

## **High Desert Test Sites Collection CAE2102**

### **Introduction/Abstract**

High Desert Test Sites (HDTS) launched in 2002 as a free ranging and ever-evolving series of contemporary art events in the Southern California desert by the loosely knit group of collaborators Andrea Zittel, Andy Stillpass, John Connelly, Shaun Regen and Lisa Anne Auerbach.

### **Biographical Note: Andrea Zittel**

High Desert Test Sites (HDTS), cofounded in 2002 by the loosely knit group of collaborators Andrea Zittel, Andy Stillpass, John Connelly, Shaun Regen and Lisa Anne Auerbach, is a nonprofit arts organization based in Joshua Tree, California. Since inception, HDTS has hosted the work of more than 460 artists, 12 expansive site-specific programs, and 25 solo projects.

### **Scope and Content**

High Desert Test Sites (HDTS) launched in 2002 as a free ranging and ever-evolving series of contemporary art events in the Southern California desert by the loosely knit group of collaborators Andrea Zittel, Andy Stillpass, John Connelly, Shaun Regen and Lisa Anne Auerbach. It was scrappy, experimental, and inspiring. Two of the organizers—Andrea Zittel and Andy Stillpass—offered sites on their own land (Zittel at her A-Z West compound in Joshua Tree and Stillpass in Gamma Gulch near Pioneertown). The group negotiated with residents and businesses to procure other sites in desert communities from Yucca Valley to Twentynine Palms and Wonder Valley. Scores of staff and volunteers assisted participating artists with their projects each year.

Common themes emerged among the projects. The desert in all its guises—from the unforgiving nature, wildlife, and local characters of the vast, rugged terrain to stories of the supernatural—was always the inspiration. Artists concocted elaborate personas, staged performances in costume, deconstructed a parade, held a pig roast, created a pop-up restaurant, and published zines and booklets. The HDTS catalogues, which contain driving maps and artist lists alongside ads for local businesses, tips on where to eat, drink, hike, and shop, horoscopes, and how-to instructions for building a telescope, becoming a Joshua Tree, or dancing The Electric Slide, capture the flavor of the pre-Airbnb high desert. Many of the projects were intended to be ephemeral, whether a one-time performance or works that lingered and decomposed on the desert floor.

Materials include printed ephemera, preparatory sketches and models, audio and visual recordings, videotapes, banners, flags, maps, posters, drawings remnants, and artifacts, exhibition copies and new photographic reproductions.

**This archive is currently in process.**