San Francisco

The wide-open landscapes of the Greater West invite exploration and investigation, but at the same time their vastness exceeds comprehension. Distances are difficult to measure due to the massive expanse of the land.

Paul Kos, a prominent California-based conceptual artist born in Wyoming in 1942, clearly speaks to this vastness in his 1971 work titled *Roping Boar's Tusk*. The video shows the artist in the vast Red Desert of Wyoming, attempting to lasso an isolated landform called Boar's Tusk. In the West, formations that appear to be nearby are in fact miles away. In this case, the artist's repeated attempt to accomplish a sweetly absurd task presents a useful and humorous metaphor for human progress—why do we keep trying to do the impossible, to rein in nature?

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

Mexican, b. 1967, lives and works in Montreal and Madrid

Solplano, 2011

custom-made LED screen, computerized surveillance tracking system, fluid dynamic algorithms (Navier Stokes, fractal flames, reaction diffusion and Perlin noise), aluminum, stainless steel and glass

The Aldala Collection of Diamond-Newman Fine Arts, LLC

The sun that both sustains and challenges earth's inhabitants is the subject of Canadian-Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's interactive sculpture *Solplano*. One-billionth the size of the actual sun, the artwork senses our presence, becoming more active and agitated when people are nearby and calmer when the room is empty. The sculpture metaphorically suggests humankind's ability to impact nature, and nature's response to human presence—indifferent to the needs and desires of living creatures, which in the broader view are irrelevant and insignificant.

Rubén Ortiz-Torres

Mexican, b. 1964, lives and works in Los Angeles

Power Tools (Herramientas), 1999

tool #1: customized leaf-blower machine with electric motor and car battery (by Cody Sanchez) and chromed low-rider bicycle club plaque, displayed on mirror and Astroturf pedestal, on a carpet of Astroturf ringed with cedar chips

tool #2: customized leaf-blower machine with 24-karat gold-plated engine, velvet, and metal-flake candy apple paint, displayed on mirror and Astroturf pedestal, on a carpet of Astroturf

banner: synthetic fabric banner

Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
Modern and Contemporary Art Council,
2000 Art Here and Now Purchase

A quintessential Los Angeles story informs Rubén Ortiz-Torres's *Power Tools (Herramientas)* sculptures which are aesthetically influenced by lowrider car and bike customizing.

A 1996 citywide ban on gasoline-powered leaf blowers was instituted due to claims that residents' quality of life was being destroyed by the blowers' noise and fumes. Gardeners and landscapers could be fined or even go to jail for using them. The ban threatened their livelihood. This conflict had both racial and class undertones, and resulted in the gardeners' protesting and organizing. The unlikely savior in this story was an auto mechanic named Gody Sanchez, who designed a quiet, environmentally friendly electric-powered leaf blower.

In his work, Ortiz-Torres displays a pair of contrasting blowers: one of Sanchez's electric models, alongside a gasoline-powered blower that Ortiz-Torres customized with candy apple red metal-flake paint, a 24-karat-gold-plated engine, and a low-rider club plate that reads "Power Tools." One blower *looks* good, the other one *does* good.

Trevor Paglen

American, b. 1974, lives and works in San Francisco and Berlin

Artifacts (Anasazi Cliff Dwellings, Canyon de Chelly, Spacecraft in Perpetual Geosynchronous Orbit, 35,786 km above Equator), 2010

c-prints

Lannan Collection

Photographers have long made iconic images of the Anasazi cliff dwellings in modern-day Arizona, beginning with Timothy O'Sullivan in 1873. The Anasazi were an ancient tribe in the Southwestern United States that flourished before suddenly disappearing as late as AD 1300, long before the region was settled by modern Pueblo peoples.

For his 2010 piece *Artifacts*, artist Trevor Paglen juxtaposes an image of the cliff dwellings at Canyon de Chelly, representing a mysterious disappearance of a human civilization, with another image depicting a barely visible ring of long-abandoned spacecraft in perpetual orbit around the earth. The spacecraft, once useful to scientists and governments, are now space junk—artifacts that will outlast human civilization and prove that we once existed.

Agnes Pelton

American, b. Germany, 1881–1961

Idyll, ca. 1952

oil on canvas

Jeri L. Wolfson Collection

Many artists seek solace in the desert and find new inspiration there. Born in Germany, Agnes Pelton moved to the U.S. when she was a young girl and studied landscape painting on the East Coast. Her work appeared in the famous 1913 Armory Show in New York. Later in her career she relocated to the California desert, and lived in Cathedral City, here in the Coachella Valley for the last thirty years of her life. Living in the desert transformed Pelton's work. She once explained, "The vibration of this light, the spaciousness of these skies enthralled me. I knew there was a spirit in nature as in everything else, but here in the desert it was an especially bright spirit." Pelton's mystical, fantasy landscapes are surreal and seem to suggest the animation of nature. In *Idyll*, the San Bernardino Mountains are framed by a cloudless sky with two brightly colored arcs of light in the foreground that seem to welcome viewers into another dimension.

Teri Rofkar

American, 1956–2016

1964 Earthquake Robe, 2006

Ravenstail Robe: merino wool, sea otter fur
and deerskin

Collection of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, Alaska State
Council on the Arts, Percent for Art Program

A historically significant tectonic event is recorded in *1964 Earthquake Robe*, created by Tlingit weaver and basket maker Teri Rofkar. Rofkar used Ravenstail weaving, an ancient form of cultural expression and storytelling, to document a twentieth-century environmental crisis. The design of the robe refers to the so-called Good Friday Earthquake of March 27, 1964, which measured 9.2 on the Richter scale. Jagged lines represent the fault lines created by the movement of the earth's tectonic plates. The "tides" pattern at the bottom of the robe represents the deadly tsunami resulting from the quake, which produced swells that were nearly seventy feet high.

Ed Ruscha

American, b. 1937, lives and works in Los Angeles

Chocolate Room, 1970–2004

chocolate on paper

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles,
Purchased with funds provided by the Acquisition
and Collection Committee

Mesoamericans—the Olmecs, and then the Maya—cultivated chocolate in the centuries before contact with Europeans. Cacao beans were fermented, roasted, and then ground into a paste, which was mixed with water to create hot *chocolatl* (“bitter water”), revered as a ceremonial drink and aphrodisiac for hundreds of years before European explorers “discovered” the beverage in the seventeenth century. It was not until two centuries later that Europeans would transform cacao beans into the eating and drinking chocolate we enjoy today.

With *Chocolate Room*, Ed Ruscha uses chocolate as an art-making material, “painting” tiles of paper with a chocolate mixture and installing them across the gallery walls to create an unforgettable sensory experience.

Ed Ruscha, *Chocolate Room* is made possible by the generous support of Linda Usher & Malcolm Lambe with Lauren and Kristin Lambe.

Phillip K. Smith III

American, b. 1972, lives and works in Palm Desert, CA

Lucid Stead: Element #4, 2015

brushed aluminum, wood, acrylic, mirror,
LED lighting, and custom electronic components

Collection of Palm Springs Art Museum,
Museum purchase with funds provided by
Donna MacMillan

The vast expanses of undisturbed land in California's high desert are a natural canvas for artists making large-scale site-specific works. Phillip K. Smith III, chose a site near Joshua Tree for his 2013 work *Lucid Stead*. At the site was a 1940s homestead cabin that Smith used as a foundation for his own work. He placed horizontal mirrored bands at intervals across the building's surface and into the openings once occupied by windows and a door. Alternating with the cabin's weather-beaten timbers, the mirrored areas reflected the landscape and gave the impression that one could see through the building to the desert beyond. The project remained in place until 2015, when Smith dismantled it and created a new series of sculptures, including *Lucid Stead: Element #4*, 2015, from its remains.

Brian Jungen

Canadian, b. 1970, lives and works in the North Okanagan, B.C.

1980, 2007

polyester, metal, painted wood on paper sonotube

Collection of Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto,
Purchased with the assistance of The David Yuile
and Mary Elizabeth Hodgson Fund

1970, 2007

polyester, metal, painted wood on paper sonotube

Collection of Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto,
Promised Gift of Rosamond Ivey

1960, 2007

polyester, metal, painted wood on paper sonotube

Collection of Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto,
Promised Gift of Michael and Sonja Koerner

First Nations artist Brian Jungen is inspired—and repelled—by the professional sports industry, due to the cult-like embrace of sports paraphernalia by fans and the industry’s adoption of names such as the Redskins or the Braves to denote fierceness and bravery. Jungen’s sculptures *1960*, *1970*, *1980* are made from golf bags re-purposed into forms that allude to Northwest Coast totem poles.

Nicholas Galanin

American, b. 1979, lives and works in Sitka, AK

*Things Are Looking Native,
Native's Looking Whiter*, 2012

digital photograph

Anchorage Museum Collection, Museum Purchase,
Rasmuson Foundation Art Acquisition Fund

Cultural appropriation is the theme of *Things Are Looking Native, Native's Looking Whiter*, a digital photograph by Tlingit/Unangax artist Nicholas Galanin. This black-and-white image, split down the center, features the character Princess Leia from the 1977 film *Star Wars* in her white dress and side-bun hairdo on the right. On the left, Edward Curtis's *A Tewa Girl* (1906), from the latter photographer's epic twenty-volume photographic portrait series *The North American Indian* (1907–30).

The Tewa girl, a Pueblo Indian native of the Rio Grande region of the southwestern U.S., wears her hair in the squash blossom style that bears an uncanny resemblance to Leia's futuristic bun, indicating the adoption and absorption of selected elements of Indigenous culture by the dominant group, in this case the American film industry.

Regina José Galindo

Guatemalan, b. 1974, lives and works in Antigua, Guatemala

Desierto, 2015

documentation of a performance

Commissioned and produced by Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago de Chile

Video: Andrés Lima and Sebastián Pando, Courtesy of the artist

Photograph: Rodrigo Maulen, Courtesy of the artist

Courtesy of the artist

Guatemalan performance artist Regina José Galindo's politically charged work addresses violence, genocide, and human rights violations in her country against women, Indigenous Mayan populations, and political dissidents. With her 2015 performance in Santiago de Chile titled *Desierto*, Galindo addressed the violence suffered by the Mapuche community of Chile, a reality that is easily extrapolated to other Indigenous cultures. For two hours, Galindo immersed her body in a desert simulated with sawdust inside an art gallery while viewers circulated outside, witnessing the performance and taking photos of the event. She specifically selected sawdust as her material to target the forms of oppression, abuse, racism, and colonialism that are hidden behind the pine timber industry, a cause of serious damage to Chile's ecosystem.

Bruce Conner

American, 1933–2008

CROSSROADS, 1976

35mm black and white film, sound

duration: 37 minutes

original music composed and performed by
Patrick Gleeson and Terry Riley, Restored by
UCLA Film & Television Archive

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchased through the Board of Overseers Acquisition Fund.

Bruce Conner's film *CROSSROADS* captures the awesome, terrifying beauty of Operation Crossroads, a pair of nuclear weapon tests conducted by the United States at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands on July 25, 1946. To create the film, Conner assembled several iterations of the detonations seen from different perspectives and accompanied these visuals with an original score by Patrick Gleeson and Terry Riley. Watching the film evokes a range of emotional responses in the viewer, from fascination to horror and fear to despair.

In 2018, as Cold War rhetoric is reignited and new enemies of the state are identified and targeted, the film takes on new political overtones.

Jack Malotte

American, b. 1953, lives and works in Duckwater, NV

Taking the Spirit Out of Mt. Tenabo, 2012

ink on paper

Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art,
Museum purchase with funds provided
by deaccessioning

Jack Malotte works in a variety of media to make artworks related to contemporary issues and controversies faced by Native people as they struggle to protect and preserve access to Native lands for present and future generations. Malotte's recent works depict both Shoshone legends and the longtime legal and political efforts made by Western Shoshone people to safeguard their lands.

Malotte's *Spirit of Mt. Tenabo* relates the story of the Dann Sisters, Mary Dann (1923–2005) and Carrie Dann (1932–), who fought for the right to continue ranching on sacred Shoshone lands for over forty years. The Danns ran their cattle beginning in 1973 and refused to pay grazing fees to the Bureau of Land Management, contending that the U.S. took their land illegally and did not abide by the terms of the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley. In *Spirit of Mt. Tenabo*, Malotte depicts the principal peak of the Cortez Mountains, Mt. Tenabo, which is now the site of a large gold mining and processing facility. Malotte's drawing brings attention to these distant sites, where ownership has been contested for nearly a century, and people have endured controversy their entire lives.

Andrea Zittel

American, b. 1965, lives and works in Joshua Tree, CA

*Prototype For Billboard at A-Z West:
Big Rock on Hill Behind House*, 2011

AC plywood, polyurethane and matte acrylic paint

Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Andrea Zittel grew up spending time on her grandparents' ranch in Southern California's Imperial Valley, south of Joshua Tree National Park—so the desert is in her blood. She considers her project *A-Z West* a testing ground for living where her own daily life and art practice are inextricably intertwined. Most of the work she makes today is connected to her life in the desert.

Zittel's Prototype for Billboard at A-Z West: Big Rock on Hill Behind House depicts clusters of boulders typical of those found in and around Joshua Tree, with a vast unsettled landscape in the distance. Overlaid on the image is a white grid-like outline that calls to mind an architectural floor plan. *Zittel's Billboard* is one of a series of large works painted on plywood in a straightforward style akin to illustration. These works often contain autobiographical references and make direct allusions to her environs.

Ed Ruscha

American, b. 1937, lives and works in Los Angeles

Atomic Princess, 1990

acrylic on canvas

Private Collection

The nuclear legacy of the Greater West unites the entire super-region, and artworks related to the topic fall under the thematic grouping, “Shifting Ground.” Ed Ruscha’s 1990 painting *Atomic Princess* exemplified this category while using a clever combination of words to tell a story. The word “princess” suggests wealth, power, privilege, and girlishness, and seems to lessen the destructive Cold War implications of the word “atomic” by enhancing a sense of postwar optimism. The two words together evoke pop cultural icons such as the well-known 1957 image of Miss Atomic Bomb, the apocalyptic pinup girl attired in a mushroom cloud.



As is common in Ruscha’s work, there is no prescribed meaning, and multiple readings are possible depending on the viewer’s perspective.

Don English, *Miss Atomic Bomb*, 1957, Black and white transparency, 4 x 5 inches. Photo: Don English/Las Vegas News Bureau

Nicholas Galanin

American, b. 1979, lives and works in Sitka, AK

Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan 1 & 2
(*We Will Again Open This Container
of Wisdom That Has Been Left in
Our Care*), 2006

two channel video

duration: Part I, 4 minutes, 36 seconds;

Part II, 4 minutes, 6 seconds

Courtesy of the artist

Nicholas Galanin uses the traditional Tlingit song *Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan*, which translates to “We Will Again Open This Container of Wisdom That Has Been Left in Our Care,” as a point of departure for his two-part video that embodies the concept of cultural collision. In the first part, the well-known Southern California-based dancer and internet phenomenon David “Elsewhere” Bernal performs to the traditional song in a studio setting. In the video’s second part, Native Alaskan dancer Dan Littlefield performs a traditional Raven dance wearing traditional regalia and holding a Raven Rattle, a symbol of power and authority. The backdrop is a Tlingit Eagle and Raven wall screen carved by Galanin’s uncle, located in the Community House in Sitka, Alaska, Galanin’s home town. The musical accompaniment for Littlefield’s dance is contemporary electronic music, providing a sense of dissonance.

Bruno Fazzolari

American, b. Mexico City, 1967, lives and works in San Francisco

Unsettled, 2017

uranium glass, *Eau de Parfum*

Courtesy of the artist

Bruno Fazzolari uses his synesthesia to see scent in terms of colors. He is a self-taught perfumer whose work explores perception and the senses. Fazzolari describes himself as following a “scent trail” as he mixes scents by hand until he comes up with a combination that embodies what he has seen in his mind’s eye.

For *Unsettled*, Fazzolari created a brand-new signature scent that represents the Greater West. He used sandalwood oil from the South Pacific since native sandalwood was a driving force for early trade and contact in the super-region. His perfume decanter in the form of a mushroom cloud alludes to the legacy of nuclear testing in the state of Nevada. The decanter is crafted from molded uranium glass. Uranium is a radioactive element used by the military to power nuclear submarines and in nuclear weapons.

Edgar Arceneaux

American, b. 1972, lives and works in Los Angeles

Peaks Above The Headlines, (New), 2017

Peaks Above The Headlines, (Tonight), 2017

Peaks Above The Headlines, (Negro), 2017

watercolor and enamel on mirror glass and paper

Courtesy of the artist and Susanne Vielmetter

Los Angeles Projects

Los Angeles–based artist Edgar Arceneaux’s shadow boxes with images of idealized mountainous landscapes in the background evoke both natural splendor and refer to landmark speeches of the civil rights era. One example is Martin Luther King Jr.’s last speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” in which Dr. King spoke the famous line, “I’ve seen the Promised Land.” Arceneaux layered headlines from the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers on top of the landscapes, selecting news stories that reported on events such as the six-day civil uprising in Los Angeles in 1965 known as the Watts riots, the largest urban rebellion of the period. Arceneaux employed a mirror to create an optical effect so that the viewer sees either the mountain or the headline, but not both at once. Each layer seems to consume the other—a metaphor for the need to look beyond the headlines to focus on the end goal: reaching the “Promised Land.”

Da-ka-xeen Mehner

American, b. 1970, lives and works in Fairbanks, AK

Native Photographer (Artist) Photographing a Woman, 2006

Da-ka-xeen, the Tlinget Artist, 2005

The Tlinget Artist, Da-ka-xeen, 2007

The Artist Alone with His Thoughts, 2007

From the series Reinterpretation

digital prints

Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, The Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Foundation Art of the Greater West Collection Fund

According to Tlingit artist Da-ka-xeen Mehner, his Reinterpretation series is a study of the constructed identity of native-ness through the lens of the “other.” While conducting archival research, Mehner came across a series of 1906 photographs by Case & Draper, who had a studio in Juneau, Alaska, and were best known for their portraits of Tlingit people. The artist selected four of their images and re-created mirror images of the scenes—reconstructing the poses, and substituting his own tools and possessions for the historical props.