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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN;

CRAFT, METALWORK;

**'The American desert in the work of two twentieth century painters
and two Land Artists'.**

by Fionnuala O'Shea

**Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and
Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of Metalwork,
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Acknowledgements

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The moment I saw the brilliant, proud morning shine high up over Santa Fe something stood still in my soul, and I started to attend in the magnificent fierce morning of New Mexico one sprang awake, a new part of the soul woke up suddenly, and the old world gave way to a new.

D.H. Lawrence, New Mexico, 1922.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1970s, and beyond, art in America underwent very major changes. The end of the nineteenth century can be understood within the context of expanding urbanism that separated people from the natural world. The pinnacle of landscape painting, in the United States, coincides with the Industrial Revolution when large areas of nature were developed and cities absorbed the population explosion. Artists began to take to the virgin wildernesses of America and paint the unseen landscapes. In the 1960s, a time of great social and political turmoil, artists reacted to increasing industrialisation and the exploitation of nature and again took their art into nature. No longer were they satisfied with canvas and paint as a means of expressing an essential connection between humans and nature. This was the beginning of Environmental Art, an art form that aimed to enhance this vital connection. As Barbara C. Matilsky has described it; "Environmental Art is part of a long tradition whereby artists creatively respond to extreme environmental changes by introducing new art forms". (Matilsky, 1994, p.7).

It has been said that the urge to produce landscape painting during the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century took the form of 'Environmental Art' in the 1960s. (Beardsley, 1984, p.7). I wish to explore this idea by taking two painters from the beginning of the twentieth century and two land artists from the 1960s and comparing and contrasting the ways they expressed fundamental qualities of the desert landscape.

In the summer of 1997, I spent three months in the desert of West America. I found the landscape there to be incredibly beautiful, yet also alien and hostile. I resolved, while there, to research artists who used this landscape in their work and follow this up for my degree thesis. In my research I came across two painters working at the beginning of the twentieth century - Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, who although not landscape painters in their own right, spent a period of their lives in this environment and were greatly influenced by it. It interested me how they could express the intense feelings of timelessness and vastness, that I experienced, on a two-dimensional surface. Also during my research I discovered the work of the land artists in the 1960s and 1970s. I found Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria to be the most interesting, both because they were leading figures in the Land Art movement and because their desert pieces dealt with these concepts of timelessness and vastness. I intend to introduce the work of all four artists and discuss the methods they used to express the concepts of timelessness and vastness of a desert landscape. I will also discuss the natural beauty of the landscape as a feature in their work. Although I experienced the desert first hand, I didn't have an opportunity to go and see the sculptures of Nancy Holt or Walter de Maria. I have researched their work through books, articles and catalogues and have used my personal knowledge of the desert environment when attempting to assess Land Art.

Behind each of these art forms lies the desire to create a connection between man and his natural environment. Although very different in form, I discuss how the conceptual ideas common to both can be traced through their work. I found comparing and contrasting to

be a useful technique to gain a deeper insight into each artist's work. Although Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley were working earlier in the twentieth century and were making a different type of art to that of Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, I could find similarities as well as differences in the ways they each expressed the fundamental qualities of this landscape and the impact this landscape had on their art.



Figure 1. Map of the West American desert



CHAPTER ONE

Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria are four American artists who, at different points in their careers, chose to work from and with the desert landscape of the American west. Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley were painters working from the beginning of the twentieth century. Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria were leading figures in the Land Art movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the work of all four artists is considerably different, they all, through different means, attempted to express fundamental qualities of this landscape. It is my intention to introduce each artist and set each within their social and artistic context, before examining their work in some depth.

At the beginning of the twentieth century art in America began to change radically. Prevailing at that time were artists and styles that had found their direction at the end of the nineteenth century. Modernism is just one of the directions that can be found in American painting of that period. Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley were among the early modernist painters, whose art made a dramatic break with the American painting of the late nineteenth century. Along with Arthur Dove, John Marin and Paul Strand, amongst others, Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley were part of a group of early modernist artists known as 'The Stieglitz Group'. Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) was the proprietor of several galleries; the Anderson Galleries, the 291 Gallery (1908) and the Intimate Gallery (1925), which exhibited the works of these artists. They each shared Stieglitz's conviction that art, to be effective, had to reveal the nature of the subject as well as the artist's emotional reaction to that subject. In praise of Stieglitz's

achievements, Abraham A. Davidson writes, "He encouraged experimentation: he laid down no laws, but in singlehandedly creating the environment that nurtured those artists ... he helped to bring forth a modernism in American painting as bold as, and, on its own terms, as valuable as the contemporary modernism in Europe." (Davidson, A.A., 1981, p.22).

Both Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley found nature to be their greatest inspiration. They are particularly interesting to me in my discussion because, although they have been classified as early modernists, they chose to paint the landscape of the American west, a tradition that was widespread in the previous century. Landscape painting emerged in America at around the same time as the Industrial Revolution, in the nineteenth century. Artists, for the first time, ventured into the wildernesses of America which had remained unseen by the vast majority of the population, and attempted to render them exactly. In much the same way, but on a lesser scale, as the forces that drove land artists out into nature in the 1960s, it was a reaction to the industrialisation of cities and an attempt to develop a stronger relationship with nature. However, Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley painted the landscape in a way that was quite different to the artists of the previous century. For Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, writes Barbara Haskell, "it offered a sympathetic vehicle for the expression of emotional states rather than the simple detailing of external reality." (Haskell, quote from Appelhof, 1988, p.17).

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in Winsconsin in 1887. A lot of her art was inspired by and devoted to the world of nature. She developed an unusual and unique style expressing her personal response to nature. Many of her paintings, the most famous of which include images of hills, trees, bones, clouds and skies, employ a technique whereby the natural object is painted in the immediate foreground, and in some cases, so much so that none of the background, or environmental surroundings, can be seen. Susan Fillin-Yeh writes, "objects have been drawn very close: the giant flowers and other floating things have been pushed to the foreground, nearly into our space. At the same time, the imagery, which looms against glowing skies crowds the canvas". (Fillin-Yeh, 1995, p.42). She goes on to imply that O'Keeffe, through these paintings, suggests that

certain things cannot be contained without boundaries and so, psychologically, their images seem to push viewers back, displacing them. Thus the viewers of O'Keeffe's paintings are brought to share the vision of the modernist artist - out of place - who privileges the view from the sidelines in images of distancing and dislocation while investing them with insight - and, perhaps, with the glamour of the unattainable.

While discussing Georgia O'Keeffe's close-up techniques, Susan Fillin-Yeh describes her as a modernist artist 'out of place'. Indeed O'Keeffe, in a modern world and as a woman trying to become a serious artist at the beginning of the twentieth century, was out of place. She trained in New York, South Carolina and Texas during which time she "confronted vocational and emotional problems that artists, especially women, continue to face". (Rosenblum, N., 1992, p.107). In May 1916 she joined the circle associated with Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), of which Marsden Hartley was already a member.

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Her earlier paintings were mainly 'non-objective' water-colour studies of forms, colours and textures. Mainly abstract pictures, they combined body and landscape imagery. 'Dark Abstraction [37]' (1924) (fig. 2), 'Abstraction' (1927) and 'Abstraction [38]' (1927) are examples from this period. In the 1920s she also painted many flower and plant pictures that have a quality not found in any of the other early modernist landscape painters. This quality is a suggested sexuality. Although to many, "O'Keeffe's work was limited to a rigid fixation upon what were considered to be essentially female aspects", (Castro, 1986, p. 53) others believed that her paintings "embody the sexual essence of woman" - there has been much speculation concerning this aspect of sexuality expressed in her work. (Rosenblum, N., 1992, p.13).

O'Keeffe first experienced the desert of New Mexico in 1917 and the region, the light, colours and climate were to become a great influence on her work and a large part of her life. "I loved it immediately", she recalled later. (Benke, 1995, p.54). As I will discuss in the following chapters, she dealt with concepts of timelessness and vastness and created ways of interpreting the scale and natural beauty of the desert in paint. The close-up techniques she used in her earlier flower paintings were again used in these desert paintings. From the 1930s onwards this desert; its churches, mountains, skies and sun-bleached cattle bones were to become central to the imagery of her work. 'From the Faraway Nearby' (1937) (fig. 3) and 'The Pelvis Series' (1940s) (figs. 27, 28, 29) are some of her most famous paintings from this region, where animal skulls, and later, pelvic bones hover in the foreground against the stark and bare landscape of New Mexico.

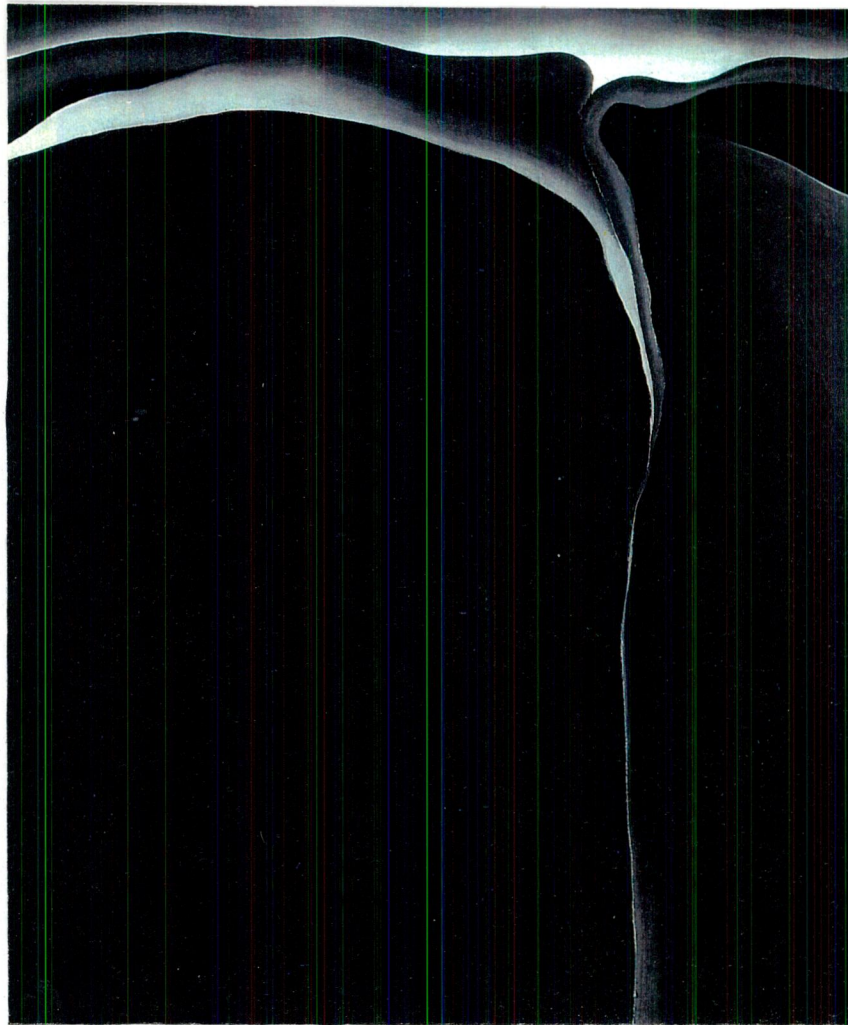
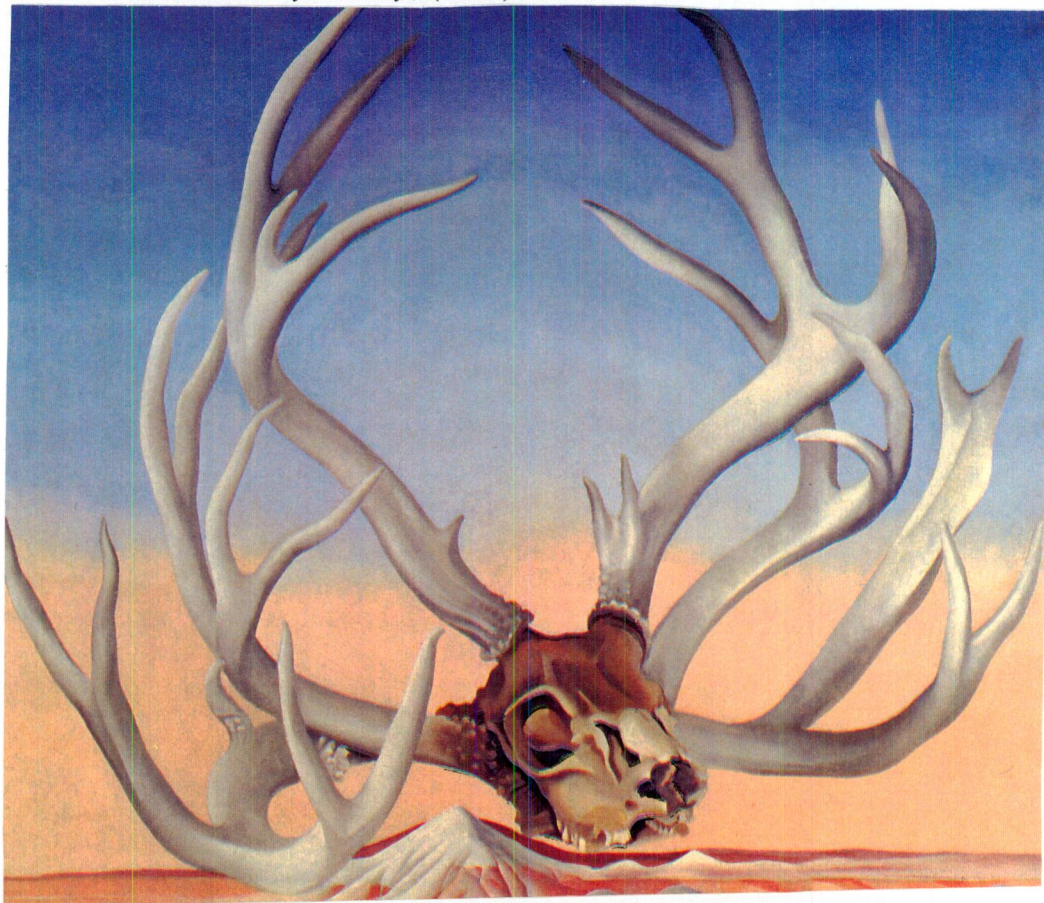


Figure 2. *Dark Abstraction* [37], (1924)

Figure 3. *From the Faraway Nearby*, (1937)



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3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions and the second section deals with the recommendations.

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O'Keeffe continued with themes of space and time through the 1950s and into the 1960s. Her later works include the 'Sky Above Clouds' series (fig. 4) which she completed in her late 60s. These paintings were an extension of the interests of her lifetime. In the 1970s she laid down her paintbrushes and died in 1986 at the age of ninety-eight.

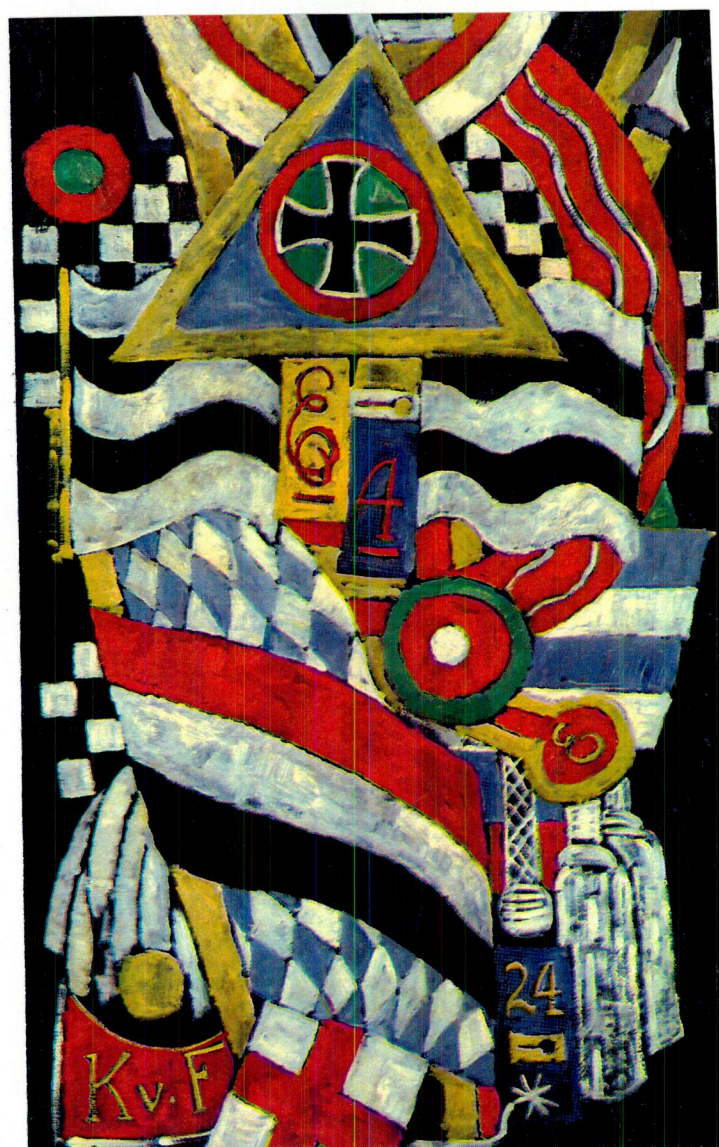
Marsden Hartley was born in Maine in 1877. In contrast to the orderly career of Georgia O'Keeffe, he spent most of his life restlessly moving from place to place and his art, consequently, was full of stylistic change. Nature remained an important aspect in his work from his earliest paintings to his later landscapes. An unsettled and intense man, he once commented that, "there is nothing that sets all things at peace within me as a communion with nature". (Hokin, 1993, p.4). He spent most of the 1910s in Paris and Berlin, on the eve of the First World War, where his work was greatly influenced by the European cubists and expressionists. Many of his paintings executed while living in Berlin are abstractions of the symbols and shapes of military decorations. 'Military' (1913) and 'Portrait of a German Officer' (1914) (fig. 5) are examples from this period. Although he turned his art almost wholly to expressions of nature after he settled in America for good in the 1930s, traces of this cubist influence can be seen even in his later paintings, for example, 'Mount Katahdin, Maine', (1942) (fig. 6) and 'Waxenstein at Hamarsbach, Garmisch, Bavaria' (1933-34).

In the early 1920s, back in the United States, Hartley's fascination with cubism and expressionism came to an end. He returned to a style more dependent on nature. He was also a member of the Stieglitz group, along with Georgia O'Keeffe. He was one of the



Figure 4. *Sky Above Clouds IV*, (1965)

Figure 5. *Portrait of a German Officer*, (1914)





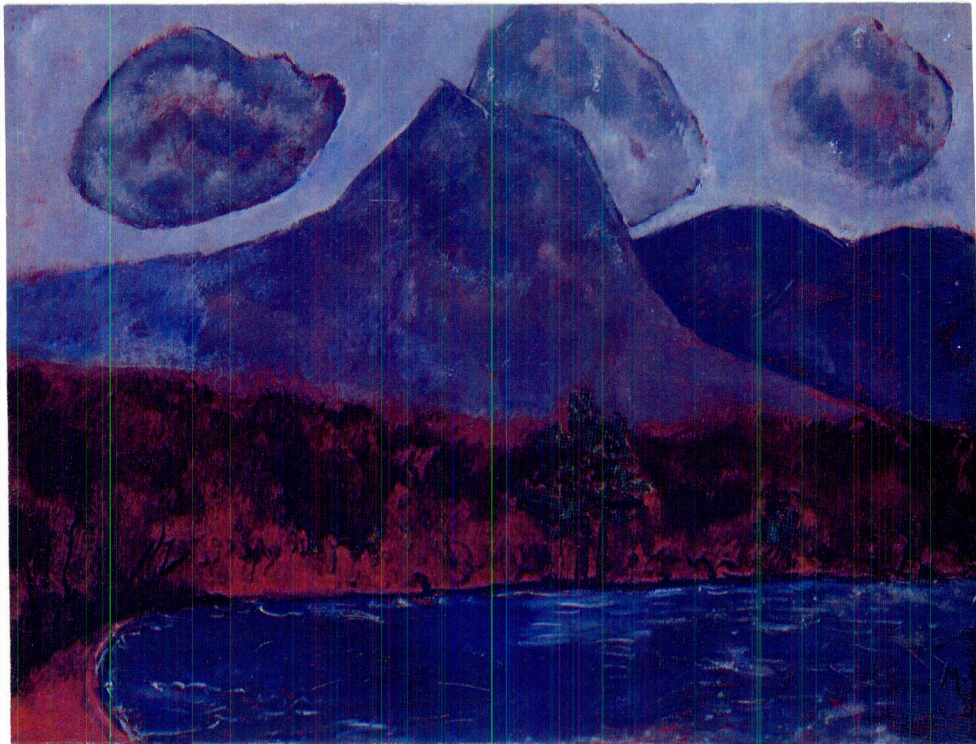


Figure 6. *Mount Katahdin, Maine*, (1942)

first artists to work in the desert of New Mexico and, according to Paul Rosenfield, had "gotten further with the locality than any other painter". (Rosenfield, From Eldredge, C., 1993, p.195). He spent the summers of 1918 and 1919 in Taos. It was a brief but significant experience in his life. While there he did many paintings and drawings that were exact and careful observations of nature (fig. 7). He was to create his best desert landscapes, however, 5,000 miles away, and two or three years later. In Berlin in 1923 the full impact of the southwest was revealed in a series of paintings he called 'Recollections' (fig. 8), later described by a critic as "hauntingly expressive renderings of that distant and exotic landscape". (Eldredge, 1991, p.195).

These paintings, characteristic of Hartley's art, were full of intensity, power, longing and motion. As Gail R. Scott has commented,

They are remembered visions of nature, halfway between landscapes of the mind and powerful evocations of the place. They evolved from and partially reflected the turmoil of post-war Berlin, with its social and sexual decadence. They are at once specific and imaginative. They have an unreal quality. These paintings speak for an entire generation of dislocated American expatriates who longed for contact with their native country yet found no real nourishment or acceptance. (Scott, 1988, p.70).

Like Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley dealt with problems of how to capture the vastness, timelessness and natural beauty of this landscape in a two-dimensional medium, yet he expresses it so differently. He returned, for the last time, to the theme of the New Mexico desert in 1924. He concentrated mainly on landscape painting up until his death in 1943 at the age of sixty-six.

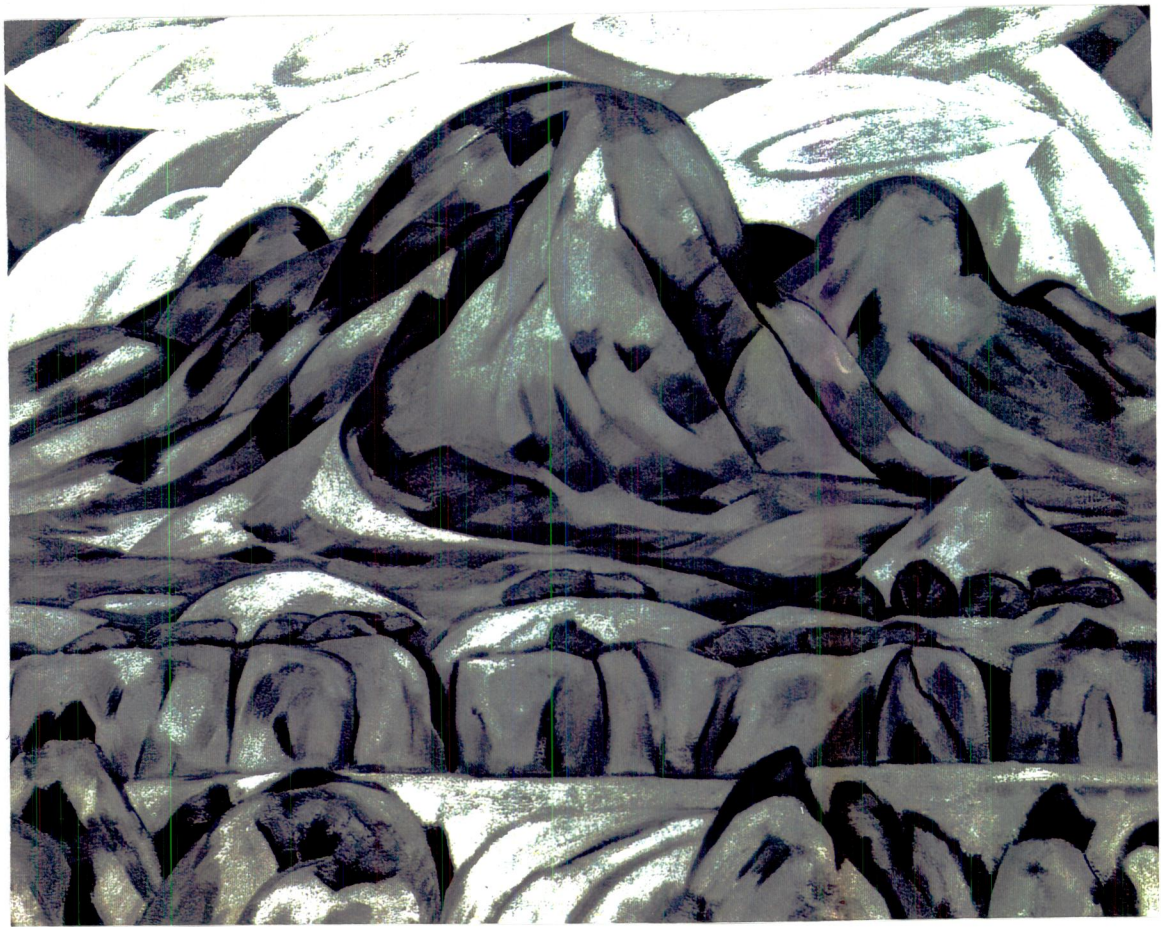


Figure 7. *New Mexico Landscape*, (1919-20)

Figure 8. *New Mexico Recollections*, (1923)



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Environmental art, which encompasses Ecological art, is a movement that emerged during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It came at a time when people began questioning traditional western values and concepts of art and nature. Environmental Art, which sought to incorporate new meaning into art, was a reaction to social concerns, but it was also a reaction to the exploitation of natural resources and increasing world pollution. In 1975, Alan Sonfist wrote,

A growing concern for nature has appeared worldwide over the last two decades. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, society faces crucial decisions about its way of life. Art has always reflected the questioning of a society by itself and often takes an active role in the search for the answers to those questions. This concern for nature is manifesting itself strongly in the United States, where American artists are proposing answers through their work These artists have had their work grouped together under such labels as "earth art", "environmental art" and "land art". (Sonfist, A., 1975, p.xii).

Working with unconventional materials, land artists brought their art out into nature, to be born from and become a part of nature. Although it tended to be minimal in style, most land art is enormous in scale. Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, two leading land artists, sited their work in the desert, "an environment that nurtures spiritual enlightenment by providing communion with nature in the wild". (Matilsky, 1994, p.7). Although this concern for the Earth grew worldwide, it was due to the experimental atmosphere in America during the late 1960s and 1970s and also to the great quantities of land that were accessible to artists there that Land Art was primarily an American movement.

Nancy Holt began her art career as a photographer and her knowledge of photography influenced her work as a land artist, much as Georgia O'Keeffe's knowledge of

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photography influenced her compositions. Born in New York in the 1940s, she worked there as a photographer and film-maker. She has described gallery spaces as “very constricting” (Donnelly, 1983, p.4) and it was not until she began directing her art outdoors that she became interested in the earthworks that were being done at the time. Her early works are small-scale site-orientated pieces. About them she explains, “I think it was about looking with the naked eye ... looking at the world and looking at it straight, looking at it without the camera lens. It was more about focusing on everyday things”. Working in outdoor sites, her work began to develop out of the site and her reaction to it. Her art deals with sight and, as she describes it, “the concretising of vision”. Light, as well as perception, is also a theme in her work. Even, early in her career, while she worked in the gallery situation she attempted to bring the outside world into the interior. She created room-size light pieces that enveloped people and the interaction of people, people as part of her work, remained to be important to her throughout her career. “In order to perceive the work you had to be part of it”, she explained. (quoted in Donnelly, M., 1983, p.4).

Early works include ‘Buried Poems’ (1969-1971), ‘Locators’ (1972), ‘Views through a Sand Dune’ (1972) and ‘Hydra’s Head’ (1974). ‘Buried Poems’ was a work that consisted of a series of buried poems, each one intended for a certain person. Each poem was buried in an outdoor site which the intended person would try to find using a set of instructions. ‘Locators’ was another series concerned with “setting up situations where people do a double-take and where, by looking through something they really focus, really perceive intensely the things seen”. ‘Locators’ were all based on the theme of

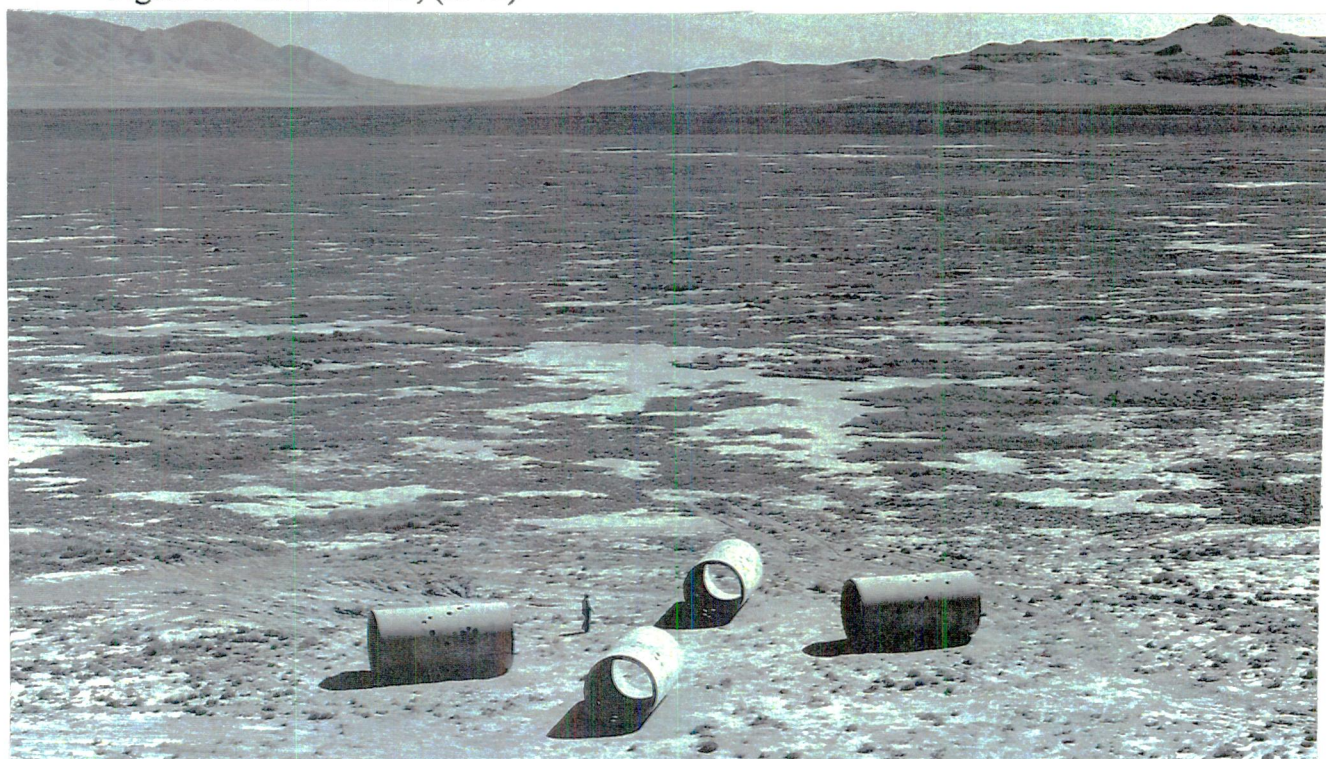
looking through a section of steel pipe at specific natural and man-made views. 'Views through a Sand Dune' (fig. 9) was based on the same idea. A section of steel tubing was placed in a sand dune and a small part of the vast horizon line was framed. Nancy Holt comments, "I was just trying to zero in on the landscape in a perceptual way". 'Hydra's Head', five differently sized small pools of water arranged with reference to the stars in the constellation Hydra, with a similar theme as all of her other early works "is about focusing in on everyday things, the things of the world". (Holt, from Donnelly, M., 1983, p.50).

Nancy Holt first experienced the desert of West America in 1968 where she apparently "felt an immediate empathy with the broad open spaces and the rugged existence that she experienced there". (Castle, T., 1982, p.86). In 1976 she completed her first major earthwork, 'Sun Tunnels' (fig. 10), which she set in the Great Basin Desert of Utah. 'Sun Tunnels' developed out of her ideas for her earlier works. She explains how "it was all those things coming together it developed out of my concern with the realisation that light and sight were interconnected and then also out of my feeling about the place". (Holt, quote from Donnelly, M., 1983, p.5). 'Sun Tunnels' consists of four concrete tunnels laid out on the desert floor in an "X" configuration. The tunnels are 86 foot long on the diagonal and cut through each tunnel are holes of different sizes that correspond to the stars in four different constellations - Draco, Persus, Columba and Capricorn. With 'Sun Tunnels' she explores fundamental qualities of the desert landscape such as infinite time and space.



Figure 9. *Views Through a Sand Dune*, (1972)

Figure 10. *Sun Tunnels*, (1976)



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2. The second part is a detailed description of the methods used.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results obtained.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and summary of the work.

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Her later works include 'Rock Rings' (1977-78), 'Star Crossed' (1979-81) and 'Annual Ring' (1980-81) (fig. 12). After 'Sun Tunnels', most of her works were sited in more social sites. Those later pieces also deal with themes of perception and space. Ted Castle, who visited four of Nancy Holt's works in 1981, has pointed out, "but it is with visitors of course that all of her various works assume their carefully meanings, pointing to a place, drawing people inside them, focusing views of the earth and the heavens and solidly existing". (Castle, 1982, p.88).

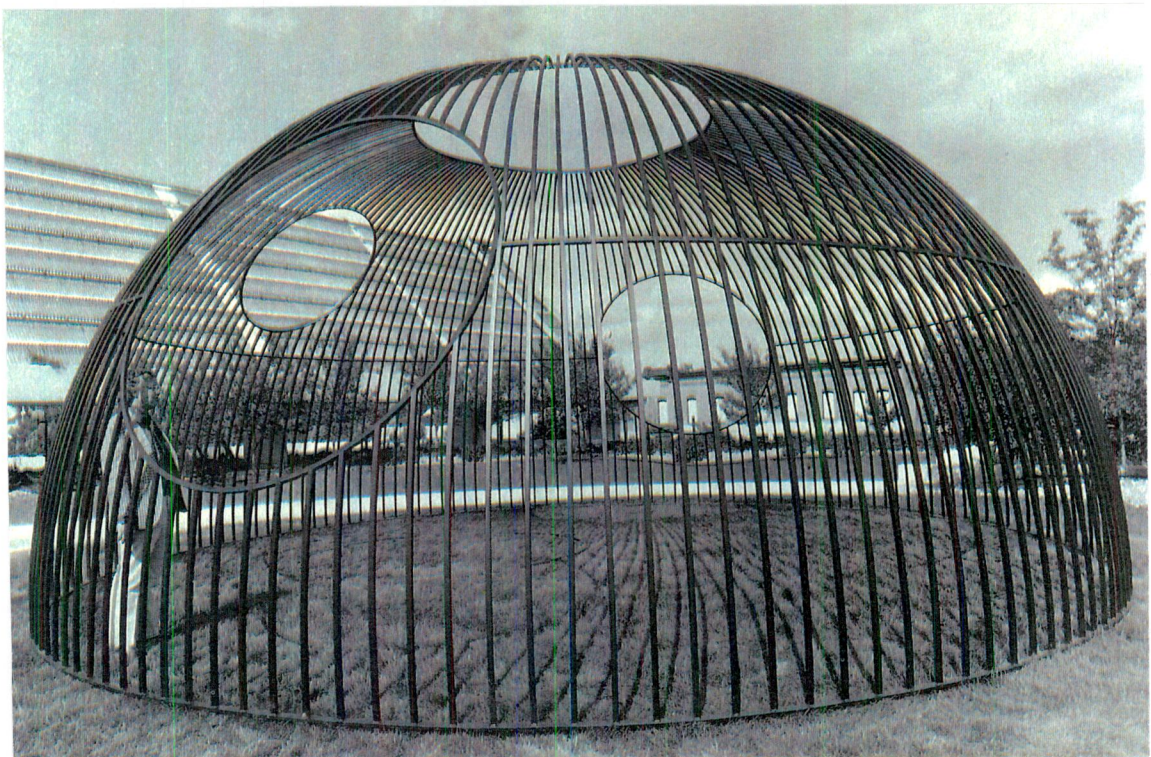
Walter de Maria is another leading land artist of the 1960s. Born in 1935, it wasn't until the early 1960s that he began to get recognition for his work. Through his art, like Nancy Holt, he attempts to highlight the experience of the elements and forces of nature. From his earliest work to his large-scale land pieces nature has remained as much part of the work as the inspiration for it. The majority of de Maria's art works are located in a natural environment. Many of his earthworks are sited in the deserts of western America and, although minimal in style, they are created on an enormous scale characteristic of American Land Art.

One of de Maria's pieces, 'Earthworks', first exhibited in the Heiner Freidrich gallery in Munich in 1968, contains 1,760 cubic feet of soil piled up inside the gallery space, filling a series of rooms to a height of two feet. In 1977 another version of 'Earthrooms' was exhibited in New York and these earthrooms achieved, according to Daniel Wheeler



Figure 11. *Rock Rings*, (1977-78)

Figure 12. *Annual Ring*, (1980-81)



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precisely what serious art has always sought to do - that is, to seize the viewer's consciousness and expand it, while also providing fresh aesthetic rewards. The latter came, in part, with the light-dark contrasts sensuously textured, black-brown dirt set against a gleaming white interior, as well as with the pungent country fragrance permeating a stale urban environment.

(Wheeler, 1991, p.265).

'Mile Long Drawing' (1968) and 'Las Vegas Piece' (1969) (fig. 13) were de Maria's first earthworks set in the desert. They both consisted of simple geometric marks made upon the desert floor. They were intended as pathways to orient the viewer in this uniform and vast landscape. 'The Lightning Field' (1977) (fig. 14) is perhaps de Maria's most famous and most successful earthwork. It was created on the scale typical of American Land Art but contains the ephemerality of European Land Art. Sited in west central New Mexico it contains 400 highly polished stainless steel poles, average height 20 feet, spread out evenly over an area of one mile by one kilometre. The isolation of the site is a vital part of the work. As Walter de Maria has declared, "Isolation is the essence of Land Art". (De Maria, 1980, p.52). It is intended that the work be viewed alone or in the company of a small group of people. In a similar way to 'Sun Tunnels', 'The Lightning Field' is intended to become a part of the landscape over time. W.A.L. Beeren commented that "the work merges with the natural surroundings, consisting in this case of the flat desert stretching out to a horizon of mountain ridges. Sky and light become involved in it to an equally large extent". (Beeren, W.A.L., from Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen Catalogue, 1985, p. 12).

'The Lightning Field' was to be the last of de Maria's work sited in the desert. Other works include 'The Broken Kilometre' (1979) (fig. 15), a piece sited in an old restored

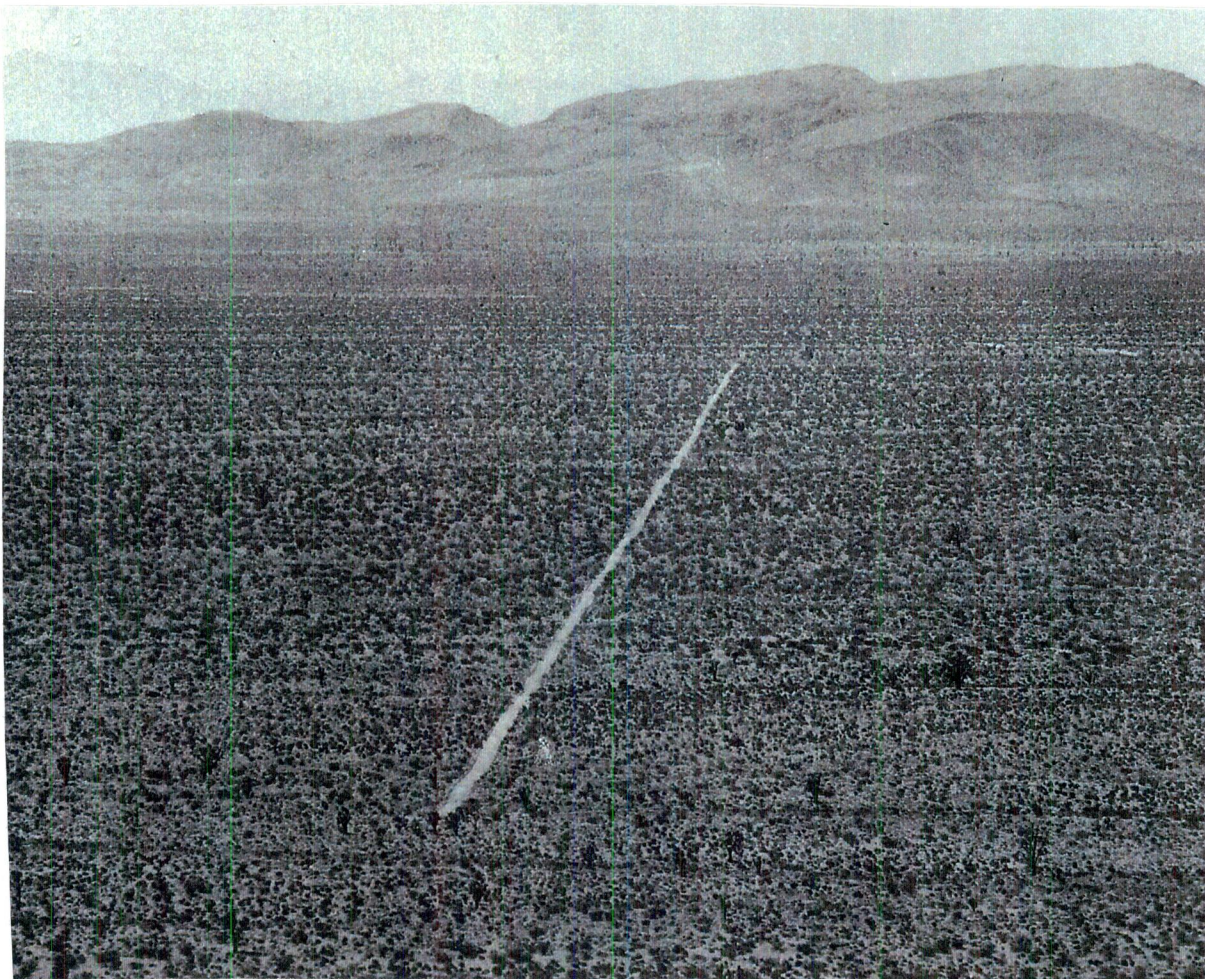
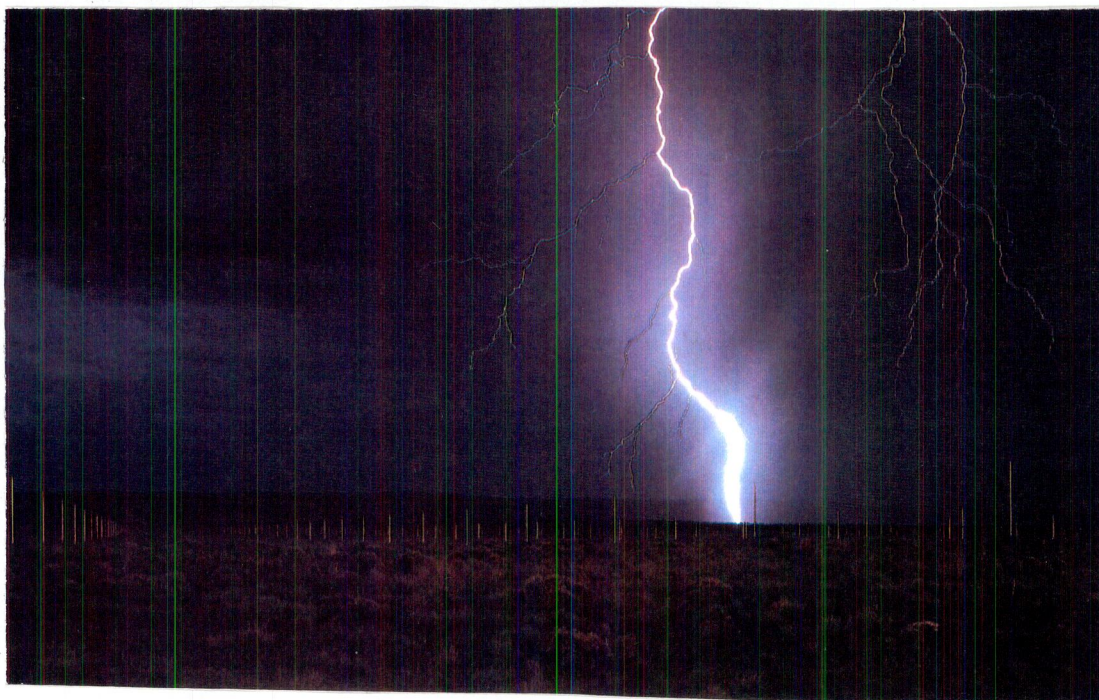


Figure 13. *Las Vegas Piece*, (1969)

Figure 14. *The Lightning Field*, (1977)





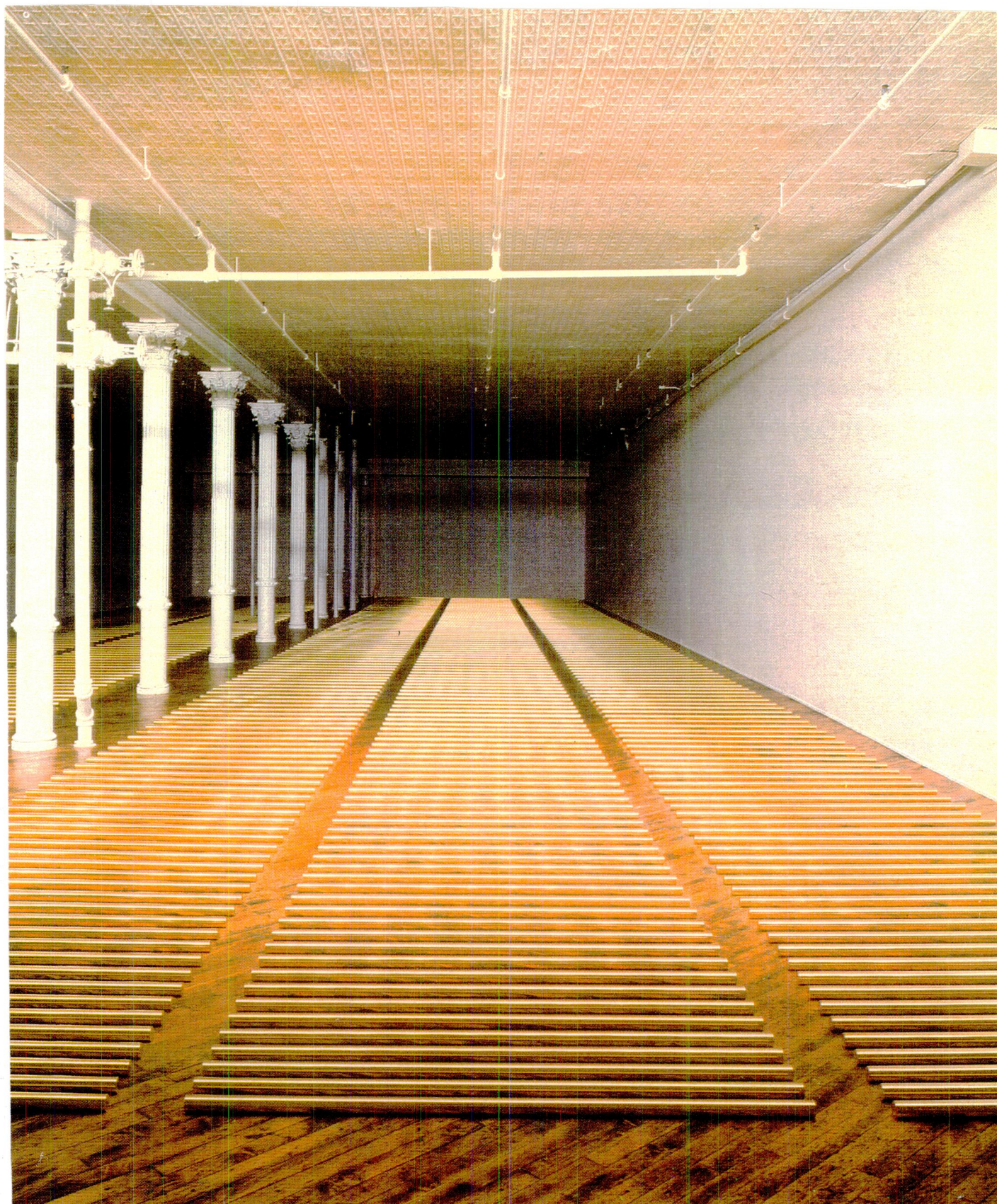


Figure 15. *The Broken Kilometre*, (1979)

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warehouse in New York city that consists of 500 brass rods, 'A Computer Which Will Solve Every Problem in the World / 3-12 Polygon' (1984), a piece that consists of ten rows of polished steel rods arranged horizontally on the floor, and 'The Vertical Kilometre', which, to the viewer, is nothing more than a stone cover on the ground. Although only the top of the rod can be seen in this piece it induces the viewer to imagine the space under the stone cover to a depth of one kilometre.

Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria are four artists who were working at different periods of the twentieth century. They are united by their attraction to the desert of West America. They each created art that was a response to the vastness and timelessness of this landscape, to which they were drawn. Although they worked almost fifty years apart, they dealt with similar aims and concepts.

CHAPTER TWO

One of the most striking aspects of desert landscape, for me personally, is the immense feeling of timelessness there. I was intensely aware of a landscape that has remained almost the same since its creation. It is this feeling of timelessness that fascinates me and I wish to discuss and explore the means these four artists used to express it, as it was part of their response to the ancient surroundings of the desert.

Nancy Holt wrote about this feeling of timelessness,

The feeling of timelessness is overwhelming 'Time' is not just a mental concept or a mathematical abstraction in the desert. The rocks in the distance are ageless, they have been deposited in layers over hundreds of thousands of years. 'Time' takes on a physical presence. Only ten miles north of 'Sun Tunnels' are the Bonneville Salt Flats, one of the few areas in the world where you can see the curvature of the earth. Being part of that kind of landscape and walking on earth that has surely never been walked on before evokes a sense of being on this planet rotating in space, in universal time. (Holt, 1977, p.35).

Timelessness is, fundamentally, a concept that must be experienced first hand. The Land artists of the 1960s used an art form that brought its audience out into the landscape and experience the work as part of that landscape. Painters, however, had the task of rendering this concept in two dimensions. By comparing and contrasting their methods, I hope to gain a deeper insight into the work of each artist, and to examine how different methods were used for similar effects.

The use of light to express this concept of timelessness is a common factor in the work of all four artists. Georgia O'Keeffe and Nancy Holt, the two women artists, were intensely

aware of the brilliant light and comparisons can be drawn between their responses to it. Georgia O'Keeffe's use of dramatic lighting highlights details at a great distance. In her painting "View from my Studio" (New Mexico, 1930) (fig. 16) the colours in her landscape range from intense orange to a tranquil blue, giving the impression of a landscape stretching back, from morning into evening, a day eternally passing. Similarly, Nancy Holt makes the passing of time in her work 'Sun Tunnels' with the use of light, both cast from the Sun and the Moon. This piece reflects the passing of time not only daily, but yearly. She has commented that the idea for 'Sun Tunnels' came to her while in the desert watching the Sun rising and setting, keeping the time of the earth (fig. 17). "By marking the yearly extreme positions of the Sun 'Sun Tunnels' indicates the 'cyclical time' of the solar year". (Holt, 1977, p.36).

In 1994 Barbara C. Matilsky wrote,

One aspect of Environmental Art is how it continuously changes as it responds to life's cycles and rhythms. Nature sometimes determines the form and content of a work. Once completed, the piece continues to evolve in tandem with natural processes. As a result art and nature merge and become indistinguishable from each other. (Matilsky, 1994, p.3).

This is a useful observation in interpreting Holt's work; in this way, Nancy Holt's 'Sun Tunnels' has, itself, become part of the timelessness of the landscape. As she herself wrote, "I like to think about the works existing alone like 'Sun Tunnels' surviving time and weather in the desert". (Castle, 1982, p.88).

Walter de Maria also uses the aspect of light to create a feeling of timelessness in his work, 'The Lightning Field'. Like 'Sun Tunnels' and most Land Art, his piece changes



Figure 16. *View From My Studio*, (1930)

Figure 17. *Sun Tunnels*, (1976)



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with time, the steel rods reflecting the light of the desert. Sarah Vowell, writer and critic recalls her first hand experience of 'The Lightning Field':

The pink and red sunset, which we watch from the cabin's porch, illuminates the rods, turning from white. This shift in temperature and light is a material in the piece as much as the metal spikes. 'The Lightning Field' doesn't just take up space, so much measure the variance of light as hand you the experience. This is the gift of the place. (Vowell, 1995, p.13).

In an attempt to express this concept of timelessness, Walter de Maria's piece evolves with time, evidently reacting very flexibly to the modulations of nature. It cannot be detached from the ground, the range of mountains or the desert wind.

When discussing the changes brought by time to Walter de Maria's lightning field similar depictions of change become apparent in some of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings. As Sarah Vowell wrote,

De Maria was in so many ways attempting to bypass Monet's art world, the gallery system's insistence on commodification, the easel painter's attempts at representation. But Monet forces us to recognise the instability of the visible world through his serial views of haystacks. To do so involves admitting that something as solid and permanent as Rouen Cathedral - which, like the haystacks, he painted at different times of day - changes as each second goes by: a grain of the masonry blows away, a shadow disappears for keeps, a speck of dust lodges in the eye of a stone saint. (Vowell, 1995, p.13).

In the same way Georgia O'Keeffe represents the passing of time and forces us to recognise the instability of the visible world, even such a timeless world as the desert, through her serial views of Ranchos Church in Taos and of the patio wall of her Abiquin home. The sky changes, shadows change and colours change. They are a reflection on the changes wrought by time (figs. 18 and 19).

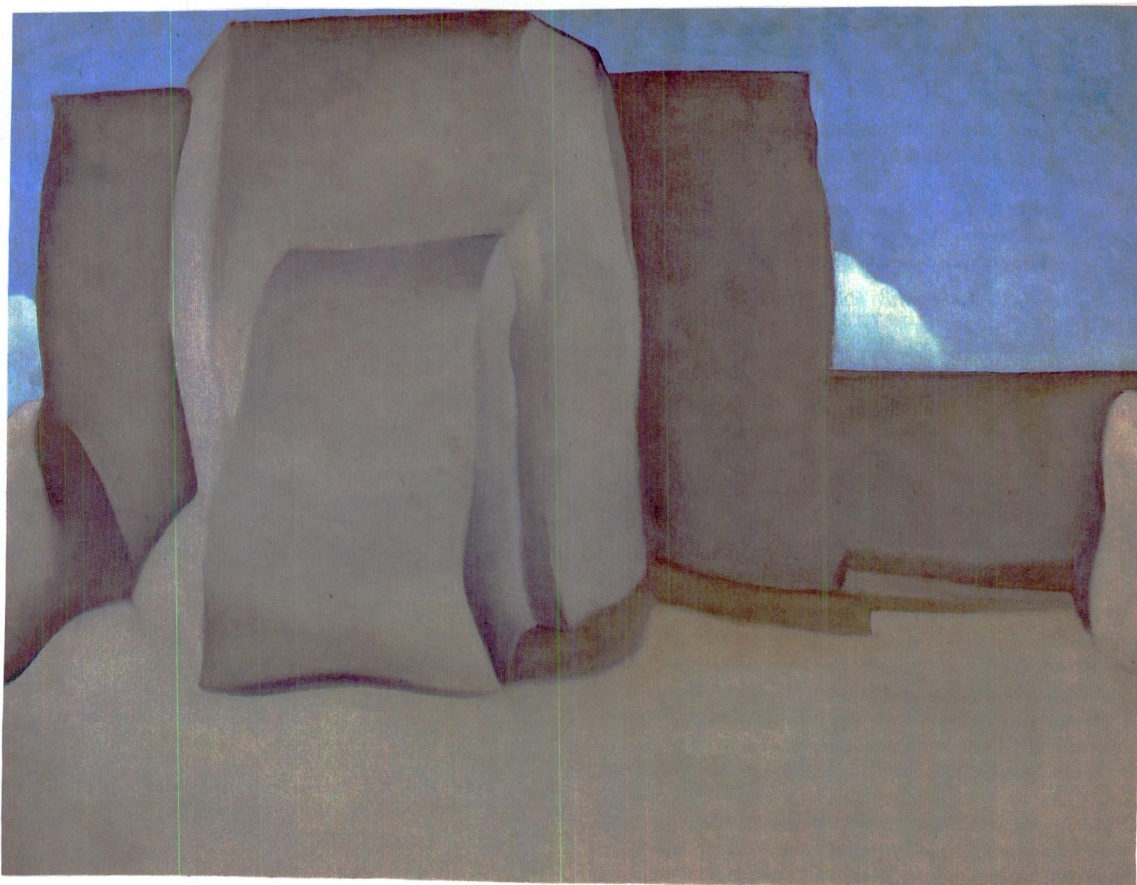


Figure 18. *Ranchos Church No. 1*, (1929)

Figure 19. *Ranchos Church, Taos, New Mexico*, (1930)



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While land artists used their art to highlight the experience of the desert itself, painters have to use different means of expressing timelessness. Instead of locating their work in the desert, they had the difficult task of bringing the desert to us. Both Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley often used colour to express the experience of light and the natural colours of the desert posed challenges that the artists solved in different ways. Georgia O'Keeffe's landscapes contained bold, intense and unmoving areas of colour whereas Hartley's landscapes were turbulent and powerful, full of motion and abstract forms. "Landscape painting is a way of remembering and Hartley shaped the land and the light like diary entries of his moods and wishes. The whole body of his work was swept forward and backward by emotional gusts", wrote Stephen Madoff. (Madoff, 1989, p.82). O'Keeffe's landscapes suggest, to me, a place unchanged and unchanging while Hartley's give an impression of a windswept wilderness in constant motion. 'Dark Mesa and Pink Sky' (1930) (fig. 20) by O'Keeffe and 'Landscape, New Mexico' (1923) (fig. 21) by Hartley highlight this contrast.

Of Hartley's painting 'Last of New England - The Beginning of New Mexico' (1920) (fig. 22) Madoff writes, "The place he painted seems caught between winter and spring - or rather captured right when winter gives way and the sky is still marked by harsh light". (Madoff, 1989, p.82). With his powerful and sweeping brushstrokes, seen in this painting and also in his 'Recollections' series (1922-23) he shapes the land and the light (fig. 8). The mountains and clouds look almost alive and are dragging across the sky. His powerful use of light highlights the contours of the clouds and mountains against the dark sky. In

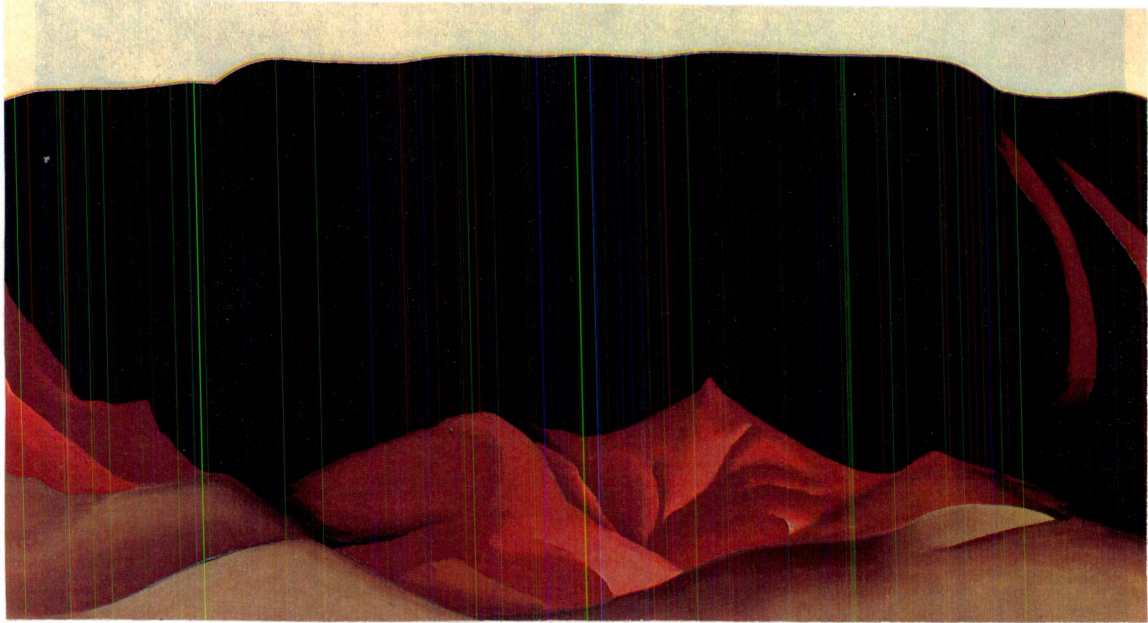
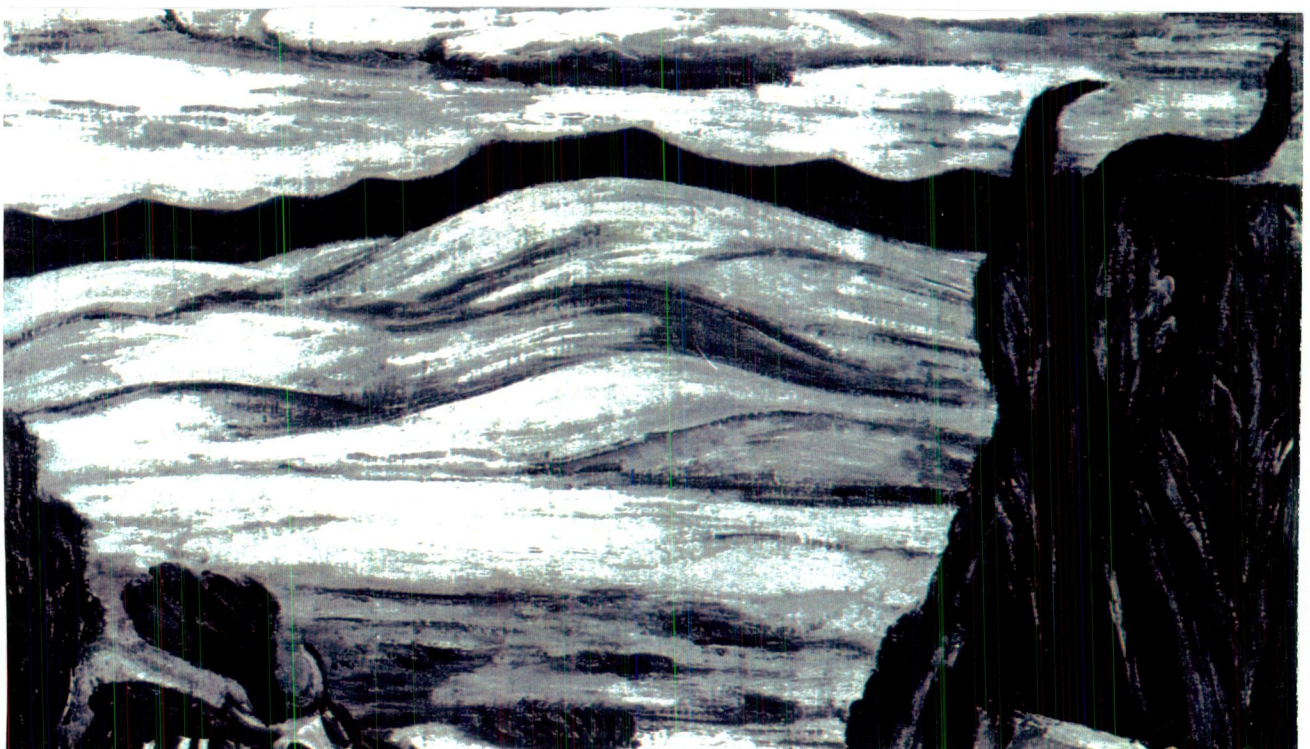


Figure 20. *Dark Mesa and Pink Sky*, (1930)

Figure 21. *Landscape, New Mexico*, (1923)





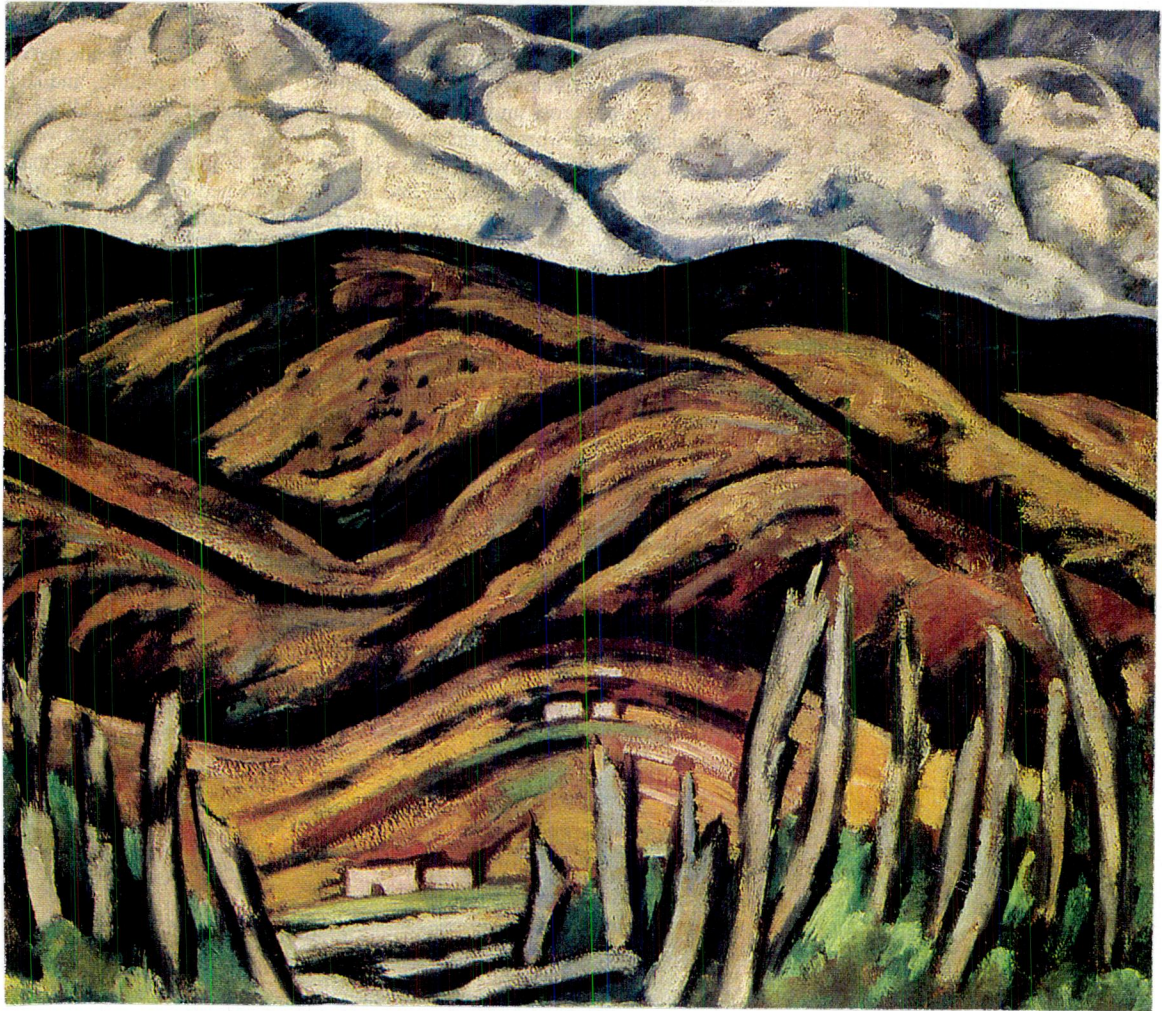


Figure 22. *Last of New England - The Beginning of New Mexico*, (1923)

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this way, Hartley captures movement and the passing of time much as Georgia O'Keeffe captures a day eternally passing in "View from My Studio" (1930) (fig. 16).

Another way in which the means used by each artist can be compared and contrasted is their use of form to express the timelessness of a desert landscape. As mentioned earlier, Marsden Hartley used his brushstrokes to shape the clouds and mountains. Georgia O'Keeffe similarly created bold, exaggerated forms to express a landscape unchanging with time. But both painters can be contrasted here in their use of form. In order to express a timeless landscape, Marsden Hartley tended to paint large sculptural forms lacking in detail. It has been suggested that he was amazed at the 'clarity of detail made possible even at vast distances by the brilliant light' (Scott, 1988, p.68) yet none of his desert landscapes include any degree of detail. On the light that he experienced there, Hartley said, "this country is very beautiful and also difficult it is not a country of light on things. It is a country of things in light, therefore it is a country of form, with a new presentation of light as problem". (Hartley, M., from Eldredge, C., 1993, p.104). At this point Hartley's art can be likened to the sculptural forms used by the land artists, Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria (fig. 23). Yet, in contrast, Georgia O'Keeffe's desert landscapes contained forms that were often minutely detailed. Her mountains show deep crevices and valleys where rivers once ran. It is important here to mention her use of animals' skulls and bones to express, amongst other things, the timelessness that she experienced in the desert. Of the bones she wrote,

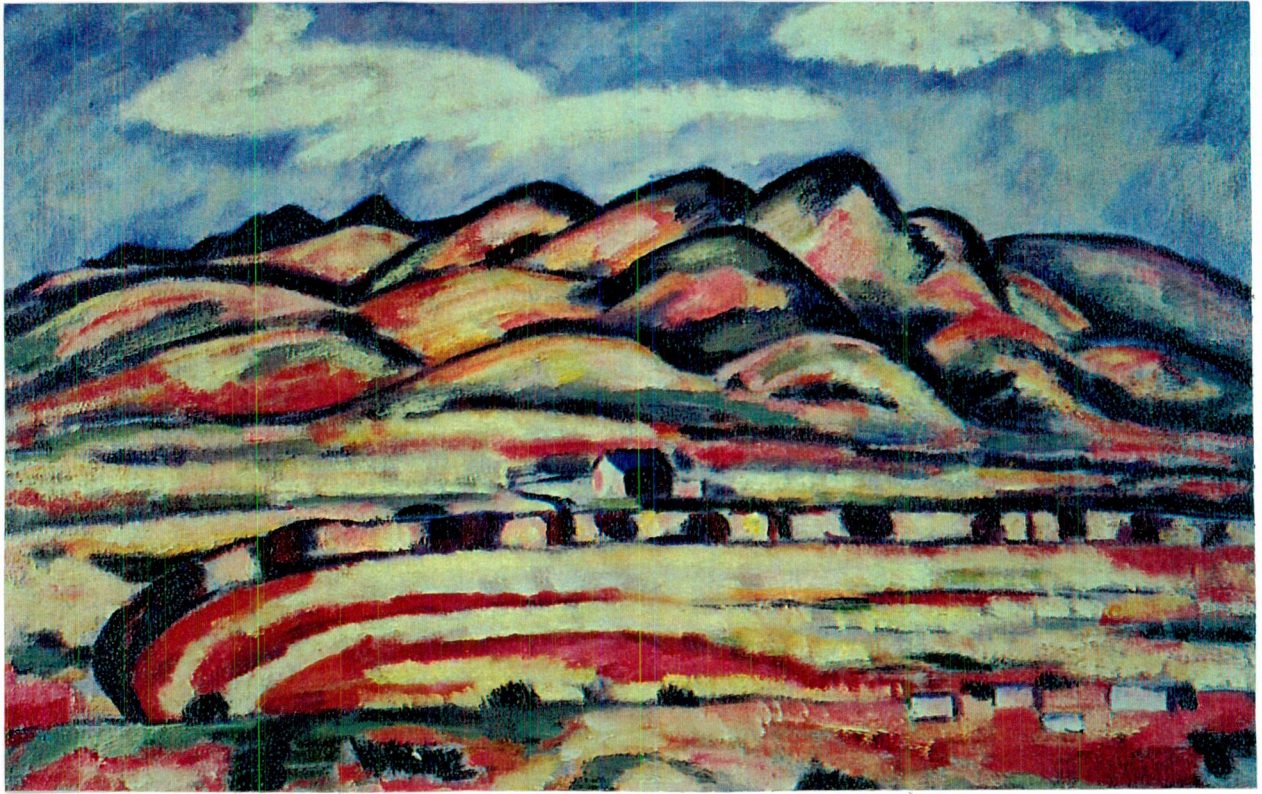


Figure 23. *New Mexico Landscape*, (1919)

the bones are as beautiful as anything I know. To me they are strangely more living than the animals walking around - hair, eyes, and all, with their tails switching. The bones seem to cut sharply to the centre of something that is keenly alive on the desert even though it is vast and empty and untouchable - and knows no kindness with all its beauty. (Castro, 1986, p.131).

In this way she eliminates death, bringing the dead to life and, as seen in her painting 'From the Faraway Nearby' (1937) she depicts them hovering above the distant and vast land. These bones are created in minute detail, unchanging, forever, in an unchanging landscape.

There has been much speculation surrounding O'Keeffe's use of skulls and bones as subjects in her paintings (Eldredge, 1991, p.201-2). Critics, both in her time and today, have read various meanings into their significance, suggesting that they are symbols of death or that, perhaps, the empty pelvises are lamentations of childlessness, symbols of menopause or an intimation of a withering creativity. Perhaps, critics suggest, they are a response to the problems of her time or an awareness of her own mortality. O'Keeffe refused to comment on the imagery directly, only saying, "they are symbols of the desert, but nothing more". (quote from Eldredge, 1991, p.201-2).

Inevitably, the forms used by Walter de Maria and Nancy Holt are very different to those used by Marsden Hartley and Georgia O'Keeffe. The forms used by the Land artists are determined by the climate and the place in which they are sited. Holt declared that; "'Sun Tunnels' can exist only in this particular place - the work evolved out of its site", (Holt, 1977, p.35), and de Maria has explained that "The land is not the setting for the work but

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a part of the work". (De Maria, 1980, p.52). The forms used by painters are determined, to a great extent, by personal expression. Painters, traditionally, had but a two-dimensional surface to work with, yet the Land artists explored the seemingly infinite number of ways that nature could be interpreted and, in the case of Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, the forms they used were determined largely by the physical forms of the land.

In discussing form, the materials used by the artist is very relevant. Nancy Holt wrote about 'Sun Tunnels',

The colour and substance of the tunnels is the same as the land that they are a part of I am attracted to materials that have a time-span beyond our human life. It isn't that I'm trying to build monuments that will last forever, I'm interested in conjuring up a sense of time that is longer than the built in obsolescence we have all around us. I want the feeling that it will last beyond my lifetime. (Castle, 1982, p.88).

Each of the Sun Tunnels are made of concrete seven inches thick and steel rings are welded around the areas where the holes are cut.

Likewise, Walter de Maria in 'The Lightning Field' uses materials that are solid and enduring steel and brass. In 1984 W.A.L. Beeren wrote on this topic:

His materials are solid and serious. Every work demands complete attention, a lot of time and effort. That means somewhat more than saying that looking at a work of art takes time. 'Time' is requisitioned here, extorted on pain of 'seeing nothing'. 'Time' is part of the work of art. 'Time' for 'time's sake' is (re-)turned to human experience. 'Time' as a value. 'Time' to look and experience, 'time' that is not lost. (Beeren, in Museum Boymans, 1985, p.10).

In this way, the pieces by Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria not only express time and timelessness but time becomes part of the experience of the work itself. In chapter four I will discuss how these pieces have survived in the desert environment.

In this chapter I have discussed some of the ways in which these four artists expressed the timelessness of a desert landscape and I have established the fact that this concept was a factor in their desert art. Using light, form, colour and detail each artist attempted to capture this unchanging wilderness. The concept of timelessness remained a factor to be dealt with, from the beginning of the twentieth century and into the 1960s, yet the land artists, with 1960s technology, were able to bring their art into the desert and site it there indefinitely while the painters of earlier in the century were still exhibiting in a gallery situation. The changing relationship between the artists and the landscape can clearly be seen here over the period of only about fifty years. Each artist, whether painter or land artist, used light, form, detail and colour to express their experience of timelessness. However, the land artists used materials other than canvas and paint.

CHAPTER THREE

Any artist working from and in the desert is immediately faced with the difficulty of how to express such a vast and uniform landscape. After experiencing the desert myself I became interested in the solutions by artists of how to frame such space. In 1983 Nancy Holt wrote, about working in the desert:

I pick up on the environment. I like to work with the site, with what's there It's like a drawing in space, there's a lot more emptiness than material. You see, that's interesting to me; I make all these structures just to emphasise empty space. (Holt, 1977, p.35).

This chapter sets out to discuss the methods used by each artist to express this boundless desert, their solutions to this problem. Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, as is characteristic of land artists, deal more with first hand experience of vastness, whereas Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley solve problems of how to express this space on a two-dimensional surface.

As the desert landscape of the American West is so enormous in scale, each artist was faced with the problem of how to 'frame' such unending skies and infinite mountain ranges. The landscape painters at the beginning of the twentieth century traditionally worked within a frame situation. Their canvas, being of limited size, could only depict a restricted amount of this space, thus excluding much of the landscape. In the 1960s, however, the land artists were not limited to the expanse of the canvas and utilised the entire landscape as part of their art work. 'Sun Tunnels' and 'The Lightning Field' serve more as frames than works of art, the landscape being the art within the frame.

Yet, Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria were also faced with the task of 'framing' this landscape in some way. Nancy Holt wrote;

I wanted to bring the vast space of the desert back to human scale The panoramic views of the landscape is too overwhelming to take in without usual reference points. The view blurs out rather than sharpens. Through the tunnels parts of the landscape are framed and come into focus. (Holt, 1977, p.34).

In this way, looking through Sun Tunnels, the work acts as a frame (fig. 24).

In 'The Lightning Field' Walter de Maria uses the 400 steel poles to frame the surroundings (fig. 25). Writer Sarah Vowell describes her experience of this feature of the work, "The rods frame the desert and chop it into pieces. The view of the surrounding hills through any two poles is singular, unrepeated. To move through the configuration is to confront the subtle variables in the land - the pale green plants and rocks". (Vowell, 1995, p.14). Like Nancy Holt he uses his piece as a means of dividing up a section of desert in order to allow the viewer experience it more clearly.

Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, being restricted to a canvas, inevitably encountered this problem of how to 'frame' such an immense landscape. Unlike Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, they were required to ignore vast amounts of the landscape in order to make art from any of it. In a discussion on how the geophysical land forms in New Mexico influenced O'Keeffe's compositions of the 1930's and 1940's, Jane Downer Collins suggested that Georgia O'Keeffe chose "a frontal viewpoint, usually on the same level as the subject rather than high above or below, so that features of the landscape lie parallel to the picture plane and a sense of deep space is compressed". She also suggests

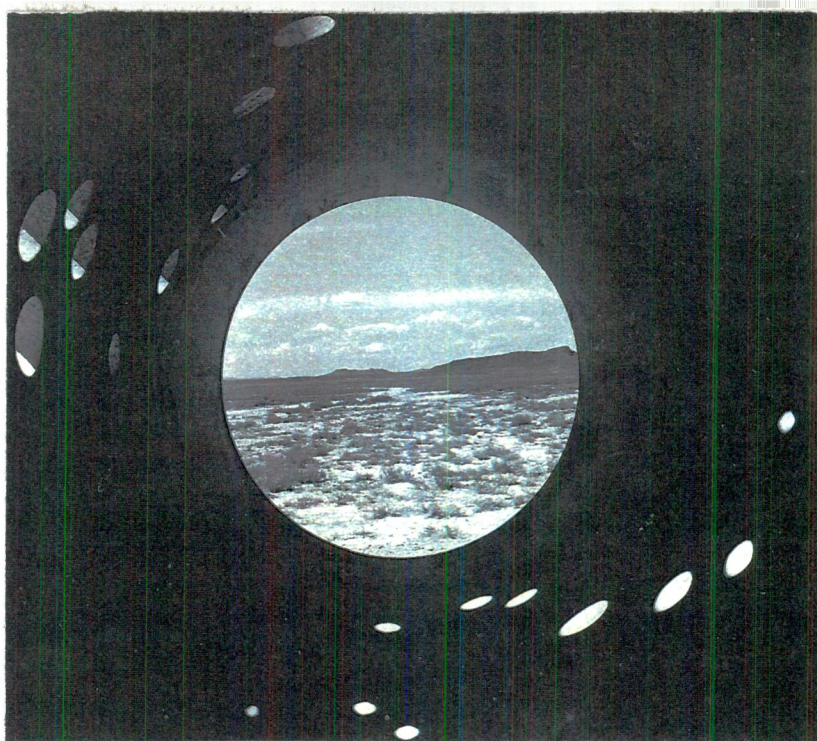


Figure 24. *Sun Tunnels*, (1976)

Figure 25. *The Lightning Field*, (1977)





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4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results have significant implications for the field of study and may lead to further research in this area.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the main findings and provides a final statement on the importance of the research.

that O'Keeffe excludes "a middle ground and sometimes both a foreground and middle ground so that recession into depth is kept to a minimum". (From Castro, 1986, p.106). In these ways O'Keeffe tackled the problem of containing infinite space on a two-dimensional surface.

But there is an interesting comparison between the way Georgia O'Keeffe and Nancy Holt use 'holes' in their desert work, through which parts of the landscape are framed. In her paintings from the 1940's, Georgia O'Keeffe uses the natural holes in bones and skulls in a similar way to which Nancy Holt uses them in her 'Sun Tunnels'. They use the holes as a means of framing the desert. Of her use of the holes as framing devices, Nancy Holt wrote, "But once inside the tunnels, the work encloses - surrounds - and there is a framing of the landscape through the ends of the tunnels and through the holes". (Holt, 1977, p.34). She later wrote,

You look through a set of holes in thick stone walls. That does something to the landscape you're seeing. It's about making structures to focus our perceptions, channelling them and giving them a depth and also a usual disorientation in space, that we don't normally have an opportunity to experience. (Castle, 1992, p.84).

Georgia O'Keeffe, on her interest in the holes said,

I like empty spaces. Holes can be very expressive when I started painting the pelvis bones I was most interested in the holes in the bones. What I saw through them - particularly the blue from holding them up in the sun against the sky as one is apt to do when one seems to have more sky than earth in one's world. (O'Keeffe, G., "About Painting Desert Bones" from Eldredge, C., 1993, p.205).

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She went on to say, "They were most wonderful against the Blue - that Blue that will always be there as it is now after all man's destruction is finished". (O'Keeffe, G., "About Painting Desert Bones", from Eldredge, C., 1993, p.205). The hole in the bones inspired the Pelvis Series of 1943, in the depression of World War II. A response to the troubles of the time, it has been suggested that the tranquil blues in this series were intended, by O'Keeffe, as a sign of peace. (Eldredge, 1993, p.205).

It is not only stretching mountain ranges and vast sand plains that are framed through these holes. In 'Sun Tunnels', Nancy Holt uses the holes in the concrete tunnels, which are arranged in accordance with the constellations, to frame the sky and the stars. "As you move through the tunnels the moon and stars and planets can be lined up and framed through each hole. Looking up through the holes on a bright night is like seeing the circles of light during the day, only inverted". (Holt, 1977, p.36) (fig. 26). Georgia O'Keeffe also used the holes in pelvis bones to frame the sky. In 'Pelvis I (Pelvis with Blue)', 1944, she has used the natural hole in the bone as a frame against the infinite blue sky, capturing a rare cloud in an infinite blue sky (fig. 27).

However, it is not only the holes in these bones that Georgia O'Keeffe utilises to express the vastness of this landscape. Before she began focusing on the holes in the bones she painted many pictures with the whole skull or pelvis placed in front of the vast and distant landscape. 'From the Faraway Nearby', (1937) (fig. 3), 'Ram's Head with Hollyhock' (1935), and 'Summer Days' (1936) are examples of this kind. In her works 'Pelvis with Moon' (1943) (fig. 28) and 'Pelvis with Pederal' (1943) (fig. 29) amongst others from

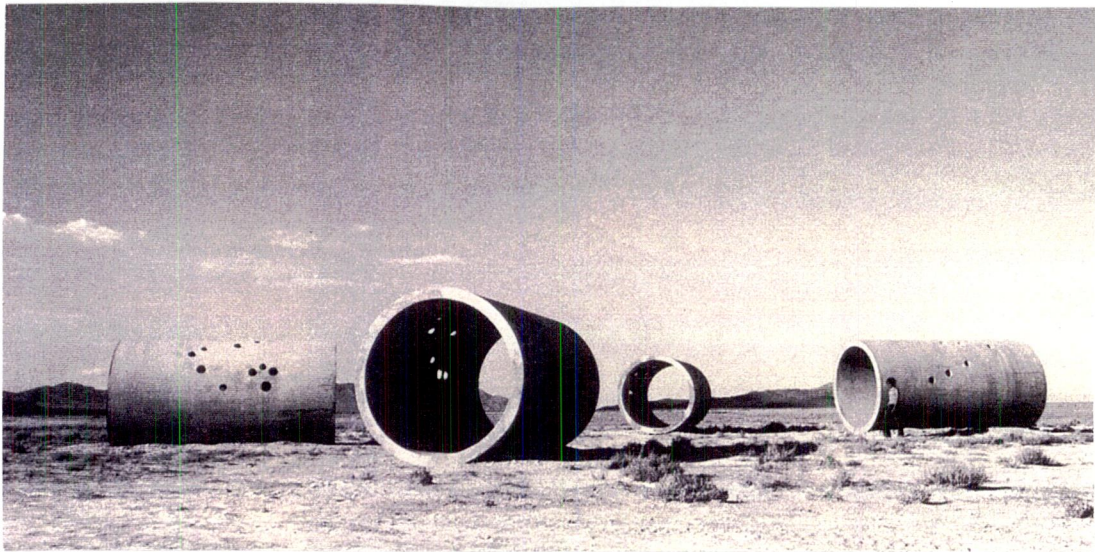


Figure 26. *Sun Tunnels*, (1976)

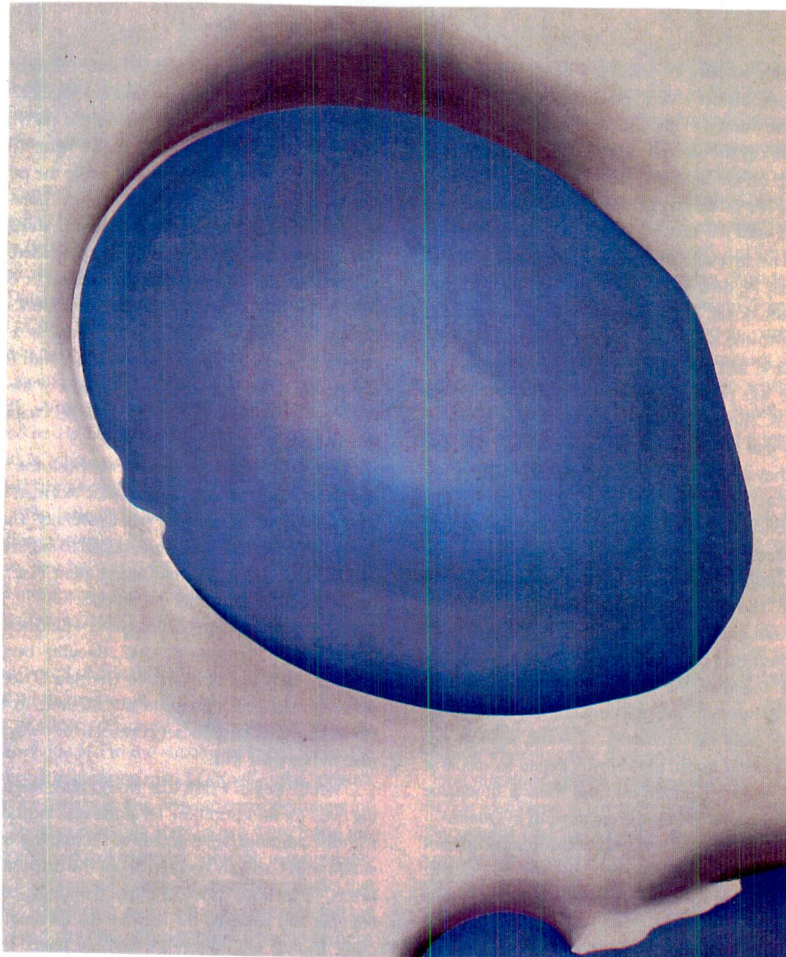


Figure 27. *Pelvis I (Pelvis with Blue)*, (1944)



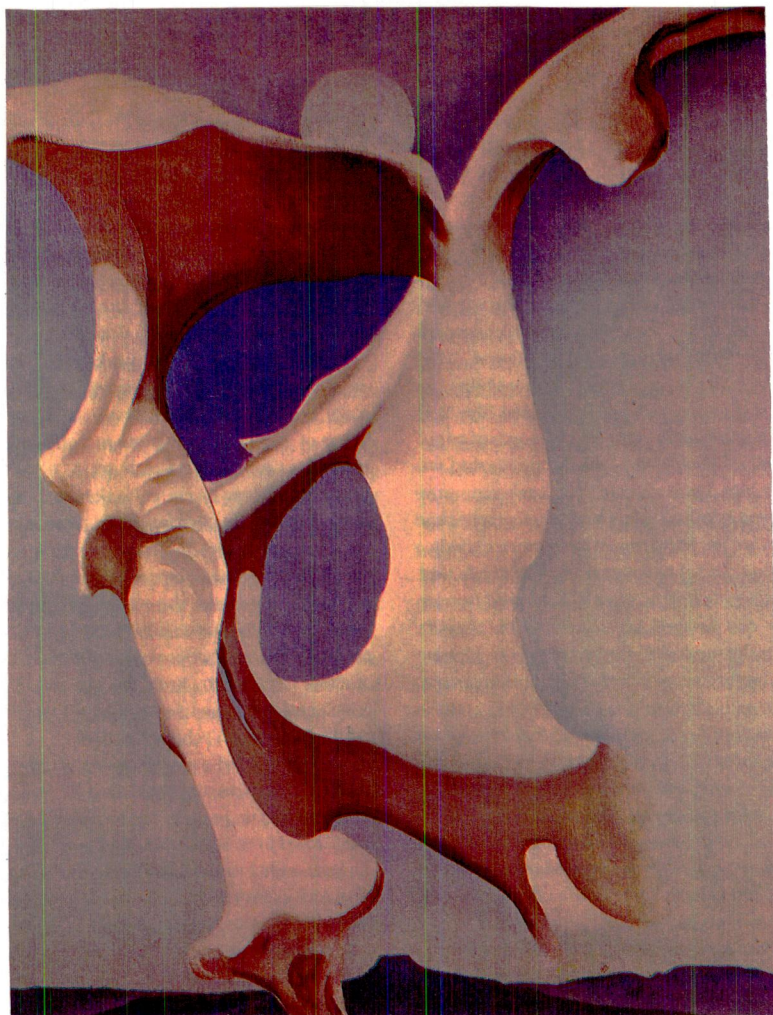


Figure 28. *Pelvis with Moon*, (1943)

Figure 29. *Pelvis with Pedernal*, (1943)





the Pelvis series, we can see how she also used the extreme close-up of the entire bone against a distant background, using the natural gaps to 'chop up' and 'frame' the landscape and sky. In this regard, she can be compared to Walter de Maria. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter he uses the steel poles to chop and frame the landscape in 'The Lightning Field'. These poles, spread over one mile by one kilometre, also serve as a connection between the vast land and the infinite sky. "Space is also structured vertically, for the poles link the sky to the ground". (Capasso, 1985, p.75). Similarly, the looming skull and pelvic bones in O'Keeffe's paintings serve to link the sky to the ground (fig. 30).

O'Keeffe's use of crosses can also be seen in this way. In 'Black Cross, New Mexico' (1929) (fig. 31) we can see how the large and looming cross in the foreground divides up the landscape and serves to frame both the land and the sky. With her use of skulls, bones and crosses, Georgia O'Keeffe divides up the vast landscape and brings parts of it 'into focus' in the same way as Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria.

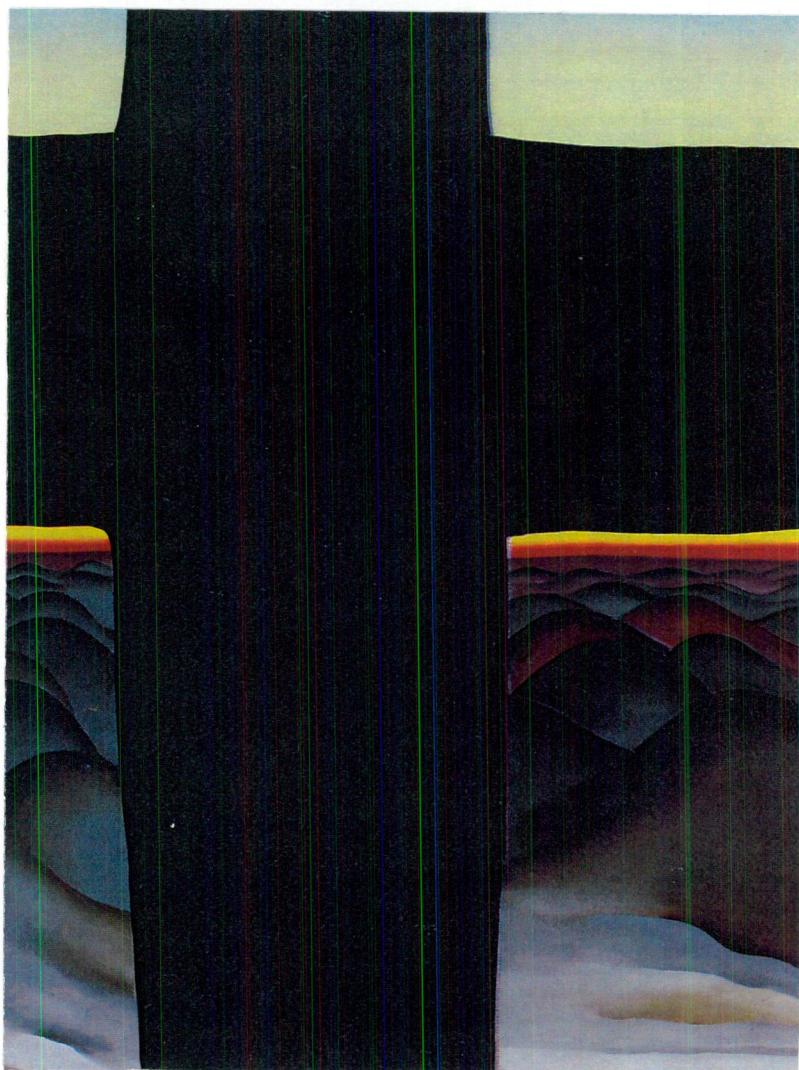
The enormity of this bleak place creates a dilemma; this is well captured by Eric Cameron,

In the desert, if one walks a mile one is still effectively in the same place. If one turns around one is still effectively facing in the same direction. If one walks in a straight line or a circle it makes no matter. If one turns one's head the view is the same, without landmarks to be anywhere is to be nowhere.....Before one can move in any direction one must create another direction to look away from or move towards. Before one can go anywhere one must create a somewhere-else so that one will know when one is still not there. (Cameron, E., in Capasso, 1985, p.74).



Figure 30. *The Lightning Field*, (1977)

Figure 31. *Black Cross, New Mexico*, (1929)



There is a common thread that runs through the work of several land artists working in the desert in the 1960s. Along with Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, leading land artists Michael Heizer, Robert Smithson and James Turrell all created artworks that attempted to reorient man in this vast environment.

In order to establish a position in nature environmental artists developed various strategies for reorientation. A dissatisfaction with traditional artistic means of creating man-nature relationships (i.e. landscape painting and landscape architecture) led to the development of completely new formal vocabularies, drawing elements from Minimalism, primitive archaeoastronomic architecture, scientific procedure and apparatus, and Conceptual Art. (Capasso, 1985, p.74).

The strategy used by both Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, in the Environmental Art of the 1960s, involves the placement of objects in the landscape to act as fixed points in chaos. 'Mile Long Drawing' (1968) and 'Las Vegas Piece' (1969) by Walter de Maria consist of very simple geometric marks or slashes made upon the desert floor. In the article 'Environmental Art Strategies for Reorientation in Nature', Nicholas J. Capasso discusses how these marks on the desert floor serve to orient the viewer on two levels. Firstly, he suggests, that they help orient the viewers by direct experience with them - walking along them, towards them or away from them. Secondly, by indirect experience - through the use of photographs. "Although the use of photographs is less effective as direct experience of the piece, the orienting effect can still be grasped", he explains. (Capasso, 1985, p.75).

'The Lightning Field' can also be seen as a fixed point in a vast landscape. From a distance it works, as his other two pieces do, in orientating the viewer. From within, the grid of poles, however, acts as a more complex orientation structure. About this

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Nicholas J. Capasso writes "when one stands in the grid's centre, the steel poles seem to extend indefinitely into space, acting not as single referential points but as a rational organising system which enables one to move through space without ever losing orientation". (Capasso, 1985, p.75).

Nancy Holt's 'Sun Tunnels' act in a similar way. Set in Utah's Great Salt Desert, they too serve as a fixed point in chaos. However, they serve to orient the viewer not only in the desert landscape but also in cosmic space and time. By marking the earth's orbit around the sun and also the motion of light and shadow cast from the sun and moon they orient us in the vastness of time and space. As Nancy Holt herself wrote "the centre of the work becomes the centre of the world". (Holt, N., quoted in Castle, T., 1982, p.85).

As Nicholas J. Capasso has suggested, it was a dissatisfaction with traditional artistic means of creating man-nature relationships, such as landscape painting, that led to the development of a new art form - 'Environmental Art'. The art of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, in the early half of the twentieth century is, ultimately, in stark contrast to that of the Land artists of the 1960s. As regards orientation in this vast environment the painters could only use their art to express the scale of the desert instead of demanding that the viewer experience it directly. When examining the methods used by both Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley to create 'fixed points in chaos' it is interesting that they both created fixed points *within* their paintings.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Union.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

5. The fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

6. The sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

7. The seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

8. The eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

9. The ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

10. The tenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

11. The eleventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Finance on the state of the Finance.

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23. The twenty-third part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

24. The twenty-fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the State on the state of the State.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Georgia O'Keeffe's use of bone, skull and cross serve as a means of framing the vast landscape. But as well as 'chopping up' and 'framing' the landscape, they become a fixed point within the painting itself. Instead of attempting to paint the landscape in all its immensity she presents these skulls, bones, crosses and flowers - see 'Mule's Skull with Pink Poinsettias', (1937) (fig. 32) detailed and looming against a background of stretching desert vistas. For example, 'Black Cross with Red Sky' (1929), 'From the Faraway Nearby' (1937) (fig. 3) and 'Pelvis with Pedernal' (1943) (fig. 29). "For me, painting the crosses was a way of painting the country", wrote Georgia O'Keeffe. (O'Keeffe, G., quoted in Eldredge, C., 1993, p.114). Marsden Hartley, in his later 'New Mexico Recollections' (1923) does include a certain amount of foreground detail and also begins to include houses, churches and people. In 'Landscape, New Mexico' (1923) (fig. 21), 'Landscape No.5' (1922-23) and 'Landscape and Mountains' (1922-23), for example, the foreground detail serves as a focal point in the paintings, fixed objects against a background full of motion.

Yet many of Hartley's paintings do not try to orient the viewer. Many of his paintings, and indeed many of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings, employ techniques to express the scale of the landscape, instead of copying it faithfully. Some of these techniques include; a frontal viewpoint on the same level as the subject: 'Dark Mesa and Pink Sky' (1930) (fig. 30) by Georgia O'Keeffe. 'Cemetery, New Mexico' (1924) by Marsden Hartley; the exclusion of a foreground and sometimes a middle-ground so that recession into depth is kept at a minimum: 'Small Purple Hills' (1934) (fig. 33) by Georgia O'Keeffe. 'New Mexico Recollections No. 12' (1922-23) (fig. 34) - Marsden Hartley; and a tendency to



Figure 32. *Mule's Skull with Pink Poinsettias*, (1937)

Figure 33. *Small Purple Hills*, (1934)



1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject.

2. The second part is a detailed description of the methods used.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results obtained.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and a list of references.

5. The fifth part is a summary of the main points.

6. The sixth part is a list of the names of the authors.

7. The seventh part is a list of the names of the institutions.

8. The eighth part is a list of the names of the sponsors.

9. The ninth part is a list of the names of the reviewers.

10. The tenth part is a list of the names of the publishers.

simplify the appearance of the landscape: 'View From My Studio' (1930) by Georgia O'Keeffe. 'Landscape No. 5 (1922-23) by Marsden Hartley. Praising O'Keeffe's skill in expressing vastness, Sally Wilder says: "To me one of her fortes is scale. In 'Red Hills with white cloud', an oil painting done in 1937 that is 6 x 7 inches, she compressed the vastness of New Mexico into that tiny painting. That is the greatness of that use of scale". (Wilder, from Castro, 1986, p.57) (fig. 35).

Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria dealt with the concept of vastness by bringing the viewer out into the desert to experience it first hand. The scale of their pieces is in keeping with the scale of the desert. 'Sun Tunnels' consists of four tunnels, each measuring eighteen foot long and nine foot wide. 'The Lightning Field' is made up of four hundred lightning rods, each averaging twenty foot in height, that cover an area of almost one mile squared. To highlight the concept they used their pieces to frame the immense landscape which is "too overwhelming to take in without visual reference points". (Holt, 1977, p.37). These giant works of art also serve to orient the viewer in so vast a landscape. Although attempting to express such a large scale concept in two dimensions, Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley also employ techniques of 'framing' and 'orientating', often in remarkably similar ways.

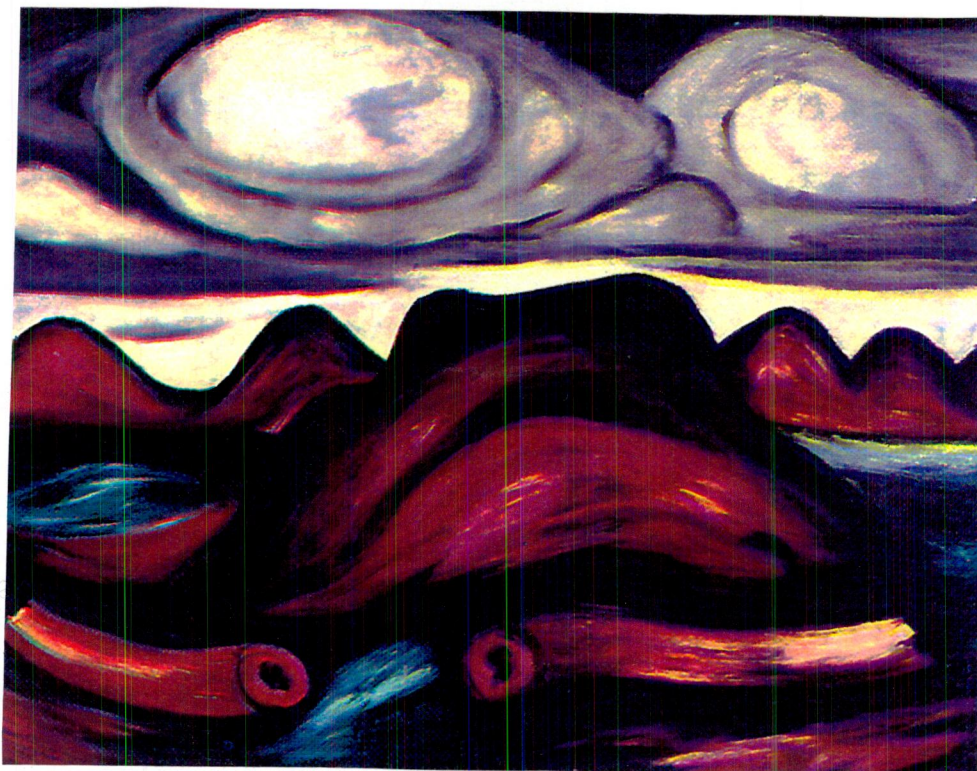


Figure 34. *New Mexico Recollections No. 12*, (1937)

Figure 35. *Red Hills with White Cloud*, (1937)



1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey, and the second section deals with the specific results of the survey.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the specific results of the survey, and the second section deals with the specific results of the survey.

3. The third part of the report deals with the specific results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the specific results of the survey, and the second section deals with the specific results of the survey.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The natural beauty of the desert landscape was to be another consideration in the work of all artists working in this environment. As well as expressing concepts of timelessness and vastness, the artists were inevitably faced with the problem of expressing the beauty of this unspoilt and, in the case of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, largely unseen wilderness. In my opinion, it is here that the art of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, being two painters working in the early half of the twentieth century contrasts most with that of land artists Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria and where the changing relationship between American artists and the American landscape can be seen most clearly.

One of the factors that led to the development of Land Art in the 1960s was many artists' dissatisfaction with landscape painting as a means of creating a man-nature relationship. (Matilsky, 1994, p.7). Instead, they turned to nature directly and developed an art form that brought art out of the gallery environment and into nature itself.

To many artists the urban scene and its powerful, controlling art market represented 'the establishment' while nature embodied and inspired the freedom to forge new directions in their work - For the first time since prehistoric peoples created earth and rock mounds and petroglyphs, large numbers of western artists began making art in, and from, the landscape These artists experimented with radically new ways of interpreting the natural world - its fragility, power, processes, textures and the essence of site. They also wanted to change perceptions of art and nature by framing and magnifying both innovatively. (Matilsky, 1994, p.8).

Ultimately the art of the land artists became more concerned with expressing ideas than aesthetic beauty.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of agriculture, the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of industry, and the third section deals with the results of the work in the field of commerce.

3. The third part of the report deals with the financial results of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the income of the organization, and the second section deals with the expenditure of the organization.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the administrative results of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the organization of the work, and the second section deals with the personnel of the organization.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the general conclusions of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general conclusions of the work, and the second section deals with the recommendations of the organization.

The art of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley was, traditionally, more concerned with aesthetics and less concerned with creating a man-nature relationship. Walter de Maria's 'Lightning Field', however, is a piece of Land Art that is intended to stimulate meditation and oneness with nature. In an essay on the work of Walter de Maria, W.A.L. Beeren wrote,

Typical of Walter de Maria's work is that abstraction and matter are polarised by being treated as entities and confronted by nature or culturally established environments. A consequence is that many of his works have abandoned the rigid constraints of the work of art (in more popular terms, they are not contained in a frame, or, do not stand on a pedestal). Art with de Maria consists of a situation in which the artefact addresses a location selected in a natural or architectural environment merges with it and by virtue of this unity becomes a work of art. (Beeren, W.A.L., From Museum Boymans - Van Beuningen Catalogue, 1985, p.10).

Nancy Holt's work is also concerned with the concepts of time, space and man-nature relationships.

Although neither Nancy Holt nor Walter de Maria were immediately concerned with the beauty of their art, some comparisons and contrasts can be made with the paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley when discussing the forms used in their pieces. In each case the forms used were dictated by the landscape. In Nancy Holt's 'Sun Tunnels' she used a natural ordering, "Sun Tunnels is positioned on the angles of the solstices at the latitude of the site". (Holt, 1977, p.34). And she describes how the configuration of the tunnels came about:

In Utah I made drawings and worked with scale models and large hoops in the desert, trying to make out different lengths, diameter, and placements, and doing photographic studies of the changes in light and shadow. I consulted with an astrophysicist at the University of Utah about the angles of the solstices at the latitude of my land. Because the land was not a perfect sphere, we had to calculate the height of the distant mountains and ridges

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PRESENT TIME

BY
JAMES OSGOOD

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and, using a computer, readjust the solstice angles from this data. The angles we arrived at formed an 'x' which worked as a configuration for the tunnels. (Holt, 1977, p.35).

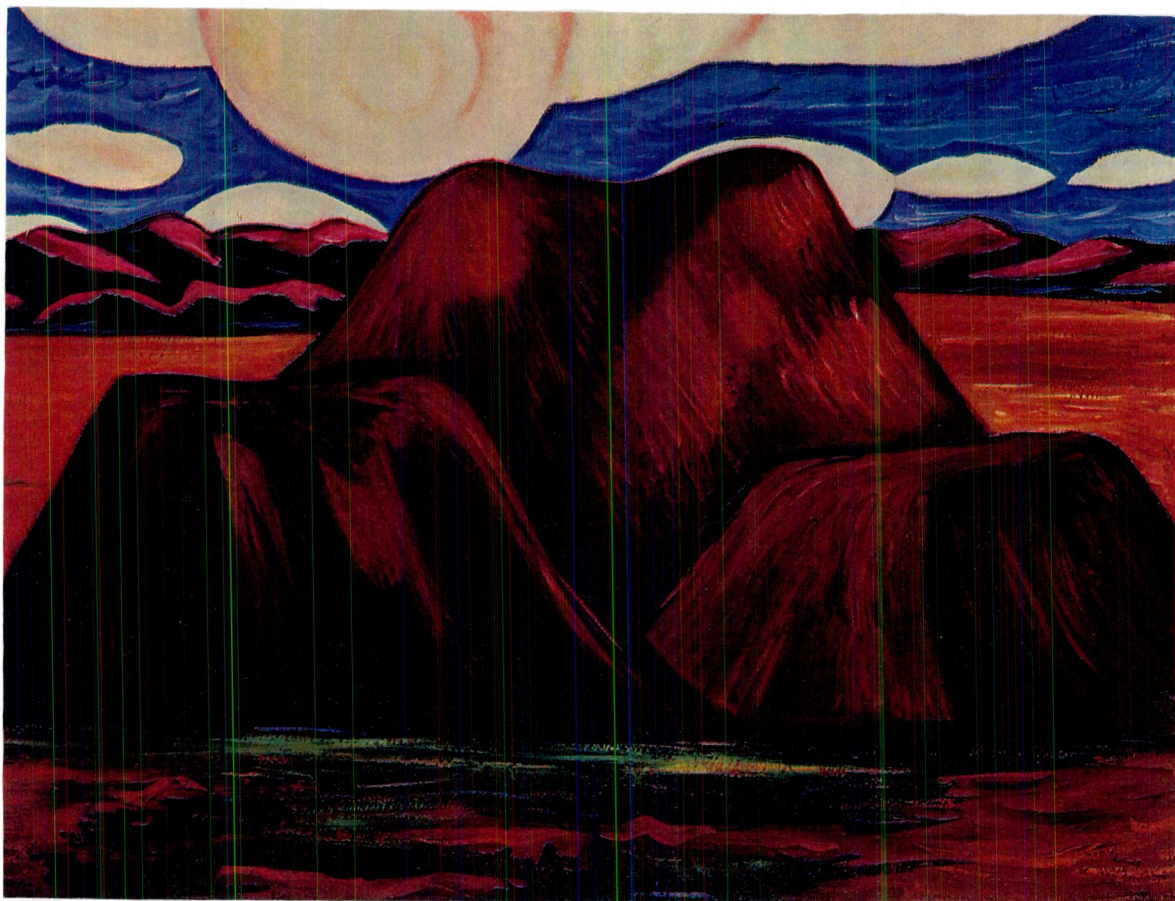
Walter de Maria's work is also concerned with the site, stating that 'the land is not a setting for the work but a part of the work'. (de Maria, 1980, p.52). His works developed out of an awareness of the site as much as a desire to enhance man-nature relationships. The lightning rods, in 'The Lightning Field' are interconnected with both the landscape and the lightning, which are also part of the environment in a highly concrete manner, an art-work that involves both earth and sky yet intrudes upon neither. In the opinion of Daniel Wheeler, "De Maria combined the ephemerality of European Land Art with the sublimity of both scale and conception typical of American Earthworks", (Wheeler, 1991, p.262).

The forms in the desert landscapes of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley are also determined by the land itself. Both artists were dependent on nature as a source for their art. The shapes of the sky and clouds and the land formations proved to be a constant source of inspiration for these two artists. Although Marsden Hartley's earlier works, for example 'Painting No. 48' (1913) (fig. 36) or 'Paris Days, Pre War' (1914), were influenced by Cubism and German expressionism, in the early 1920s he developed a style more dependent on nature. After his trip to New Mexico in 1918 he concentrated his art on landscapes. His painting 'Earth Warming' (1932) (fig. 37) is an example of his preference for heavily modelled forms. The clouds and mountains are painted with heavy, passionate brushstrokes and he uses strong, bold colours. Hartley is capturing the power of nature just as the land artists were later to attempt to do.



Figure 36. *Painting No. 48*, (1913)

Figure 37. *Earth Warming*, (1932)



In the desert work of Georgia O'Keeffe her forms are always organic and closely based on nature. Her mountain ranges look almost like living forms, like human shapes or animals lying asleep on the desert floor. For example, her paintings 'Purple Hills Near Abiquiu' (1935) (fig. 38), or 'Red Hills with White Cloud' (1937) (fig. 35) look less like distant desert mountains and more like abstract organic forms. Georgia O'Keeffe also introduces an element of death, or danger, into her landscapes, with the inclusion of animal skulls and bone. In an essay on her, Marsden Hartley analysed 'From the Faraway Nearby' (fig. 3),:

Take the new ram-skull picture in the present exhibition - it is - or so it seems to me - a transfiguration - as if the bone divested of its physical usages - had suddenly learned of its own esoteric significance, had discovered the meaning of its own integration through the processes of disintegration, ascending to the sphere of its own reality, in the presence of skies that are not troubled, being accustomed to superior spectacles - and of hills that are ready to receive. (Hartley, 1982, p.106).

In this way the bones of deceased animals live on, eternally occupying a place in this hostile environment.

When discussing O'Keeffe's ox and horse skull pictures "where the spirit of death is always present" we can see a link with the art of Walter de Maria. In 'The Lightning Field' de Maria also includes this element of danger - an element that determined the form of his piece. W.A.L. Beeren has written of de Maria's quest to "stimulate our ideas and experience of the elements and forces of nature. He introduces us to the danger zone in 'The Lightning Field', where we could be struck down. He points to that mysterious

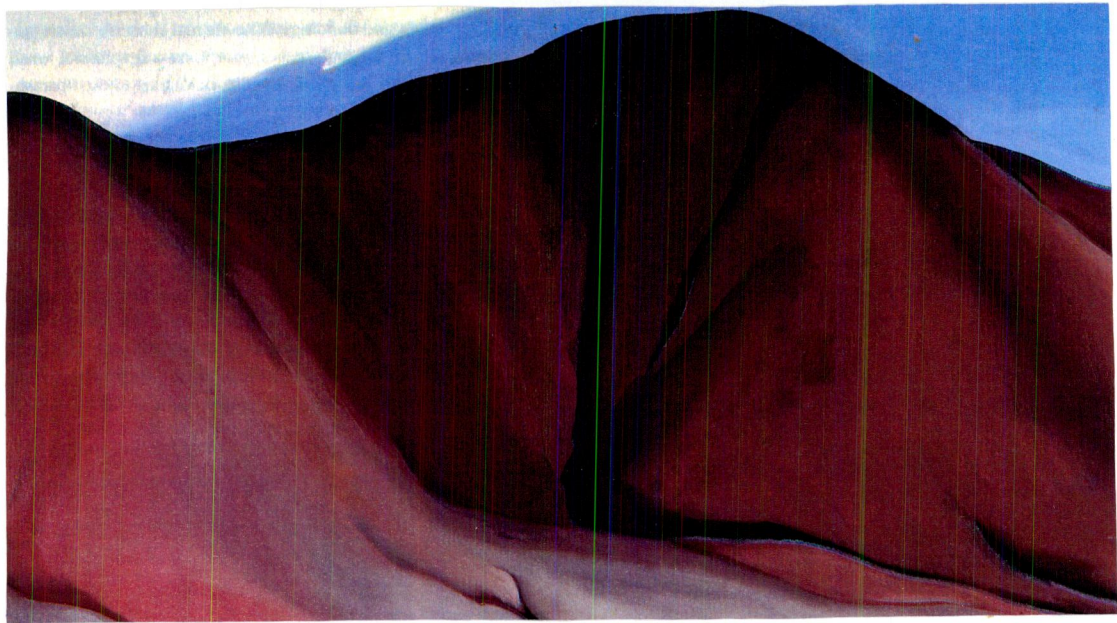


Figure 38. *Purple Hills near Abiquiu*, (1935)

Figure 39. *Carnelian Country*, (1932)



1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: a description of the country and a description of the survey. The description of the country is divided into three parts: a general description, a description of the climate, and a description of the population. The description of the survey is divided into two parts: a description of the methods used and a description of the results. The general description of the country is divided into three parts: a description of the geographical situation, a description of the political situation, and a description of the economic situation. The description of the climate is divided into two parts: a description of the general climate and a description of the local climate. The description of the population is divided into two parts: a description of the general population and a description of the local population. The description of the methods used is divided into two parts: a description of the general methods and a description of the local methods. The description of the results is divided into two parts: a description of the general results and a description of the local results.

2. The second part of the report deals with the results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: a description of the general results and a description of the local results. The description of the general results is divided into three parts: a description of the general situation, a description of the climate, and a description of the population. The description of the local results is divided into two parts: a description of the general situation and a description of the local situation. The description of the general situation is divided into three parts: a description of the geographical situation, a description of the political situation, and a description of the economic situation. The description of the climate is divided into two parts: a description of the general climate and a description of the local climate. The description of the population is divided into two parts: a description of the general population and a description of the local population. The description of the general situation is divided into three parts: a description of the geographical situation, a description of the political situation, and a description of the economic situation. The description of the climate is divided into two parts: a description of the general climate and a description of the local climate. The description of the population is divided into two parts: a description of the general population and a description of the local population.

twilight zone where we can see the beauty that threatens our lives". (Beeren, from Museum Boymans - Van Beuningen Catalogue, 1985, p.11). As Walter de Maria said himself about this danger "When danger and beauty are mixed, the result is a heightened beauty". (de Maria, W., quoted in Sonfist, A., 1975, p.27). He expresses the beauty of the desert landscape by using danger as an element of his piece.

Another thing common to both Walter de Maria's Land Art and Marsden Hartley's painting is their tendency to simplify forms. In Hartley's desert landscape paintings he often excludes all traces of human-life and man-made structures. He simplifies the shapes of mountain ranges and sky, reducing forms to a minimum. These forms often take on a geometric or angular shape and are painted as flat areas of colour - For instance in his painting 'Carnelian Country' (1932) (fig. 39). Traces of this cubist approach can be seen in his earlier works, such as 'Portrait of a German Officer' (1914) (fig. 5) where his use of triangles, circles and flattened forms give his painting a "tapestry-like" appearance. Walter de Maria also simplified the forms in his art. According to Beeren, Walter de Maria was "one of the first artists to reduce form radically. He stripped his sculptures of their anthropomorphic character, minimalizing to the utmost extent". (Beeren, from Museum Boymans - Van Beuningen Catalogue, 1985, p.11). The only form used in 'The Lightning Field' is that of the lightning rod - 400 cylindrical solid steel poles. Earth or Land Art tended to be minimal in style, but on a scale greater than anything possible in a studio or gallery situation.

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Inevitably there is a critical debate that has surrounded Land Art since its beginning.

Because this art form was so conceptually orientated, the land artists, including Holt and de Maria, dealt almost wholly with the expression of ideas rather than the aesthetic beauty of their art, thus differing radically from O'Keeffe and Hartley. As the land artists' large scale artworks were sited in the landscape indefinitely, their art was considered ugly and obtrusive. Little Land Art was carried on after the 1970s. Instead, a new form of Environmental Art, called Ecological Art, began to emerge in the 1970s. This new art form set out to treat nature in a delicate and unexploitative manner creating art that highlighted problems of pollution and industrial development. It strove not only to enhance our relationship with nature, but also to offer creative solutions to environmental problems. And, as the 1970s unfolded, artists no longer sought to create huge pieces of art in remote areas of the world, but instead began to use public spaces such as cities and social spaces. (Wheeler, 1991, p.266).

Today these pieces of Land Art still occupy their places in their desert of Western America. The debate surrounding Land Art still continues, yet these works of art remain being maintained. In chapter two I discussed how time was a part of these works and how they were intended to age with time. Over twenty five years later how well did they succeed in creating art that would, given time, become part of its surroundings?

There is little information to be found on how well these pieces have aged but in June 1995, writer Sarah Vowell travelled to the desert of West America to visit these works of art from the 1970s. She found 'The Lightning Field' neither ugly nor obtrusive but part of

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It also mentions the scope of the study and the limitations. The second part of the paper discusses the methodology used in the study. It mentions the data sources and the statistical methods used. The third part of the paper discusses the results of the study. It mentions the findings and the conclusions. The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study. It mentions the policy implications and the future research.

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the landscape. "Being out in the middle of it, looking around and through and past the metal, the piece makes sense, seems inevitable, part of the world". (Vowell, 1995, p.13). Walter de Maria's piece is successful in uniting with its environment. As W.A.L. Beeren wrote in 1984 "At its most dramatic it receives the lightning, but in the bright light of day it is practically invisible". (Beeren from Museum Boymans Van Beuningen Catalogue, 1985, p.11).

'Sun Tunnels' also remains, as a keeper of universal time, in the desert. Sarah Vowell found it disappointing on the summer solstice of 1995 - "a combination kegger and family cookout". Yet she can recognise Nancy Holt's attempt at creating a fixed point in a vast landscape, "[she] attempts to write an "X" to mark the spot, MY spot, in the overpowering vastness of the universe, to dip her toe in the river of time". (Vowell, 1995, p.18). Nancy Holt wrote about the tunnels in the sun of the desert, "When the sun beats down on the site, the heat waves seem to make the earth dissolve, and the tunnels appear to lose their substance - they float like the mirages in the distance". (Holt, 1997, p.36). 'Sun Tunnels' remains, although incongruous, a part of the desert indefinitely.

Daniel Wheeler has pointed out that

Also contributing to the development of Earthworks was the notion that "progress" had so exploited the landscape that what remained unspoilt should be revered as only art could and what had been devastated restored by the same agency. In Europe, particularly in England, where long habitation and dense settlement made virgin terrain seem all the more precious, the tendency was to alter nature as discreetly as possible and in no way inconsistently with its own organic workings. In the United States, however, fallow territory still abounds, whether natural or industrially induced, with the result that artists, inspired by plenty, felt free to operate on the heroic scale innovated by the Abstract Expressionists. (Wheeler, 1991, p.264).

This unlimited and heroic scale that Daniel Wheeler suggests is, in my opinion, sometimes more closely related to the artist's ego than any real artistic concept. I found Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria to be the most humane of all land artists in their treatment of nature. Sarah Vowell, on her visit to Michael Heizer's earthwork 'Double Negative' (1969) (fig. 40); a piece that consists of two ramp-like cuts to a depth of 50ft, facing each other in an implied line across a narrow canyon, termed it "a massive assault of bulldozers on an innocent, ancient table of land". After playing a game of frisbee across the void, she added "How ugly. How obscene. And how bloody pointless. A big art ditch. So fucking what?" (Vowell, 1995, p.15). Clearly the debate continues.

Each artist approached differently the task of expressing the natural beauty of the desert landscape. The art of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, in accordance with tradition, was primarily concerned with the aesthetic beauty of nature whereas Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria, in accordance with Land Art, dealt primarily with the idea of nature (in the twentieth century). The landscape, for them, was both a setting for, and a part of, their work. Comparing and contrasting the use of forms in the work of each artist, I found their art not to be wholly dissimilar. In each case the forms used were derived from the land. The organic forms found in the landscapes of O'Keeffe and Hartley contrasted with the simplified forms of Land Art, although tendencies to strip down form were traced through Marsden Hartley's work also. Often considered obtrusive and incongruous, the work of Holt and de Maria looks set to survive there for decades to come.

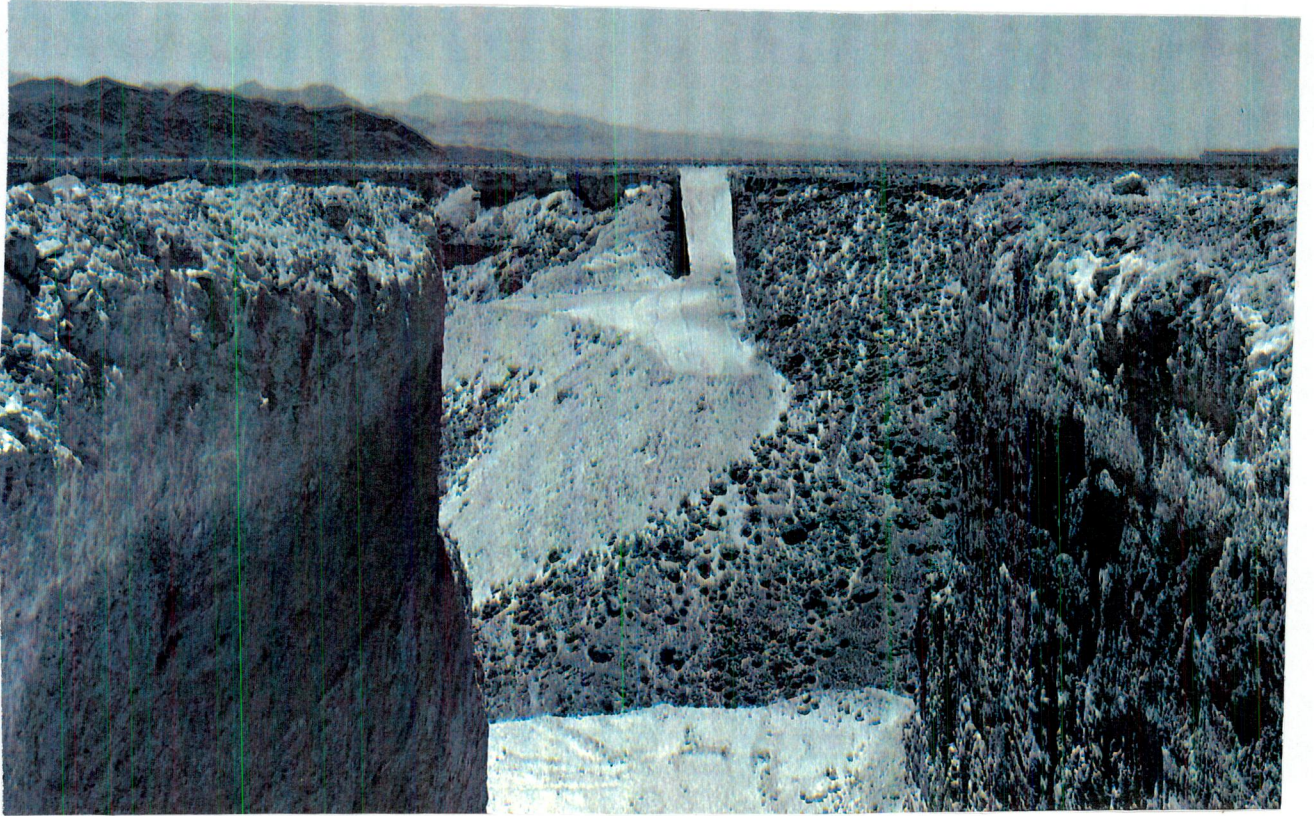


Figure 40. *Double Negative*, (1969)

17. The first of these is the fact that the
theoretical model of the system is based on
the assumption that the system is in a state of
equilibrium. This is a reasonable assumption
for a system that has been operating for a
long time, but it may not be valid for a
system that is just starting to operate.
The second point is that the model is based
on the assumption that the system is a
closed system. This is also a reasonable
assumption for a system that has been
operating for a long time, but it may not
be valid for a system that is just starting
to operate. The third point is that the
model is based on the assumption that the
system is a linear system. This is a
reasonable assumption for a system that has
been operating for a long time, but it may
not be valid for a system that is just
starting to operate.

CONCLUSION

Expressing timelessness, vastness and the natural beauty of a desert environment are themes common to the art of Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria. It was my intention, through the course of this discussion, to examine the comparisons and contrasts that could be found between each artists methods of expressing these concepts. Although the Land Art of Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria is formally very different to that of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, I attempted to find the beginnings of Land Art in the early twentieth century paintings.

In chapter two I described the ways each artist approached the concept of timelessness through the use of light, form, colour and detail. Chapter three explored how each artist 'framed' the landscape, often in very similar ways, and orientated the viewer by creating fixed points in the vast landscape. In chapter four I discussed the natural beauty of the desert, how Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley expressed it and how Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria dealt with beauty as a concept.

Although the intentions of each artist were similar, their methods of expressing these themes changed greatly over a period of only about fifty years. This changing relationship between American artists and the American landscape is still continuing today. Environmental art developed, from the 1970s onwards, to include Ecological Art, an art form that not only attempted to enhance man's connection with nature but also to offer creative solutions to environmental problems. Land Art, after the 1970s, ceased

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject.

2. The second part is a detailed description of the methods used in the study.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results of the study.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and a list of references.

5. The fifth part is a list of appendices.

6. The sixth part is a list of figures and tables.

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13. The thirteenth part is a list of references.

14. The fourteenth part is a list of appendices.

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23. The twenty-third part is a list of appendices.

24. The twenty-fourth part is a list of figures and tables.

25. The twenty-fifth part is a list of footnotes.

almost completely, out of greater concern for the environment. Artists and patrons tended away from Land Art sited in remote parts of the world and towards more public and social environments.

I would argue that the work of Nancy Holt and Walter de Maria captures, most successfully, the timelessness and vastness of the desert environment. Because they require the viewer to travel into the desert to experience the landscape first hand and because their artworks highlight the qualities of the desert so dramatically their art was, for me, a more satisfying response to this landscape. However, from the point of environmental concern, the work of Georgia O'Keeffe and Marsden Hartley expresses the landscape in an art-form that complements, not takes away from, the natural beauty of the desert. Charles C. Eldredge suggests, of Georgia O'Keeffe's work, that,

the pelvic compositions - close, tangible frames surrounding infinite recess - might even anticipate the cosmic concerns of contemporary artists in the land, such as James Turrell, whose sensibilities were prefigured by Georgia O'Keeffe (Eldredge, C., 1993, p.197).

So, although the paintings of O'Keeffe and Hartley are formally far removed from the sculptures of Holt and de Maria, they share similar aims and concerns: how to depict the vast scale and timelessness of a majestic desert environment.

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