



6 installations to see at Desert X 2021

The desert-spanning biennial runs this spring in the Coachella Valley. Here's what to see.

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Every two years since 2017, Desert X has turned a stretch of the Coachella Valley into a playground for massive art installations that offer visually impactful but often provocative thoughts about the surrounding desert environment.

The out-of-the-gallery, open-air experiences seem practically made for our current moment—and so too does the fact that all 13 of the site-specific installations are free to visit.

Desert X runs from March 12 to May 16, so you'll have some time to see everything. And we do suggest seeing everything: Especially if the desert is a bit of a destination for you, hitting up all of the installations is worth your while. But if you're looking for some quick highlights, we've picked out six installations that we think stood out following a

virtual preview just ahead of the exhibition's opening. Some of the spots are right along the road and others are in sandy expanses of the desert, so we've included the precise latitude and longitude that Desert X has provided for each.



Eduardo Sarabia, *The Passenger*

Frank Sinatra Dr and Portola Ave, Palm Desert
33°46'33.3"N 116°22'07.3"W

Using petates, traditional rugs woven from palm fibers, the Mexican artist has transformed the legacy of desert journeys, migrations and searches for a better future into a triangular maze.



Nicholas Galanin, *Never Forget*

North of the Palm Springs Visitors Center at Tramway Rd, 2901 N Palm Canyon Dr,
Palm Springs
33°51'27.7"N 116°33'32.8"W

The Alaskan artist has co-opted the instantly recognizable letterforms of the Hollywood sign—which, when erected in 1923, served as an advertisement for the whites-only Hollywoodland housing development—into a 45-foot tall, impossible-to-ignore reminder of the indigenous Cahuilla people's claim to the area. "The chosen narrative of Palm Springs is one of Hollywood," Galanin says of the work's location, and he hopes its visibility will "invite everyone to understand these histories."



Xaviera Simmons, *Because You Know Ultimately We Will Band A Militia*

Gene Autry Trail (Between Via Escuela and Interstate 10), Palm Springs
33°51'08.8"N 116°30'21.9"W

On a barren stretch of Gene Autry Trail flanked by power lines and ads, the New York artist has turned a series of billboards into monuments that speak to reverence, resistance and the redistribution of resources. Simmons says that “billboards have a way of constructing whiteness,” so here she has mixed public domain images from the Met with bold text statements that together allow people of color to self-define their monuments.



Ghada Amer, *Women's Qualities*

Sunnylands Center & Gardens, 37977 Bob Hope Dr, Rancho Mirage
33°46'49.3"N 116°24'34.5"W

The Egyptian-born, New York-based artist continues a 2001 series in which she asks people on the street to share qualities that they identify with or to which they have been ascribed. For this iteration on Sunnylands' circular lawn, you can "listen to the equality of women according to the people of Palm Springs" as planters bloom over time and spell out a ring of words: strong, caring, determined, beautiful, loving, nurturing, resilient.



Serge Attukwei Clotey, *The Wishing Well*

James O. Jessie Desert, Highland Unity Center, 480 W Tramview Rd, Palm Springs
33°52'05.2"N 116°33'09.9"W

Water scarcity unites both Palm Springs and Clotey's home in Ghana (and, as time goes on, an increasing number of places in the world). Here, the artist has used yellow plastic Kufuor gallons, a water-toting vessel that's a symbol of that scarcity (and one of colonialism, as they were introduced by Europeans), to create a yellow brick road of sorts.

Christopher Myers, *The Art of Taming Horses*

Tahquitz Canyon Way between Sunrise Way and Civic Dr, Palm Springs
33°49'23.4"N 116°30'47.8"W

Of the pieces that we're recommending, this is the only we haven't seen any images of yet. But Myers, if you're familiar with his work, masterfully threads mythology, history and pop culture in his bold and colorful figurative pieces, whether on quilted tapestries

or sculptures. In this case, it's a combination of the two with six steel horses draped in banners along Tahquitz Canyon Way.

The Art of Taming Horses tells the story of two fictional cowboys, Altanviro and Loper, who stand in for Mexican migrants and those who fled bondage, respectively. In a documentary about the installation, Myers says he sought to rethink the idea of the equestrian memorial and took specific inspiration from a controversial statue that's slated for removal in front of New York's American Museum of Natural History that depicts Theodore Roosevelt on horseback, flanked on the ground by an African man and a Native American man. "The foundational American myth was full of people of color," Myers says. "[It] was full of all of these folks who were trying to rewrite history for themselves and for their future."

(Speaking of controversy, Myers's installation courted a bit of contention of its own when the city of Palm Springs declined to sponsor the piece as long as the Desert X name was attached—and instead sought, unsuccessfully, to bypass the biennial and work with the artist directly—due to Desert X's decision to stage an art fair in Saudi Arabia in early 2020.)



Zahrah Alghamdi, *What Lies Behind the Walls*

Pierson Blvd between Foxdale Dr and Miracle Hill Rd, Desert Hot Springs
33°57'51.3"N 116°29'03.3"W

Slabs of regional cements, soils and dyes that have been assembled into a monolithic wall.

Felipe Baeza, *Finding Home in My Own Flesh*

201 N Palm Canyon Dr, Palm Springs
33°49'31.9"N 116°32'50.4"W

A mural that highlights the erasure of queer people of color. Opens April 2021.

Judy Chicago, *Living Smoke*

Date, time, and location TBA

A colorful, nontoxic smoke display that was slated for the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens but then called off following pushback from an environmental activist.

Alicja Kwade, *ParaPivot (sempiternal clouds)*

71690 Channel Run Rd, Sky Valley
33°55'41.1"N 116°24'42.8"W

A series of iceberg-like white marble rocks that seem to precariously balance atop a black frame.

Oscar Murillo, *Frequencies*

Check desertx.org for exhibition dates and venues.

Students at Coachella Valley schools received a canvas and art supplies that they were free to create on whenever they'd like. The results will be collected and digitized for an online archive.



Kim Stringfellow, *Jackrabbit Homestead*

Adjacent to the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce, 72559 Hwy 111, Palm Desert
33°43'24.9"N 116°24'03.4"W

A 122-square-foot cabin stuck between the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce and a CVS that sparks conversations about the mid-century homesteading experience.

Vivian Suter, *Tamanrasset*

333 S Palm Canyon Dr, Palm Springs
33°49'09.0"N 116°32'50.6"W

A series of paintings inspired by the desert landscape that've been placed in the windows of a modernist building.