

## Gianfranco Gorgoni

### Land Art: Photographs

Gianfranco Gorgoni's photographs from the late 1960s and early 70s brought the American Land Art movement to the eyes of the world. This exhibition unites over fifty iconic images of earthworks by Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, Richard Serra, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Nancy Holt, Charles Ross, and Ugo Rondinone, affirming that Gorgoni's body of work constitutes a defining record of the field known as Land Art.

Born in 1941 in Rome, Gorgoni began his career in photography in Milan in the mid-1960s and in 1968 traveled to the United States aboard a freighter, paying for his passage by creating a portfolio about life at sea. Assignments for the magazine *L'Espresso* led to his documentation of the avant-garde art scene in New York City, which led in turn to a 1969 invitation from Robert Smithson to visit Utah to photograph the work-in-progress that was to become *Spiral Jetty*. From this beginning, Gorgoni became not only the premier documentarian of Land Art in the American West, but also a key collaborator in the movement in his own right. "Gorgoni's photographs do not serve only to record or to recollect facts and events, but also remain as evidence of his own participation," the Italian art historian and critic Germano Celant wrote in 2019. "His images grasp the energy of the artworks, highlight their physicality and secret movements, document their murmurings and pulsating energy."

In 2016, the Nevada Museum of Art chose Gorgoni as the official photographer for Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, an earthwork created near Las Vegas that was co-produced by the Museum and the Art Production Fund. The large format photographs in this exhibition are now part of the Nevada Museum of Art Carol Franc Buck Altered Landscape Photography Collection. Gorgoni died in 2019, leaving hundreds of Land Art photographic contact sheets to the archive collection of the Museum's Center for Art + Environment.

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## Gianfranco Gorgoni (1941-2019)

Gianfranco Gorgoni first traveled to the United States from his birthplace in Rome, Italy, in 1968. He had been invited to produce a photographic essay on New York artists, and he intended to return to Italy after only a few months. Instead, he remained there for the better part of the next fifty years. A chance encounter with the artist Robert Rauschenberg in 1969 led to an introduction to the prominent New York gallery owner Leo Castelli, who eventually mounted four solo exhibitions of his photographs between 1972 and 1996.

In addition to his significant Land Art photographs, Gorgoni is widely admired for his portraits of famous artists engaged in the creative process. Among the individuals he photographed were Andy Warhol, Richard Serra, James Rosenquist, Joseph Beuys, Sol LeWitt, and Agnes Martin. Gorgoni was an early member of the photojournalism agency Contact Press Images, and he traveled around the world on assignment. He spent time photographing Afghanistan rebels in 1981, Yasser Arafat in Beirut, U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and Fidel Castro. Castro introduced Gorgoni to Gabriel García Márquez, who later wrote the prologue for Gorgoni's book *Cuba Mi Amor* (1990).

Gorgoni's photographs have been reproduced in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *New York Times Magazine*, and numerous European publications. Gorgoni's work is represented in the collections of the Nevada Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and numerous public and private collections.



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ROBERT SMITHSON

SPIRAL JETTY

1970

A 1,500-FOOT-LONG, 15-FOOT-WIDE COUNTERCLOCKWISE COIL MADE FROM BASALT ROCKS AND MUD LOCATED ON THE NORTHEASTERN SHORE OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE NEAR ROZEL POINT IN UTAH.

ROBERT SMITHSON

AMARILLO RAMP

1973

A 140-FOOT DIAMETER PARTIAL CIRCLE THAT RISES FROM LEVEL GROUND BENEATH THE SHORELINE OF A SMALL RESERVOIR TO APPROXIMATELY 15 FEET HIGH; COMPLETED BY NANCY HOLT, RICHARD SERRA, AND OTHERS AFTER THE DEATH OF THE ARTIST WHILE WORKING ON THIS PROJECT.

MICHAEL HEIZER

CIRCULAR SURFACE PLANAR DISPLACEMENT DRAWING

1970

A SERIES OF INTERSECTING CIRCLES APPROXIMATELY 900 X 500 FEET THAT WERE MADE BY A MOTORCYCLE ON THE SURFACE OF JEAN DRY LAKE, JUST SOUTH OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.

MICHAEL HEIZER

DOUBLE NEGATIVE

1969

CREATED BY THE DISPLACEMENT OF 240,000 TONS OF RHYOLITE AND SANDSTONE, TWO TRENCHES, EACH APPROXIMATELY 30 FEET WIDE AND 50 FEET DEEP ON OPPOSING SIDES OF A BAY ATOP A MESA, LOCATED IN THE MOAPA VALLEY NEAR OVERTON, NEVADA.

MICHAEL HEIZER

DISPLACED/REPLACED MASS

1969

THREE LARGE GRANITE BOULDERS FROM THE SIERRA NEVADA NEAR SPOONER SUMMIT WERE MOVED 50 MILES EAST AND PLACED INTO THREE CONCRETE-LINED TRENCHES THAT WERE EMBEDDED IN A MICRO-PLAYA NORTH OF THE CARSON RIVER IN NEVADA.

MICHAEL HEIZER

CITY

1970-PRESENT

THE LARGEST LAND ART SCULPTURE IN THE WORLD MADE FROM EXCAVATED DIRT AND CONCRETE AND MEASURING 1,312 FEET BY 6,562 FEET AND 80 FEET TALL, LOCATED 150 MILES NORTH OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.

CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE

OCEAN FRONT

1974

APPROXIMATELY 150,000 SQUARE FEET OF WHITE, WOVEN POLYPROPYLENE FABRIC FLOATING ATOP AND COVERING A COVE AT KING'S BEACH IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND.

CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE

RUNNING FENCE

1972-1976

AN 18-FOOT-HIGH, SINUOUS, NYLON FABRIC FENCE APPROXIMATELY 24 MILES LONG THAT EXTENDS ACROSS THE HILLS OF SONOMA AND MARIN COUNTIES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN NEAR BODEGA BAY.

RICHARD SERRA

SHIFT

1970-1972

SIX LARGE, CONCRETE FORMS, EACH APPROXIMATELY 8 INCHES THICK AND 60 INCHES HIGH, THAT ZIGZAG OVER THE NORTHWEST PORTION OF A ONE-ACRE SITE OUTSIDE OF KING CITY, ONTARIO.

CHARLES ROSS

STAR AXIS

1971-PRESENT

AN EARTHWORK AND NAKED EYE OBSERVATORY BUILT INTO THE SIDE OF A MESA WITH EARTH, SANDSTONE, AND GRANITE IN NEW MEXICO. AT THE CENTER, A STAR TUNNEL IS PERFECTLY ALIGNED WITH THE EARTH'S AXIS. BY CLIMBING THE STAIRS, ONE VIEWS THE EARTH'S CHANGING ALIGNMENT TO THE POLE STAR, POLARIS, OVER A 26,000-YEAR CYCLE.

NANCY HOLT

SUN TUNNELS

1973-1976

FOUR LARGE, CAST-CONCRETE CULVERTS, EACH APPROXIMATELY 18 FEET LONG AND 9 FEET IN DIAMETER, ARRANGED ON THE DESERT FLOOR IN A PATTERN THAT ALIGNS WITH THE SUNRISE AND SUNSET ON THE SUMMER AND WINTER SOLSTICES.

WALTER DE MARIA

DESERT CROSS

1968

TWO LINES OF INTERSECTING WHITE CHALK, ONE 500 FEET LONG AND THE OTHER 1,000 FEET LONG, THAT FORM A CROSS VISIBLE ONLY FROM THE AIR ABOVE EL MIRAGE PLAYA SOUTH OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.

WALTER DE MARIA

LAS VEGAS PIECE

1969

A SHALLOW, DESERT ETCHING CONSISTING OF FOUR LINES; TWO ARE 1 MILE LONG AND TWO ARE A HALF-MILE LONG, MADE WITH AN 8-FOOT BULLDOZER BLADE NORTH OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.

UGO RONDINONE

SEVEN MAGIC MOUNTAINS

2016

A DESERT ART INSTALLATION COMPRISED OF SEVEN TOWERS OF COLORFUL, STACKED BOULDERS STANDING MORE THAN 30 FEET HIGH, LOCATED NEAR JEAN DRY LAKE AND APPROXIMATELY 10 MILES SOUTH OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.

MICHAEL HEIZER

EFFIGY TUMULI

1983-85

FIVE MOUNDS OF DIRT EXCAVATED INTO THE SHAPE OF ABSTRACTED INDIGENOUS ANIMALS AT BUFFALO ROCK STATE PARK, A FORMER MINING SITE ABOVE THE ILLINOIS RIVER.

