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## High Desert Test Sites 2011



Drive for two hours in any direction from LA, save for West, and you will find yourself in an entirely different landscape. When I speak impassionedly about day tripping from Los Angeles, I inevitably sound like Ally Sheedy's character in *The Breakfast Club*: "I can run away and I can go to the ocean, I can go to the country, I can go to the mountains, I can go to Israel, Africa, Afghanistan." Ok, so maybe not the last three, but LA is certainly in close proximity to the others.

My favorite weekend getaway is the Mojave Desert. The high desert offers sprawling vistas of twisting Joshua trees and boulders the size of houses. Geodesic domes spot the hillsides and [roadhouse bars](#) are aplenty. The harshness of desert living has inspired unique communities where artists, bikers, rock climbers and off-the-grid types live side by side.



Last weekend [High Desert Test Sites](#) held its annual show of experimental art, architecture, performance and design in the desert towns of Joshua Tree, Pioneertown, Wonder Valley, Yucca Valley and 29 Palms. I was intrigued by the guide map alone, which included instructions on what to do if your car gets stuck in sand. (Interestingly enough put your floor mats behind the tires to ease out.)

HDTS is like nothing I have ever experienced. The project sites are separated by as many as 70 miles. Unexpectedly off-roading in my Prius, I found myself clinging to the sparse map, cringing at my lack of cell reception and just praying I would spot the art if I drove by. Add 90-plus degree heat to the equation and you feel like you have worked for your art—just how HDTS likes it.





The show is like a microcosm of the desert itself: no one can do it alone. Survival dictates that you reach out to strangers to ask for directions or for help with digging your car out of sand. When you arrive at the sites you're only too happy to talk with the artists, share a laugh with a stranger about missing the turn—"Drive a mile or so until you see something."—and take in the art or revel privately in your experience of finding to the art: almost one in the same.

Many of the projects at HDTS are ongoing. Drop by [HDTS headquarters](#) or check out sites you can still visit [here](#). The artists and pieces include Sarah Vanderlip, *Untitled*; Shari Elf, *The World Famous Crochet Museum*, Shari Elf's *Gospel Revival*; An RV at Shari Elf's studio; Ball Nogues Studio, *Yucca Crater*; Kiersten Puusemp, *Untitled*; Adam Silverman, *Plutonic macro-basalt bloom*; LeRoy Stevens, *OutOut Houses*; Bob Carr, Merete Vyff Slyngborg, Mette Woller, *The Crystal Cave Project*.










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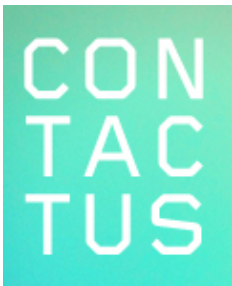


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