

**ELEVATION -86** **M**  
**DEATH VALLEY** **ASL**





**ELEVATION -86**

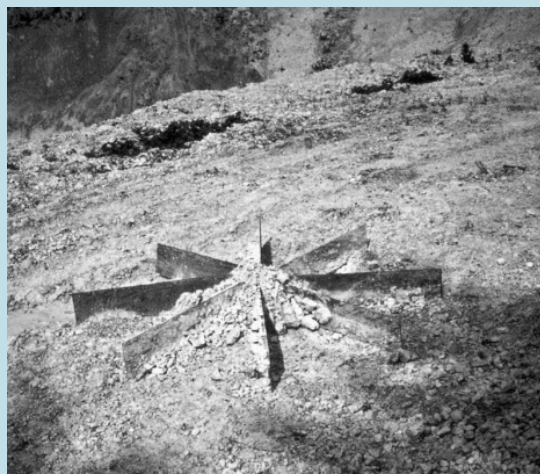
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**ASL**

**DEATH VALLEY**





**“A WORK OF ART WHEN PLACED IN A GALLERY LOSES ITS CHARGE, AND BECOMES A PORTABLE OBJECT OR SURFACE DIS-ENGAGED FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD.”**



**-ROBERT SMITHSON**

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**“IF ATOMS ARE THE BUILDINGS BLOCKS OF LIFE, THAT MEANS THAT THE CORE OF LIFE IS INVISIBLE. THE INVISIBLE IS JUST AS MUCH A PART OF REALITY AS THE VISIBLE AND THEREFORE IT SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED FROM ART”.**



**-WALTER DE MARIA**

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Elevation1049 was the first in a series of site-specific exhibitions in which artists have been invited to interact with, and draw inspiration from, the natural conditions of a particular landscape. The first iteration took place in February/March 2014 in Gstaad, Switzerland. Over twenty artists were invited to visit and create artworks that were both reflection of the place and a journey of exploration that invited locals and visitors alike to see the familiar Alpine landscape through new eyes. Organized according to the principle of elevation (measured in meters above sea level) the artworks differed from those associated with a gallery setting in that they were neither for sale, nor were they intended to leave any footprint on the landscape they inhabited. Details of the show can be found at [www.elevation1049.org](http://www.elevation1049.org)

Elevation1049 was curated by Olympia Scarry and Neville Wakefield and was supported by LUMA& a not-for-profit Foundation based in Switzerland and the US.

# ELEVATION1049

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## GSTAAD 2014





## ELEVATION 1049

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL

GSTAAD 2014

JANUARY 27 – MARCH 8

JOHN ARMLEDER

ALEXANDRA BACHZETSIS

OLAF BREUNING

VALENTIN CARRON

CLAUDIA COMTE

URS FISCHER

PETER FISCHLI / DAVID WEISS

SYLVIE FLEURY

BERNHARD HEGGLIN / TINA BRAEGGER

THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

GIANNI JETZER

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY

MIA MARFURT

OLIVIER MOSSET

GIANNI MOTTI

MAI-THU PERRET

PIPILOTTI RIST

UGO RONDINONE

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

KILIAN RÜTHEMANN

OLYMPIA SCARRY

ROMAN SIGNER

TOBIAS SPICHTIG

NOT VITAL

HANNAH WEINBERGER

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

MATTHIAS BRUNNER

# ELEVATION 1049

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## GSTAAD 2014





**“In the internet age of global communication, a return to place, as a hypothetical idea and an impractical reality feels both radical and necessary. Despite the uneven nature of the projects, the acoustic vacuum created by the snowscape and the restrained pace enforced by the setting were only advantages. In the wake of ambitious statement shows, such as Documenta 13 and the 55th Venice Biennale, “Elevation1049” felt more like an artist’s project in its simplicity and lack of organizing principles. It did not attempt to bend time or evoke the metaphysical, but commanded the increasingly rare phenomena of presence and attention.”**

**Frieze Magazine**



# ELEVATION1049

## GSTAAD 2014

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**“Artists have had a major impact on the creation and development of America’s national parks since the beginning of the national park movement”**

<http://www.nps.gov/dena/historyculture/arts-program-history.htm>

Just as the picturesque Alpine village of Gstaad embodies a certain vision of Switzerland, so Death Valley represents an extreme version of the American wilderness. Its presence has captured the imagination of artists, writers and film-makers throughout the centuries. It embodies many of the myths of the American West, of a culture formed in a crucible where life-defying wilderness and human ambition are at permanent odds. Not only are the highest and lowest points in the contiguous United States visible from within Death Valley, but its extremes of temperature and inhospitable aridity have rendered it an indelible part of the American landscape and the psyche born of it.

Death Valley’s Badwater Basin is the point of lowest elevation in North America at 282 feet (86 m) below sea level. This point is 84.6 miles (136.2 km) east-south-east of Mount Whitney, the highest point in the contiguous United States with an elevation of 14,505 feet (4,421m). Death Valley’s Furnace Creek holds the record for the highest reliably reported air temperature in the world, 134°F (56.7° C) on July 10th, 1913.

Like Elevation 1049, Elevation -86 (so named after the lowest point in the US at 86 meters below sea level) renders a kind of map, plotted in occurrences and recitals suspended in the rasterized field of the World Wide Web, for which Death Valley National Park acts as an expanded exhibition space.

# OVERVIEW -86

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## DEATH VALLEY







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A detailed topographic map of Death Valley, California, showing contour lines, elevation markers, and geographical features like Shoshone Mountain and Gunnery. The map is overlaid with a red grid.

Aguereberry Point  
Elev. 6433 ft.

**ELEVATION -86**

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**DEATH VALLEY**





**“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”**

**Wilderness Act, 1964**

Elevation-86 takes as its premise that it will have no footprint and leave nothing behind. It will exist in the space between fact and fiction, between the act and its documentation. It will attempt to meet the demands of what constitutes art's obligation to its audiences – as well as its makers – with zero environmental impact. Leave No Trace, an ethic of outdoorsmanship originating with the dirtbag climbers of California's nearby Yosemite Valley, defines a code of conduct implicit to the underlying curatorial principle of Elevation. Such a premise is in accord with the demands of working within a National Park subject to the 1964 Wilderness Act. It will be the first show of this kind – a show that can never be fully witnessed or understood except through documentary traces recorded in real time and space, but accessible only through the fiction of a place other than itself held in the ether of the world wide web.

# CONCEPT -86

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By aligning the curatorial principles of Elevation -86 with those of the Wilderness Act, the aim is to synchronize the notion of the 'dematerialized' artwork with the practices of sustainability, in which the art, as much as man, is a visitor that does not remain. In this, Elevation -86 is positioned not just as an antidote to the market-driven work that has come to dominate the current landscape but also as a re-thinking of the '70's idea of 'land' art as the collaboration of men and machinery shaping the surface of the earth.

To this end we are proposing to operate within the constraints established by the National Parks Service. Most projects will be realized under Parks Service supervision. Where projects cannot conform to the terms set out by the NPS exceptions can be made by operating outside of park boundaries or utilizing former mining and other concessions that fall within the park's limits but are not subject to its jurisdiction. General NPS guidelines are as follows:

- That proposed activity is wilderness dependent (conception could not be realized elsewhere)
- That proposed activity does not cause unacceptable impact to resources or wilderness values
- That proposed activity does not unreasonably disrupt the public's use and enjoyment of the site
- That proposed activity leaves the site untrammelled, natural and undeveloped

The aim of Elevation -86 is in part to create out of a set of historical and self-imposed guidelines an alternative approach to art-making: to take the idea of limitation and make of it something that stands in opposition to market excess.

# CURATION -86

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**“Mythology is the womb of mankind’s initiation to life and death.”**

**Joseph Campbell, “Bios and Mythos”**

The actions that take place in Death Valley will exist primarily in record. Like other performances and events in extreme conditions there will be few eyewitness accounts. Testimony to their existence will belong almost exclusively to the Elevation -86 website, the primary publication of the show. The site / non-site dialectic introduced by Smithson in the late ‘60’s as well as describing a relationship to place, was a pun on sight and what could be seen. In an inversion of Smithson’s dialectic Death Valley will here be the non-site - an arena in which actions and events may or may not have happened – with the (web)site (elevation-86.org) being the visible location of the project.

The website will be created in collaboration with Google. Not only does this guarantee eyes on the project but also means that certain mapping and recording technologies will be made available to artists. These may include streetview and satellite recording techniques as well as other technologies relating to the creative mapping of time and space. Given the primary role of documentation it is expected that most projects will exist primarily in film and video. Lead-time for the use of google technologies is considerable and applications would have to be made a minimum of three months in advance.

Elevation-86 will exist in and explore the space between what is known and what is seen, between mindscape and landscape, fact and fiction, the space of the desert and that of the world-wide-web.

# AUDIENCE -86

## DEATH VALLEY

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The execution of Elevation-85 will take place in the following three phases:

**January – June 2015** (research and development)

Artists will be invited to make site visits and create proposals, which can be budgeted and submitted to the NPS for permitting. Proposals should adhere as much as possible to Wilderness principles and should include details as to nature and method of documentation.

**September – December 2015** (realization of projects)

During this period projects will be realized within the Death Valley environment and documentation suitable for exhibition on the site created. The organizers will work with the artists and the NPS to find mutually suitable dates to work with during this window.

**January 2016** (elevation-86 to go public)

Early in 2016 Elevation-86 will be revealed to the public through the unveiling of the website and a gathering of artists, organizers and press on site in Death Valley.

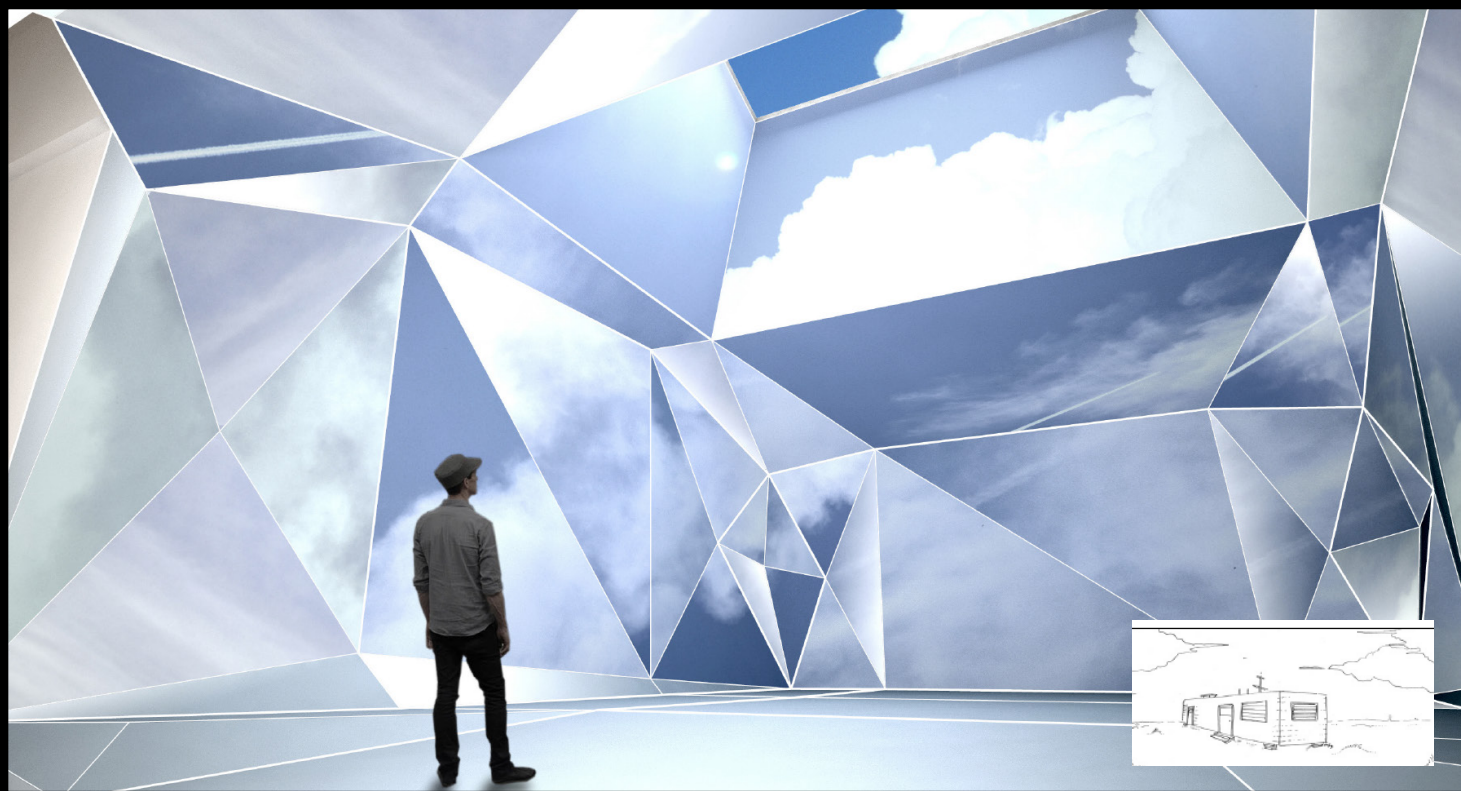
# EXECUTION -86

## DEATH VALLEY

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Doug Aitken: Nomadic Desert Light Sculpture Proposal. Housed appears to be a single wide trailer Aitken's sculpture is from the outside in keeping with the vernacular and condition of the desert. Upon entry the viewer will discover an environment of refracted sky created by a series mirrors. Literally turning the outside in Aitken reverses the expectations set up by the architecture to create an ever shifting environment composed only of light and space. For the duration of Elevation -86 the sculpture will be moved to occupy various different sites in the Death Valley region. Its location can only be discovered through the website and it will be one of very few 'physical' representations within the Elevation show.

# EXAMPLES -86

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## DEATH VALLEY







Nicholas Lobos: Timisha Proposal. Death Valley's original Native American inhabitants called themselves Timisha, which translates to "Red Rock Face Paint" this name is also used for the valley itself as a place name. Lobos plans to produce an industrial quantity of red ochre paint using the pigment particular to the clay found in Death Valley. Formulated to contain only local clay based pigment and water, it is a water soluble indigenous product it will be washed off after a few instances of rain. This creates tension with the natural condition of Death Valley in which rain is virtually non-existent. This project will be presented photographically online and in print. The aim is to execute the painting at a scale that can be photographed by the USGS satellite Landsat-8 or other large scale photography that may be available but which will be barely visible from the ground.

# EXAMPLES -86

## DEATH VALLEY

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Vanessa Beecroft: 12 Hours Walk (Death Valley) Starting at early dawn and ending in the dark of night a woman (Vanessa Beecroft - the first time she has featured herself in her performance work) wearing a coyote fur (reminiscent of Joseph Beuys), long loose hair and heels will set foot on a lonely uninterrupted walk across the desert. Inspired by traditions of Romanticism from the Gospel according to St Matthew by Pier Paolo Pasolini to Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, the walk will be filmed as a single continuous tracking shot accompanied by an interior monologue inspired by memory and landscape and recorded in real time during the walk.

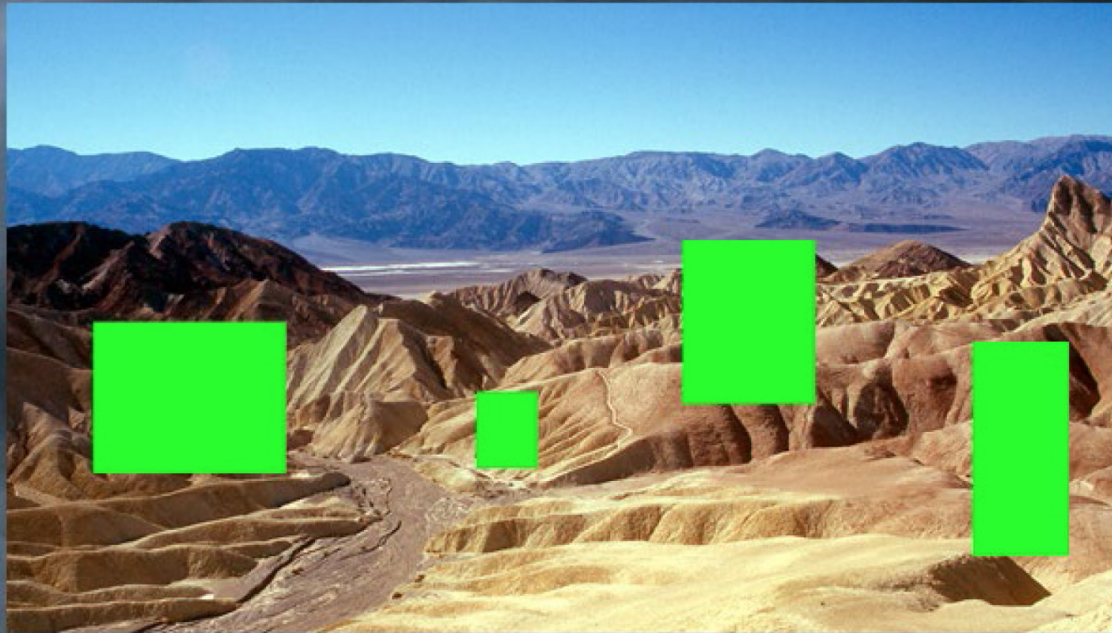
# EXAMPLES -86

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Public Fiction: Green Screen Ice Cream Proposal. The idea is to use Death Valley as the setting for a new kind of exhibition in which the art is temporary and in which the site is changing (i.e., the desert as the site for the art-work and ultimately the website as place for display.) A small film crew will travel to the desert and film scenes of the landscape with a composition of green screen panels, like apertures or windows within the desert itself. These six 'scenes' will then be handed off to various LA based artists who will in turn film the empty space. Death Valley will then become context, set and frame for their work. Green Screen Ice Cream will then function as a micro/meta exhibition held within the Elevation -86.

# EXAMPLES -86

## DEATH VALLEY

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**Trevor Paglen**

**Piero Golia**

**Peter Coffin**

**Joel Kyack**

**Jimmy Durham**

**Ari Marcopolous**

**Katy Grannan**

**Robert Irwin**

**Doug Aitken**

**Matthew Barney**

**Andrea Fraser**

**Florian Maier-Aichen**

**Skip Arnold**

**Kaari Upson**

**Catherine Opie**

**Ed Ruscha**

**Andrea Zittel**

**Flora Weigmann**

**Paul McCarthy**

**ARTISTS - 86**

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**DEATH VALLEY**

**Public Fiction**

**Virginia Overton**





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**THANK YOU**

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