

## **We Belong Here**

Extreme environments—from the Arctic Circle to outer space—have long provoked curiosity and wonder. In more recent times, these seemingly uninhabitable places have attracted attention as potential sites for development, future migration and colonization.

With the growing reality of climate change, more environments are now becoming extreme. Changing weather patterns increasingly impact the daily lives of many people. In the western United States, 2020 was marked by unprecedented wildfires and unhealthy air from the smoke. According to *The New York Times*, 19% of the world could be a barely livable hot zone by 2070. Climate migration has already begun, but where can displaced people go? One thing is for certain: Rather than looking to the past for solutions, we must think radically, and take into consideration the fragility of our planet as well as our place in the universe.

Armed with this awareness, artists, designers, and engineers have worked across disciplines to power innovation, question existing systems, and seek visionary solutions to help navigate the future of extremes. These practitioners help us to understand our connection to this world and other worlds. They tackle difficult concepts making the inaccessible accessible, and the invisible visible.

The artists and designers featured in *We Belong Here* comment on the shifting geopolitics of extreme environments and encourage us to consider the planets of our solar system as potential destinations. They contemplate the enormity of our universe, reminding us that our place in the larger scheme of evolution is miniscule. To paraphrase the late, great theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, they also teach us to look up at the stars—not down at our feet.

This exhibition is organized in conjunction with the 2021 NV STEAM Conference, a statewide education conference focused on exploring ideas and strategies that incorporate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math education into innovative classroom practices that foster student creativity and innovation. The NV STEAM Conference is presented in partnership with the Desert Research Institute's Science Alive program and supported by the Nevada Department of Education and the Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

## **QUOTE**

Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up.

--Stephen Hawking (1942-2018)