

RANDOLPH SIMS: ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT

Randolph Sims studied commercial and fine art at the San Francisco Art Institute from 1963-64. While a student, he met Michael Heizer, who in a few years would become an acclaimed Land Artist. Their relationship continued when they moved to New York City—Heizer in 1966 and Sims shortly thereafter. Heizer was making a living painting lofts and Sims worked with him. The two men spent evenings at Max's Kansas City, a famous artist's bar, where Sims met other artists such as Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, and art critic Lucy Lippard.

Sims accompanied Heizer to the Mojave Desert in 1969 as an unpaid assistant to help him work on Land Art projects at Coyote Dry Lake. It was the first time that Heizer had access to earthmoving equipment, and at the end of the day, he offered Sims the use of the backhoe and operator “on the spur of the moment.” Sims dug four parallel trenches in the side of a small hill, his first Earthwork.

The timing was perfect, as the shaped paintings that Sims was making had enlarged past his capacity to work indoors. He continued making “negative sculptures” outdoors, and ephemeral drawings on rock and on sand with water until 1991. Sims seldom had funds to complete his more ambitious Land Art works, and was only able to make preliminary sketches and then temporary maquettes in the landscape. His work has rarely been exhibited.

The materials for this exhibition are drawn from the Archive Collections of the Center for Art + Environment.