

The

Sep/Oct 2017

Desert Light

The Magazine of the Mojave National Preserve Artist Foundation

www.MojaveAIR.org



Lu Ross

Artist-in-Residence

Plus don't miss...

- Poet's Corner
- Time in Mojave



MNP MOJAVE
NATIONAL
PRESERVE
ARTISTS FOUNDATION
a National Park Service Friends Group



DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Notes	3
Lu Ross - Elements of Mojave - Artist-in-Residence	4
2018 Artist-in-Residence Announcements	12
Poet's Corner - Mojave	13
O.X. Ranch Update	14
Time in Mojave	16



Editor's Note



Kelso, CA Post Office
Courtesy of the US Park Service

Elements of Mojave

Opened in the Desert Light Gallery this month is Lu Ross' collection of photographic prints entitled, Elements of Mojave. She has captured images using an architectural point of view. She focused on the earth's power to sculpt a landscape using wind, water, fire and molten rock from below its surface. This collection of images is a representational abstraction of Mojave's birth and subsequent molding by the forces of nature. It is a must see.

Fall is a beautiful time of year to visit Mojave National Preserve. The cooler weather allows for long walks and the brisk mornings provide crisp air to keep you motivated on the desert floor. If you're headed to Las Vegas from LA or the other way around consider making a slight deviation to Kelso where the rangers will invite you to walk the hallways of the old train depot and experience some of California's diverse past. There is a film that screens upon request and a bookstore selling art from our Artists-in-Residence. Walk the ruins of the old post office and spend a few minutes in the jail cell – it's a great break from the monotony of the Interstate.

Our president, Bob Killen, has an update for us on the exciting construction project at OX Ranch. We are still looking for volunteers and donations. Visit our [fundraise.com](https://www.fundraise.com/mojavenationalpreserveartistsfoundation) site, watch the video and donate today! <https://www.fundraise.com/mojavenationalpreserveartistsfoundation>

This month also saw devastation in Texas, Florida and many Caribbean Islands from some of the largest hurricanes ever recorded. If you can, please donate to your favorite charity to help your fellow human's recovery efforts.

You'll find me under a wandering star.
Peace.

Tom

TOM@MOJAVEAIR.ORG

The Desert Light

The Magazine of
Mojave National Preserve Artist Foundation

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Tom Lowe
ART DIRECTOR: Melody Duque
ON LINE: Elisabeth Hewlett
PHOTO EDITOR: Joe Raggin

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE ARTIST FOUNDATION
310 W. 5th St., 2nd Floor, Santa Ana, CA 92701



MNP MOJAVE
NATIONAL
PRESERVE
ARTISTS FOUNDATION
a National Park Service Friends Group

WHO WE ARE

The Mojave National Preserve Artist Foundation is a Not-for-Profit Corporation dedicated to supporting the Artists in Residence Program (AIR), and the restoration of the Kousch Homestead, a future home for artists creating work in Mojave National Preserve.

WHAT WE DO

The Foundation provides programs to encourage diverse artistic interpretations from emerging growth and seasoned artists to pursue themes that will establish a continuum of understanding for the public regarding the land, history, atmosphere, and the many visual communities of Mojave National Preserve.

EDITORIAL MISSION

The Desert Light fosters an appreciation of the contributions and work of artists who participate in thematic projects for Mojave National Preserve. The magazine uses the power of imagery and language to forge a lasting bond between MNPAF members, readers, while inspiring new readers in our efforts to develop art in national Parks and to complete the Kousch Homestead Restoration Mission.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Mojave National Preserve Artists Foundation is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to the development of the arts within Mojave National Preserve. When you make a donation, you make a difference, contributing funds that will help restore our new artist's residence, the historic Kousch Homestead, expanding arts on the Mojave National Preserve, and enabling us to present exhibits that educate, entertain, and inform through the work of gifted artists.

HOW TO DONATE

Contribute today by going to <https://www.mojaveair.org/contribute> or send your tax deductible donation check to Mojave National Preserve Artists Foundation, 310 W. 5th St., 2nd Floor Santa Ana, CA 92701

HOW TO REACH US

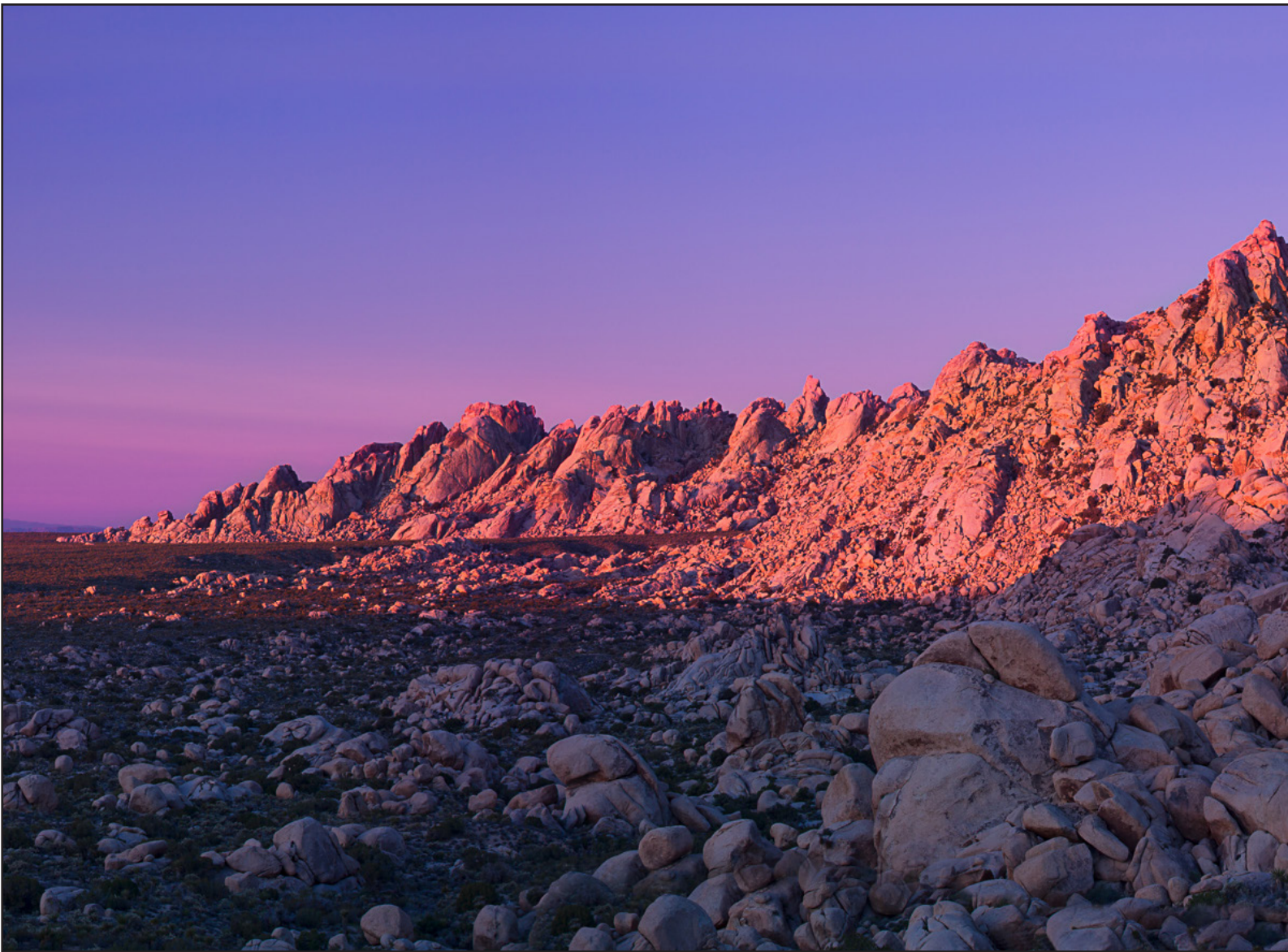
On line:
director@mojaveair.org
Phone:
(562) 665-7472
Mail:
Mojave National Preserve Artists Foundation
310 W. 5th St., 2nd Floor
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Lu Ross

Artist-in-Residence

By: Janet Huston

***Earth, Fire, Wind and Water sculpt Lu Ross’
“Elements of Mojave” exhibition at the Desert Light Gallery.***



Chilean born photographer Lu Ross (www.lurossphotography.com) opened her exhibit, “Elements of Mojave” on September 5, 2017. “I use representational photography and abstraction to convey shapes crafted by erosion on a dry lakebed, exquisite lines and curves formed by wind-blown dunes and unique textures created by the cooling of molten rock,” Lu explains. “The intrinsic beauty of the desert often goes unseen. With each element of nature came the unique, and often violent, transformation of the Mojave National Preserve into an oasis of peace.”



Granite Mountains

Trained in mathematics and statistics at the Universidad Catolica de Chile, Santiago, and now a photographer and fine art gallery co-owner, Lu spent 14 years as a contract web designer and webmaster. She found that as technology changed the photography industry, the software programs she learned as a web designer began to compliment her photographic artistry and workflow. “Once I realized that web design only partly satisfied my desire for creativity and art, I decided to pursue further education through the *New York Institute of Photography*.”

“ I was inspired not only to capture nature’s beauty but also to depict the beauty created by mankind. ”

Lu grew up in a world of travel and art influence (her mother was a painter) and her continued travels inspire her to connect her audience to the joy of life through the creation of images. Despite, or perhaps because of, her wide-ranging expeditions, she does not have a favorite place. She does acknowledge, however, that her visits to Italy have significantly impacted her photography. “I was inspired not only to capture nature’s beauty but also to depict the beauty created by mankind,” she explains.

As Lu traversed the immense 1.6 million acres of the preserve her Elements theme resonated with each new image.

Element: Earth (Granite Mountains [Page 4](#)) “As lava rose to the crust through the *earth* movement, or subduction, granite formations created the core of the Granite Mountains and the New York Mountains, both being sculpted by erosion throughout time.”

Working in the Mojave National Preserve presented new challenges to this photographer who had not previously produced much desert photography. “Finding a place to stay was hard, so we outfitted our Toyota FJ with a roof top tent so I could be in the right location at the right time.” She gratefully credits her husband, otherwise known as her “Sherpa,” for helping navigate the Mojave’s back roads.

An adventurous journey along Aiken Mine Road was a stark reminder of the unforgiving terrain and the absolute value of common sense. But, it was the starkness and the hidden landscapes that drew her to Mojave. “I don’t chase images, I don’t want the “iconic” shot. I want the unique, the remote, the undiscovered. And that is what Mojave offered and delivered.”

“ I don’t chase images, I don’t want the ‘iconic’ shot. ”

As an artist her inspirations include her mother, Claude Monet, and acclaimed nature photographer Art Wolfe. “I try to bring a combination of art, painting and photography to my work. This lets me put my own signature on even familiar images.

Element: Fire (Darkness to Light and Devastation - *right*) Violent volcanic eruptions gave way to *fire* as hot lava created rock fragments of tuff and cinder cones. Now left exposed, these volcanic rock formations are known as the Hole in the Wall and The Cinder Cones.”

“I want to express that one of the purposes of my photography is to bring awareness of the beautiful world that is all around us, that we need to take care of it and contribute to its preservation. One of the reasons I decided to do the Mojave project (besides the artistic side of it being a unique place to photograph) is to contribute to the preservation of the National/State Parks that I love so much and to highlight the Mojave Preserve as a special place to visit. Visiting the “Parks” and being in touch with nature brings joy and health to everyone that participates; art is a way of making that happen. Using my photography to contribute to special causes and to help others is one of my motivations.”



Darkness to Light



Devastation



Lu Ross

The Edge



Erosion

Element: Wind (The Edge - [Page 8](#) & Sand Waves - [Page 10](#))

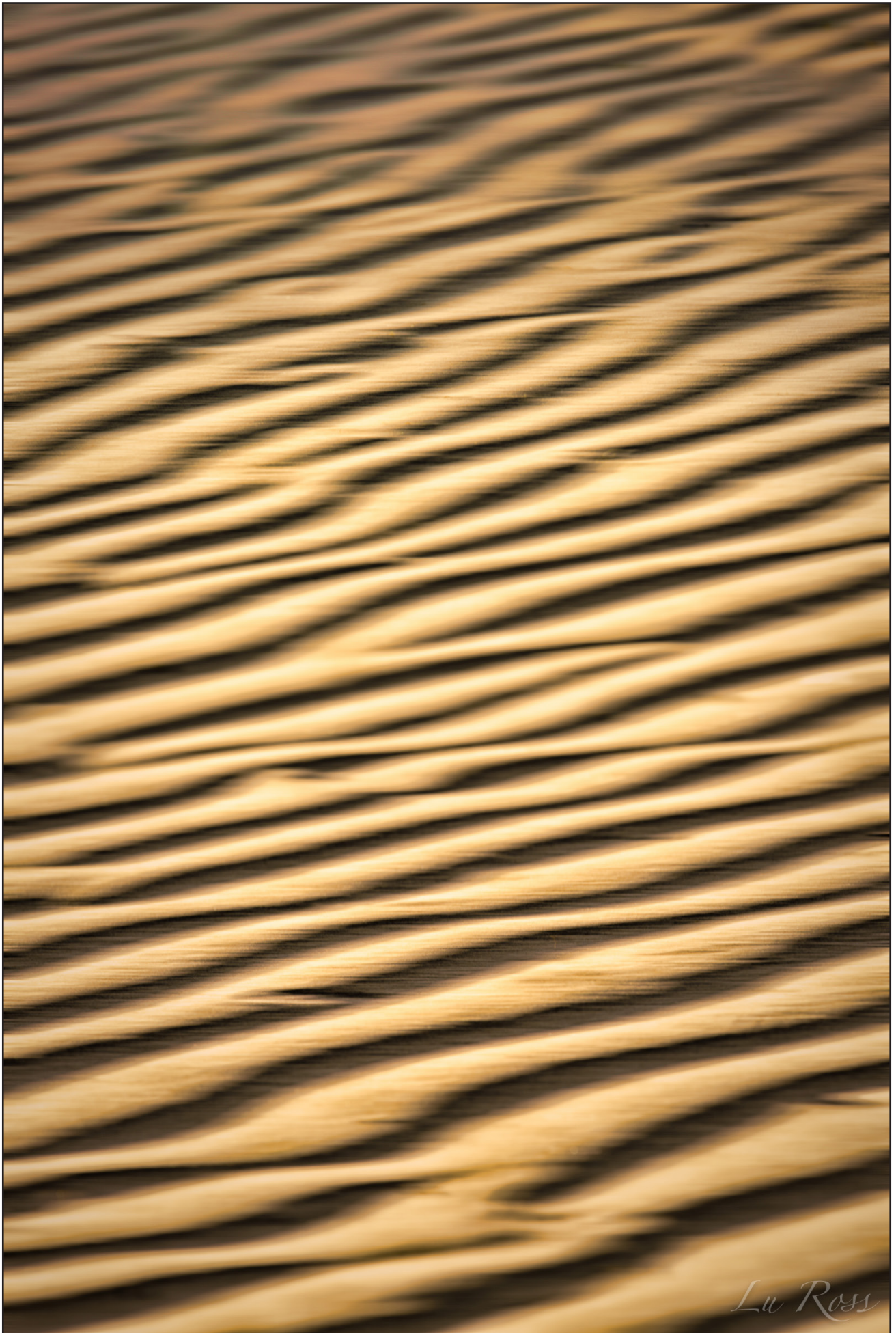
“Sand dunes formed by furious *winds* that blew fine sand from the Mojave River sink (Soda Lake) created the Kelso Dunes that rise more than 600 feet above the desert floor.”

“As an artist, I see the beauty and results that these elements left behind, and I wish to explore, study and tell the story of how the Mojave National Preserve came to be.”

Her reverence for this landscape is present in every image. Even with all of the hours spent in the desert as a part of her residency she admits she was barely able to scratch the surface of the Mojave. She intends to continue exploring the Mojave National Preserve and her interest in abstraction. We can only hope she continues to take us along.

Element: Water (Erosion - *above* & Passing of Time - [Page 11](#)) Marine creatures fossilized in limestone, indicative of a time when seas covered the Mojave National Preserve, and the salt pans from an evaporating Soda Lake demonstrate the vast expanse and change of the Preserve’s ecosystem through *water*. What once covered most of eastern Mojave, both Lake Mojave and Mojave River, which fed Soda Lake, now form startling dry lakes and dry riverbeds known as playas and arroyos. As rainfall evaporated, the remaining alkaline deposits formed a startling white surface against the dry, brown background at the playas of Soda Lake.

“Visiting the
‘Parks’ and being
in touch with
nature brings
joy and health
to everyone that
participates.”



Sand Waves



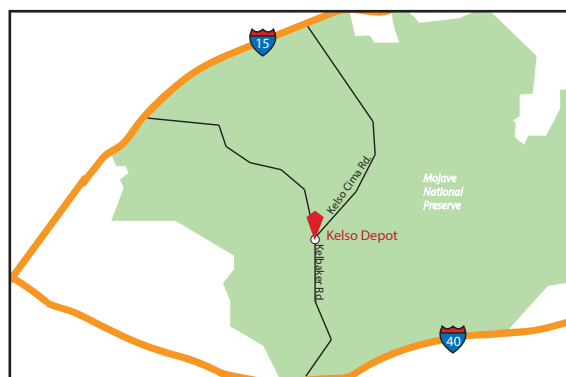
Passing of Time

The Exhibit

Lu Ross' exhibit of "Elements of Mojave" will be on display at the Desert Light Gallery through November 4, 2017. The gallery is open Thursday - Monday from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm.

Art Ownership

When you purchase art from a Mojave National Preserve Artists-in-Residence you are making an investment in our National Park. Net proceeds from art sales support the Desert Light Gallery, the reconstruction of the Kousch Homestead and other vital projects that require funding. If you wish to purchase work from this collection contact the Desert Light Gallery Manager at (562) 665-7472 or email director@mojaveair.org



GALLERY DETAILS

Hours:

Thursday through Monday
- 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location:

Kelso Visitors Center
- From I-15: Exit Kelbaker Road at Baker, Calif. Continue 35 miles southeast on Kelbaker Road to Kelso, Calif.

- From I-40: Exit Kelbaker Road (about 29 miles east of Ludlow Calif., or 28 miles west of Fenner, Calif.). Continue 22 miles north on Kelbaker Road to Kelso, Calif.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Mojave National Preserve
2018 Artist-in-Residence Program

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2018 ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE EXHIBITORS

The Mojave National Preserve Artist Foundation is pleased to announce new National Park Service Artist-In-Residence Grants for 2018 Exhibitions at the Desert Light Gallery. These artists worked hard on their applications, themes, and concept work. We look forward to their work and the opportunity to share their in furtherance of understanding the Mojave National Preserve mission.

Evan Bracken	Los Angeles, CA	Jan 6 - Mar 2	Photography
Maureen Ferry and Linda Mason	Los Angeles, CA: New York, NY	Mar 3 - May 4	Photography; Painting
Shawn Demarest	Portland, OR	May 5 - Jul 7	Painting
Amir Moshfegh	Anaheim Hills, CA	Jul 8 - Sep 4	Photography
Gerard Burkhart	Los Angeles, CA	Sep 5 - Nov 2	Photography
Kathleen Fischer	Willowbrook, IL	Nov 3 - Jan 4	Photography

Dust to Dust - J.Marie Huston

MOJAVE

By: Diane Siebert

Throughout her poetry, Diane Siebert gives the desert the voice of a very old woman. She reminds us that the desert -- and the earth itself-- are living things. As you read the poem, ask yourself, "How can a desert be like a person?"

I am the desert.
I am free
Come walk the sweeping face of me.

Through canyon eyes of sandstone red
I see the hawk, his wings outspread;
He sunward soars to block the light
And casts the shadow of his flight
Upon my vast and ancient face,
Whose deep arroyos boldly trace
The paths where sudden waters run--
Long streams of tears dried by the sun.

I feel the windstorm's violent thrust;
I feel the sting of sand and dust
As bit by bit, and year by year,
New features on my face appear.

Great mountain ranges stretch for miles
To crease my face with frowns and smiles.
My lakes are dry and marked by tracks
Of zigging, zagging, long-eared jacks.
Dust devils swirl and slowly rise;
They whistle, whirling to the skies,
While tossed and blown in great stampedes
Are stumbling, bumping tumbleweeds.

And as the desert seasons change,
The hands of Nature rearrange
My timeworn face with new designs
Of colors, shadows, shapes and lines:

In wintertime the north winds blow;
My mountain peaks are capped with snow;
But resting, waiting patiently
Beneath the frost that covers me,
I dream of spring, when I can wear
The blossoms of the prickly pear,
Along with flowers, wild and bright,
And butterflies in joyful flight.

My summer face is cracked and dry,
All blotched and flecked with alkali,
Until the coming of a storm
When thunderclouds above me form,
And bursting, send their rains to pound
Across my high, unyielding ground
Where walls of water grow, and flow
Toward my valleys far below.

But soon the blazing sun breaks through,
And then, beneath skies wide and blue,
My features shimmer, blurred by heat,
Till autumn breezes, cool and sweet,
Caress my face, now brown and burned,
To tell me autumn has returned,
To touch the land where coyotes prowl,
Where coyotes lift their heads and howl;
At night they sing their songs to me:

We are the desert.
We are free...

O.X. RANCH UPDATE

By Bob Killen

After unexpected delays, the OX Ranch project is starting to move forward with professional guidance and project planning.

Sam Quackenbush, our interim Chief of Maintenance, is working with us to develop the work flow project for the site. We met in early September and reviewed the building and utilities and examined items to make sure the changes we made fit within the original construction and design parameters. We also tested the electrical system and reviewed the water requirements.

As of this report, project managers from the MNPAF and the Mojave National Preserve are revising the project work flow schedule, work units, renovation and replacement items that require further approvals and analysis. This pre-planning will need a couple of weeks and examines issues such as tile selection, the timing of utility connections, ambiance period motif, and other requirements. Initial work to support construction has already begun with the removal of the tree, and we will be installing a new well pump shortly.

We expect to release call for additional volunteers and work crews in mid to late October for project work in November and December. We have not determined an occupancy date.



An artist at work at O.X. Ranch

MNP MOJAVE
NATIONAL
PRESERVE

ARTISTS FOUNDATION
a National Park Service Friends Group

**Become a part of History!
Help us rehabilitate the
O.X. Ranch house.**

**DONATE TODAY! via
FUNDRAISE.COM**



TIME IN MOJAVE

By: Tom Lowe

Recently I filmed a set of commercials for a corporate airline company. Our focus was on two of their luxury jets. These planes are well known around the world and have become status symbols for rock stars, celebrities, and real estate tycoons. It was a multi-day production filming over much of the Pacific Northwest. I was fortunate enough to fly as a passenger/observer onboard one of the magnificent aircraft during one of our sorties. Scooting amongst the clouds in lavish surroundings as my crew flew in another jet with cameras to film my aircraft, in flight. The pilots maneuvered in formation, wingtips often less than 50 feet apart, dancing with one another in the clouds, over the rises of the terrain, into precision hard bank turns and calculated altitude changes. As a passenger, it was like a ride at Disneyland, only with plush leather seats.



Camera jet off the wing of the target jet

We climbed the coast of Washington, with the San Juan Islands highlighting the ocean below, snacks jostled around the cabin, and soon the sunset loomed in the background. As daylight receded, the earth below took on the peacefulness of twilight. Then with filming completed the camera jet slipped away, and the pilots of my luxury airplane settled into a more routine flight pattern.

I leaned over to watch the red ball of the sun drop below the horizon and the Pacific Northwest fall into darkness. For me, moments like this provide some clarity, the way time and distance provide perspective. A deep breath, knowing we'd done our jobs well and a sense of calm settled over me.

The same sort of calm I find myself in whenever I'm in the desert. It is amazing to me how often I find myself looking at my life through the lens of my time in Mojave. I think it has something to do with the overwhelming vastness of the landscape and the richness of being so alone in the middle of the night with nothing but the wind to keep me company. The desert's open space grounds me in reality and helps me to reconnect with the earth. Looking down into the blackness below the plane, I began to think that at first glance the desert floor is vastly different from the forest of the Pacific Northwest. Dry decomposed granite hardens to rocky pumice protecting the delicate desert fauna from the harsh environment while the detritus of the forest remains soft and fertile making it easier for seeds to germinate and grow. Upon closer scrutiny, these environments aren't that different after all.

Not to get too ethereal here but in geologic time, we humans only experience these landscapes for a mere blip. We aren't around long enough to witness these environments evolve. According to Texas A&M University, the Sahara Desert was once a tropical rainforest <https://phys.org/news/2016-12-years-sahara-tropicalwhat.html>, as were many parts of the Southwest United States (see Petrified Forest National Park, AZ). Scientists say that millions of tons of desert sand from the Sahara blow around the globe annually, collecting on beaches and influencing ecosystems. Particles that were once the undergrowth of a giant forest nestle in this wind born cacophony of ancient life, perhaps helping to germinate renewed forests on distant shores. Some scientists say that most of life on Earth is a product of blowing desert sand. Could that mean we are all part of the desert? Maybe it's why so many of our artists at MNPAF feel grounded in its surroundings.

So it is here that we find our latest Artist-in-Residence, Lu Ross, in the present, looking back in time, to gain perspective and connection to Mojave through her photography. She's defined her approach through the lines, shapes, texture, and color of the desert landscape using four elements – earth, wind, fire, & water. Entitled "Elements of Mojave," she tells a story as old as history itself, freezing it through her lens.

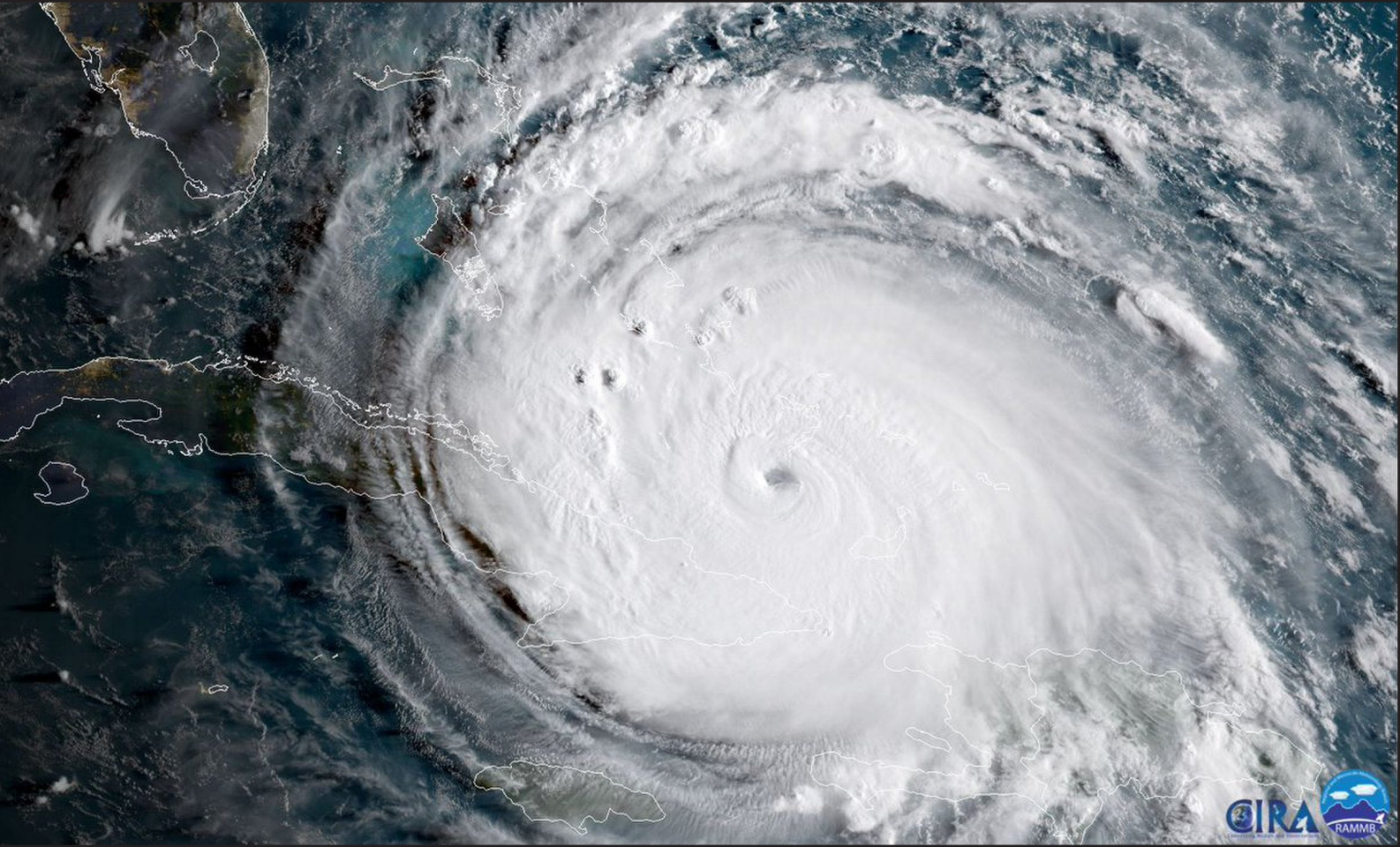
Lu's work inspires contemplation and connects us to a landscape the way some of the masters of her chosen field of art have in the past. She's captured emotive light in lava tubes, found faces in ancient formations, framed fire torn trees in stark poses indicative of her hero, Ansel Adams' images and presented a dry lake bed in an almost cubist style. The collection is a tour of time itself. Walking through the Desert Light Gallery with her prints, I find myself being transported to these places and wishing to remain.

The desert sands continue to blow shaping our world and Mojave into new and interesting formations. As our earth warms and climates adjust to this new reality the microscopic organisms that hitch a ride on the trade winds may be locked to their lands due to additional moisture or other changing weather patterns. Lu has captured this moment in Mojave in an exciting and unique way.

As the luxury jet's wheels lightly touched down, I was brought back to the real world. Wandering amongst the clouds at sunset was only a brief respite from my responsibilities. Although, through Lu's work, I find I can always escape to the open and intrinsically inviting Mojave.



Lu Ross in her "element" at Mid Hills



Hurricane Irma approaches Florida on September 9, 2017 in this view from the International Space Station by NASA astronaut Randy Bresnik.

A series of very powerful hurricanes has hit the Caribbean and the southern United States. For our last shot we are asking you to consider supporting the ongoing relief efforts in the region. Nature's wrath left behind a lot of human suffering. Please donate what you can to your favorite Charity.