



DESERT BREATH since since the completion of its construction in March 1997

DESERT BREATH SELECTED PRESS

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Central St. Martins College of Art and Design, London Institute. Lecture by D.A.ST. about the work *Desert Breath*, with the use of visual material.

Cooper Union, New York. Lecture by D.A.ST. about the work *Desert Breath*, with the use of visual material.

Athens School of Fine Arts. Lecture by D.A.ST. about the work *Desert Breath*, with the use of visual material.

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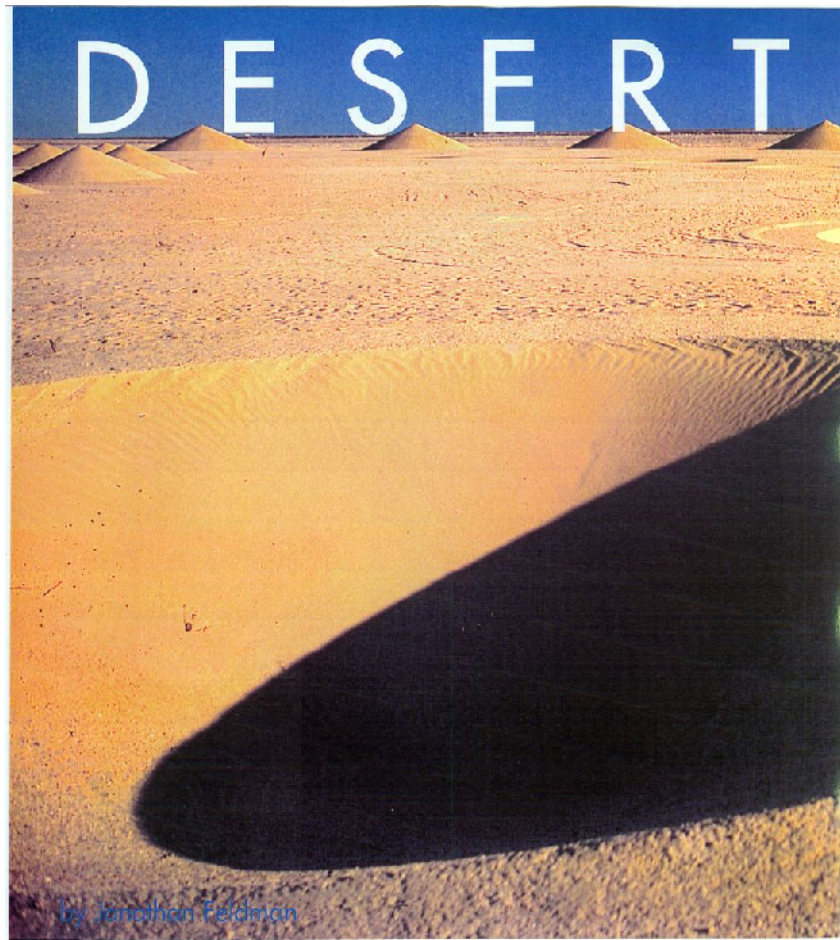
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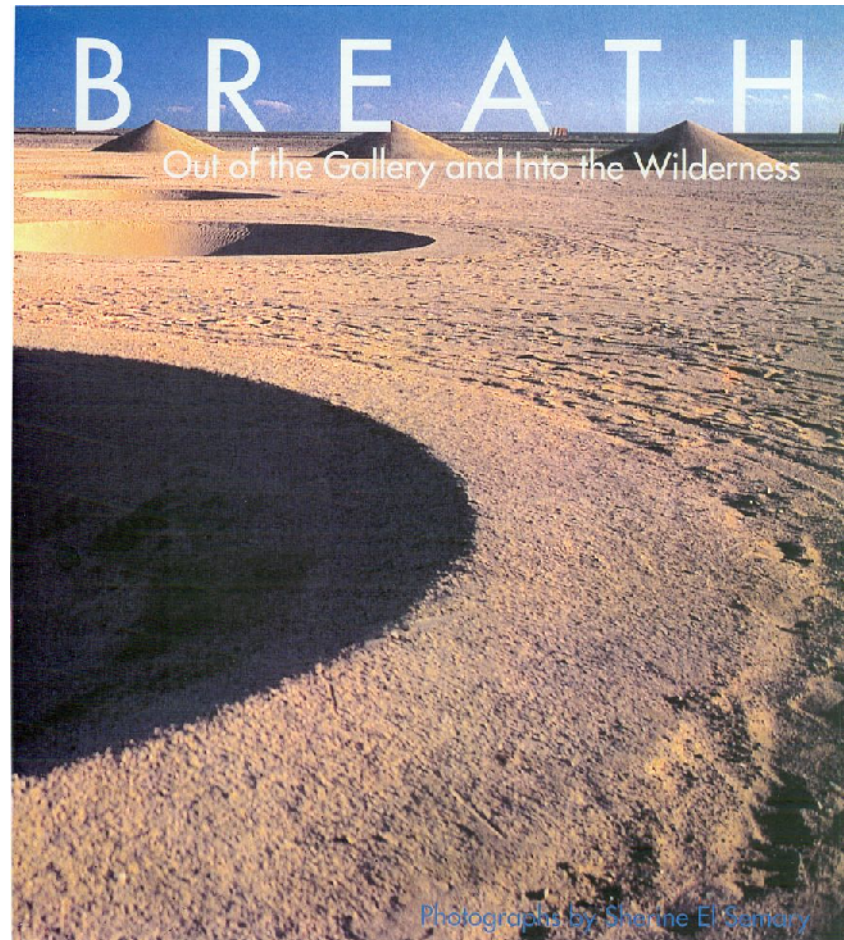
By Jonathan Feldman

In June 1996, three young Greek artists, Danae Stratou, Stella Constantinides, and Alexandra Stratou, broke ground on the construction of a monumentally-scaled land art installation in Egypt's Eastern Desert. Nine months later, on March 7th of this year, the installation was inaugurated with a formal opening. Having done

their part, the artists, who work under the acronym DAST, will now dedicate their energies to documenting the installation's degeneration as the desert works to reclaim the site.

The installation, *Desert Breath*, belongs to a movement that is now three decades old. In the 1960s, a number of American installation artists began

using natural materials, like stone, earth, and pigment, in ways that challenged conventional notions about the appropriateness or suitability of media in high art. And in 1964, a certain German, Joseph Beuys, loaded a wooden chair with a slab of fat to construct an installation inventively entitled *Fat Chair*. But this wasn't entirely without precedent



Photographs by Sherine El Samary

either. Robert Rauschenberg had raised eyebrows in the 1950s when he incorporated found objects and workaday detritus—umbrellas, tires, linen, yesterday's newspapers—in peculiar and improbably successful paintings. Still earlier—more than thirty years before Rauschenberg made his first "combine" paintings—Marcel Duchamp had scan-

dalized the art world by insisting that bicycle wheels, bottle racks, and porcelain urinals might be appropriated as ready-made sculpture. But Duchamp and his Pop-art heirs seldom questioned the formal venues where art was typically encountered. It was left to land artists to challenge the concept of the gallery as a sanctified space.

In 1968, Walter De Maria filled a Munich gallery with 1,600 cubic feet of fertile topsoil. The installation, entitled *Munich Earth Room*, literally soiled the gallery, desecrating its pretensions of religious purity and the reverence accorded art as an elevated object. In the same year, another American, Robert Smithson, began experimenting with



gallery installations that employed natural materials and referred back to a particular physical landscape or site. Smithsonian's *Red Sandstone Corner Piece* displayed fragments of sandstone taken from the New Jersey countryside in a New York City gallery where they were resituated in a mirror-lined corner.

Just as artists deliberately assaulted the pretensions of gallery space by introducing the banal and mundane, they also began to imbue the landscape with some of the high formalism associated with the traditional gallery. The earth itself came to be regarded as both "canvas" and "pigment" as artists ventured out into the wilderness to construct installations on a heroic scale. But still more than Rothko, Motherwell, Frankenthaler, and the Abstract Expressionists who referred to their paintings as color fields or abstracted landscapes, these land artists were landscapists. Their work had more in common with the monumental land sculpture of pre-



historic civilizations, such as Stonehenge in England and the Nazca Lines in Peru, than with the New York School.

Desert Breath is situated on a desert flood plane between the Eastern Mountains and the Red Sea near El Gouna. The installation encompasses approximately 100,000 square meters and is composed of 178 cones precisely plotted to describe two interlocking spirals. One of the spirals is built of protruding cones of sand, while the other is constructed of incised cavities. As the cones spiral inwards toward the installation's center, they become progressively smaller. The center point is itself a conical form: a huge earthen vessel with a thirty-meter diameter filled with water.

Within this incised cone is situated another positive cone, which rises up out of the water revealing its apex as an island.

Describing the technical and material details of the installation is a thankless task, and tends to muddy *Desert Breath's* formal elegance. It's a little bit like trying to pass a camel through the eye of a needle. If the corre-

lation of the positive and negative cones, their distance from the centerpiece, and relative size seem difficult to visualize,

the installation's actual form, like a chambered nautilus, is deceptively simple and eminently organic. The spirals appear to open up towards the landscape and spin it round itself like Wallace Stevens's jar: "round it was, upon a hill./It made the slovenly wilderness/Surround that hill." And much as the jar in Stevens's poem has the curious effect of taming the surrounding wilderness, *Desert Breath* imposes a kind of order and design upon the desert plane—or at least our perception of the plane.

With its ruddy mountain backdrop, deep sky, and the penetrating blues of the Red Sea beyond, the site courses with energy—the magnetic charge that transitional landscapes so often emit. This kind of scenic beauty can trip up land artists, and DAST knew from the outset that they didn't want to choose a landscape that was in itself too magnificently evocative. Some landscapes are so gorgeous that they cannot be further elaborated. Such a site would overwhelm, or at least resist, their own efforts, making their work seem either inadequate or inconsequential.

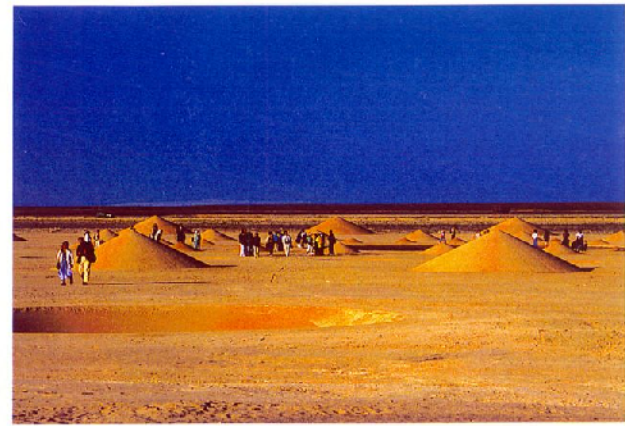
But working in Egypt presents land artists with a still greater challenge. Anytime anyone considers building anything on a monumental scale in Egypt, inevitably that person runs up against the country's Pharaonic legacy. Been

there, done that. DAST insist that they never set out to engage this history and that their work should be considered without reference to the Great Pyramids or the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut. Whether or not the monuments at Giza and The Valley of the Kings enticed the Greek artists to work in Egypt is not really the point. The subtext is there, and it's not so very subterranean. To borrow a phrase from the often convoluted language of art criticism, this legacy doesn't need to be "excavated." It's already been dug up, and tourists from the world's four corners stand in line every morning to gawk at the archaeological remains of ancient Egypt.

The triumph of *Desert Breath* has everything to do with the artists' humility. While the installation wasn't designed to speak to Egypt's archaeological past, it does. And it does so indirectly and intelligently. When the artists arrived in Egypt, they didn't have a pre-conceived concept in mind for an installation. They knew only that they wanted to use natural materials, materials that were present at the site. And rather than impose a previously conceived design upon the site, they would take their cues from the landscape itself so that their work would be site-determined.

The artists first visited the El Gouna site in June 1995. As they surveyed the plane, they recognized physical features which had become familiar to them during their explorations in other Egyptian desert landscapes. They were intrigued by the conical shapes formed by accumulated, wind-blown sand. They also could discern roughly conical shapes in the Eastern Mountains, which they considered in a sense to be constituent forms of the mountain range. There was something elemental about all of these related conical structures. And the artists decided that they would incorporate this shape as a basic component of their design.

Whatever the artists' intent, *Desert Breath's* cones do resemble the pyramids at Giza, Saqqara, and Dashur. But the

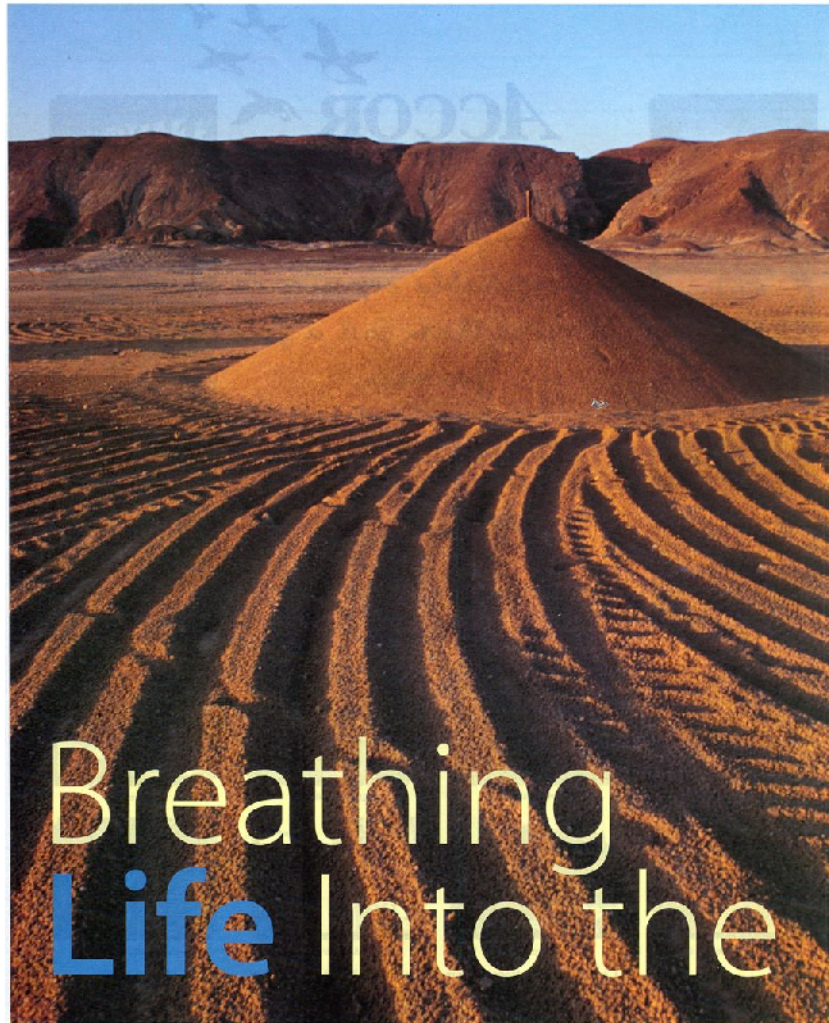


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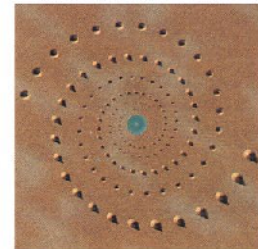


Breath's cones are so powerfully evocative, is no less remarkable.

The idea that earthworks should be "site-determined" has taken on the aura of dogma for many land artists. And like any article of faith, this belief is often allowed to stand unquestioned. But it would be ludicrous to ignore the fact that some of this "determining" is actually done by the artists themselves and when land artists set up camp at a selected site they bring with them, among all of their personal effects, a good deal of aesthetic and ideological baggage—



72 MARCH 1997



One
of the world's
largest land art
installations
is born this month
in Hurghada.
by Valerie A. Franchi
photos by Dana Smillie

EGYPT TODAY 73

Egypt Today, Valerie A. Franchi / March 1997



Alexandra Stratou supervises repairs on the central vessel (opposite, left). The November flood damaged both the insidians and the sculpted cones but provided workers with a rare opportunity to swim in the desert (opposite, right).

Previous page: A graphic illustration of the project from above reveals its striking visual effect.

Look over and Alexandra Stratou is sleeping. The daily strain of overseeing more than 35 workers, engineers and surveyors, coordinating publicity, and missing her family and friends is taking its toll. It's not the most comfortable place for a nap — atop a rocky peak of the eastern mountains near El Gouna, 21 km north of Hurghada on the Red Sea coast — but it's peaceful, and from here she can feel the subtle energy radiating from Desert Breath below, the result of almost two years of effort.

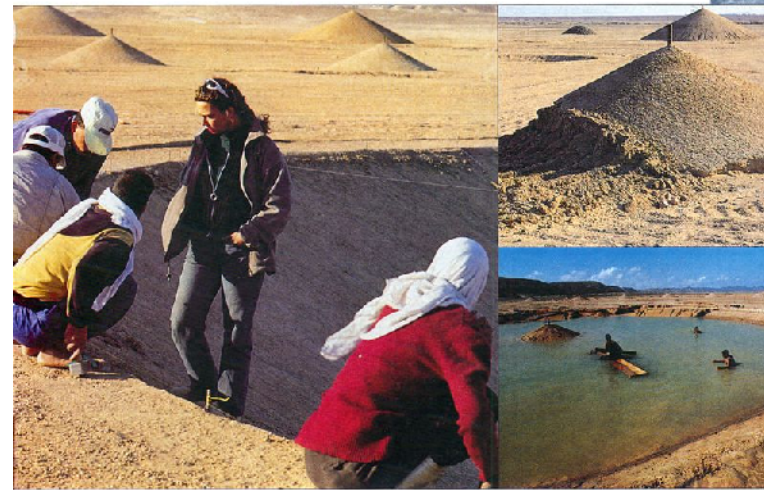
At ground level, walking among the unfinished cones and cone-shaped depressions that form the land art installation, there is a sense of how very earthly the project is. With its piles of dirt and bright orange water hoses, it looks like a typical construction site even after the trucks and laborers have left for the day. But from above, it is mystical, like a message left behind by creatures from a distant and more advanced planet.

But Stratou, one of three young Greek artists working on Desert Breath, believed to be the largest land art installation under construction in the world, will not allow extraterrestrial beings to take credit for their hard work. Stratou, her cousin, sculptor Danae Stratou, and architect Stella Constantinides have spent months preparing Desert Breath for its March 7 - 10 inauguration. Since construction began in July, the artists have come to El Gouna in turns to monitor the work's progress. In mid-January, it is Alexandra's turn.

The staff and residents of El Gouna know her well. She has almost become a fixture of Kafr El Gouna, the resort's village center, where she stays in one of the apartments built for resident artists. Stratou considers El Gouna her second home, which is fortunate because, due to unforeseen circumstances, she is spending more time there than she ever expected.

On November 17, just 13 days before the project's first scheduled inauguration, unusually heavy rains flooded the site, causing enough damage to delay the project three months. "All the invitations had been sent [and] travel plans made when the rain came," says Stratou. "The average amount of rain here is about one millimeter per year — we got more than 170 mm in four days. It came down from the mountain and in a half-hour everything was flooded." But she insists that the trio never viewed the rain as a bad omen. "It was so beautiful, like a gift from God. Later, we realized how much work it was going to take to repair the damage, but we still never saw it as a negative."

The installation is made up of 178 cones arranged in two interlocking spiral formations covering 100,000 square meters of flat desert land. Walking toward the center, the cones — half of them depressions cut into the desert floor and half-sculpted from sand above the ground — decrease in size from 3.75 meters to around 50 cm. At the center is a cone-shaped vessel 30 m in diameter, with another cone rising from its center.



courtesy of D.A.S.T. Art Team

This vessel will eventually be filled with 1,200 cubic meters of water.

Following the cones inward or outward, there is a feeling of being pulled along by some unseen force. As viewers walk toward or away from the center, "We hope they feel a subtle, strong energy," says Stratou, who has walked the spiral hundreds of times. "There is no control over pace as you walk through it — every time is different." The purpose of the installation, according to Stratou, is to heighten the viewers' awareness of their relationship to the earth and nature. "As the viewer starts to feel part of this spiral organism, it reinforces the feeling of belonging," she says.

Background

For the artists, who call themselves the D.A.S.T. Art Team (from the initials of their first names), working together on Desert Breath has been a natural evolution of their own individual work. The three have been close friends in Athens for many years and all have artistic backgrounds.

Stratou, 26, graduated in 1992 from the Rhode Island School of Design with a degree in industrial design. Following two years in London freelancing in graphics and interior design, she returned to Greece in 1994 to work in her own studio. There, she designed exhibits and a line of furniture. Her thesis explored "the relationships between earth, the human body and the structures in between."

Danae Stratou, 32, studied sculpture at St. Martin's School of Art in London from 1983 to 1988. She grew up in a home which evolved around art and was especially influenced by her mother, who is also a sculptor. Since 1991, she has focused on sculpture involving interaction between the environment and the viewer. Her large-scale experiments with natural materials, such as sand and water, eventually led her to explore outdoor installations.

Constantinides, 27, is currently pursuing a postgraduate degree at the Architectural Association in London. Prior to beginning Desert Breath she experimented with small-scale installations in the southern Californian desert.

All of the artists were deeply influenced by land artists such as Robert Smithson and James Turrell, who use the land and surrounding nature as both setting and material in a number of their works. Often categorized under environmental or installation art, land art or earthwork emerged in the late 1960s in direct opposition to the minimalist art movement of the same period to reflect harmony between art and the environment. Smithson, one of the best-known land artists, created two land art installations based on a spiral formation: *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a spiral of dirt and rocks (which is now submerged) leading to the Great Salt Lake in Utah; and *Spiral Hill* (1971), a road winding in a spiral form around a mountain peak in the Netherlands.



Conception

After dinner in one of El Gouna's restaurants, Stratou lights a Marlboro and explains how the project came about. "All we knew was that we wanted to work in the desert," she begins. "Being from Greece, we loved the sea and the desert is like a reflection of the sea in the earth. It has the same immensity and endlessness."

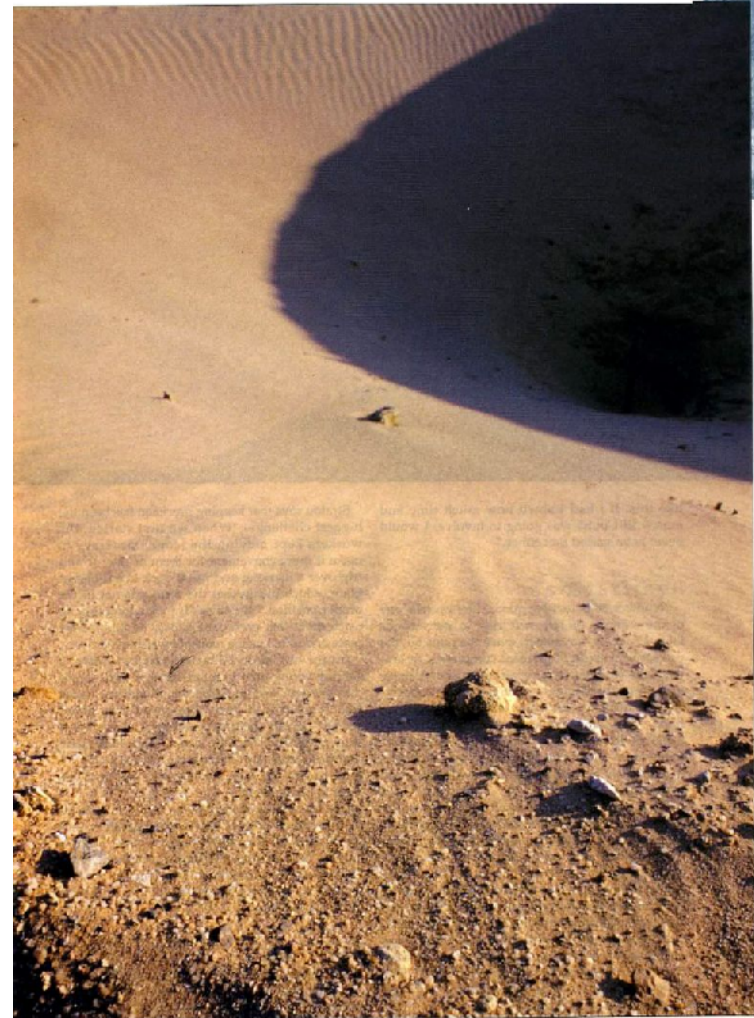
While in Egypt scouting for a site in June 1995, a friend told the three women about a new resort town called El Gouna where artists are welcomed. The artists visited the resort and found an area that seemed perfect just across the Hurghada-Cairo road from El Gouna and sandwiched between the eastern mountains and the Red Sea. "We loved it because it has water, mountains and desert together," says Stratou, adding that it is also located near an oasis, which is used as a water supply, and El Gouna, which provides other necessary supplies and accommodations for the duration of the project.

They left Egypt with the idea of the cone shapes and the medium of the work — sand. "We liked the idea of displacing sand from one place to make forms in another," Stratou says. The idea for the conical shapes was derived from the peaks of the mountains near the site and from the natural patterns of sand: the piles formed by the wind or when poured from trucks onto the ground. Back in Greece, the artists spent three months experimenting with sand and treating the overall

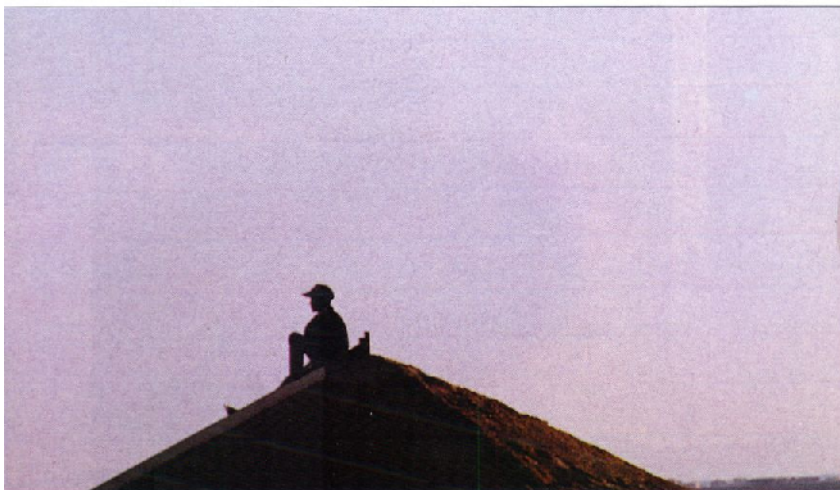
design of the installation. "We all looked at the project from different points of view, but our different ideas converged and we all agreed simultaneously on the concept of the spiral formation of cones," Stratou says. "The spiral is a symbol of a mystical journey from one dimension to another. Using such an open formation — which is not deprived of a focus — seemed appropriate, if not imperative."

The team then began preparing a presentation for potential sponsors, including Orascom, the company that owns El Gouna and the land the artists wanted to use for the installation. Before the women could even complete the presentation, however, a sponsor approached them. In September 1995, Samih Sawiris, president of Orascom Projects and Touristic Development, arrived in Greece and offered the artists use of the land, accommodations and full sponsorship for the entire project. "He had heard about the project and was very enthusiastic about it," says Stratou, clearly amazed at their unexpected good fortune. "It was that first leap of faith that got us started." A month later, the trio returned to Egypt, chose the exact site and began preparations to construct Desert Breath.

Sawiris seems less idealistic about the whole affair. "I thought it would be fun," he says simply. "I like art but I have never been an art fanatic. [The project] has been more involved than I ever imagined, but it's better when projects happen



The workers (shown above repaving a cone) found it difficult to understand the purpose of the project, according to engineer Zakaria Saad Lawandy.



like this. If I had known how much time and money El Gouna was going to involve, I would never have started that either."

Realization

"Number 88 is looking good," Stratou tells one of the workers on-site, referring to the second-largest cone. In November, when the rains hit, the project was about 95 percent completed. In January, the workers were repairing erosion damage to the cones and digging out the conical depressions that filled with water and mud during the flood. "The rain came at the peak of our effort," explains Stratou with a tired look. "We lost our momentum and it was difficult to pull ourselves together. We had expended all our energy up to that point."

The first stage of the project was the installation of a pipe from the nearby oasis to the site to carry water for packing down the sand. After marking the exact spots for each cone, heavy machinery — borrowed from an El Gouna construction site — was used to displace the 8,000 cubic meters of sand: an excavator to dig out the conical depressions and a loader to move the sand and compress it into step pyramids. Using large metal blades of different sizes, the pyramids were then smoothed out to form perfect cones. This final step will have to be repeated before the installation's completion.

A worker takes a moment to rest and reflect on his efforts as the sun rises over the installation.

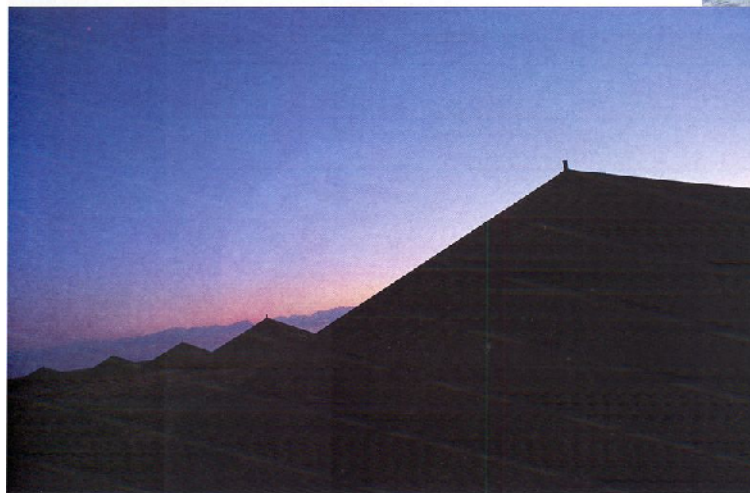
Stratou says that keeping precision has been the biggest challenge. "When we first started, the workers kept moving the cone markings to make it more convenient for them or they would trip over a marking and put it back in a different place, which meant that the cone was not in the proper position," she says. "It took a long time to teach them that each cone had to be in an exact place and to tell us if a marking was moved."

Junior engineer Zakaria Saad Lawandy, a smiling young man in a red baseball cap, agrees that the workers he supervised did not know what to make of the three women and their grand project. "It was the first time they had ever seen something like this," he says. "They had many questions and kept asking me, 'What's this?' I tried to explain it to them, but it was hard for them to understand."

Despite all the obstacles, the artists never lost their sense of humor. When asked about a gold star placed on top of the biggest cone, Stratou laughs. "I had forgotten about that," she says. "We spent last Christmas here and so we put the star up as a joke and took a picture to use as our Christmas card."

Time zero

The timing of the construction and the repairs — which Stratou believes are part of the creative process — is vital to the work. More than 70



workers will be necessary in the days leading up to the inauguration weekend to keep the cones and incisions at the specific dimensions. Each cone must be geometrically perfect for the inauguration to mark what the artists refer to as "time zero" — the moment of perfection — before Desert Breath begins to disintegrate with the passage of time. "We are creating figures for nature to work its little miracles on," she explains.

Between 200 and 300 guests, mainly from Greece and Egypt, are expected to attend the inauguration, which will feature celebrations in the nearby oasis, parties in El Gouna outlets, a slide show on the work's construction and hot air balloon rides. "It is important to see the project from two different points," Stratou explains. Being able to view the work from above and to walk through it were central to its conception. "Human scale — the relationship between the viewer and the work — is very important to the project. As you walk toward the center, the way you relate to the cones changes. First the cones are bigger [than the viewer], then the same scale, then smaller," she says.

Guests at the inauguration will also be encouraged to spend the entire day at the site, from sunrise to sunset, to view the light changes and how they affect the work. "The installation seems to expand and contract with the change in light and shadow — as if it is a living, breathing organism," Stratou says.

Progress

After time zero, the artists will document the installation's erosion on film and in a photographic essay over six months. The team then plans to stage photographic exhibitions of the construction, inauguration and deterioration of Desert Breath in Greece and in as many other countries as possible. Asked if it will be difficult to see her "child" being eroded away, Stratou replies simply, "I don't see it as deterioration, I see it as another kind of progress." But it will still be hard to let go, even after the last cone has disappeared. "It completely absorbed us," Stratou admits. "As its needs kept growing, we kept giving more and more, until eventually we gave everything up." For the duration of the project, the artists put their individual work — and often their personal lives — on hold.

When all the exhibitions are over and Desert Breath is just a flat expanse of desert again, Stratou says she hopes to start another project with her cousin and Constantinides: "Working together has been an amazing experience. It has been a tough collaboration but a rewarding one. We have all changed through this process and on each project, we will continue to grow."

As the sun sets behind the peak where Stratou had been napping earlier, the shadows on the spiral below grow longer and more defined. The cold wind picks up on the mountain and darkness engulfs the spiral. **ET**

Αναπνοή της Ερήμου

Στη διάρκεια του αιώνα που τελειώνει, η καλλιτεχνική δημιουργία σηματοδεύτηκε από την τάση μιας αυτοανάλυσης και μιας αργής – για ένα “αιώνα ταχύτητας” – διαδικασίας απογύμνωσης και αποκάλυψης του κορμού των εννοιών οι οποίες στηρίζουν το έργο τέχνης. Αυτή η κίνηση ξεκινάει με την πρώτη δεκαετία του αιώνα και προϋποθέτει την αφαίρεση από το έργο κάθε “επεισοδίου”, όσο λαμπρού ή γοητευτικού μπορούσε να είναι, ικανού να αποτρέψει τον θεατή από τη συνειδητοποίηση της εσωτερικής δομής του έργου και της διαδικασίας ανάπτυξής του. Η θέση του έργου μέσα στον χώρο, η υλική υπόστασή του, ακόμα και η σωματική παρουσία και δράση του καλλιτέχνη έγιναν μέρος του “θεάματος”.

Στο τέλος των χρόνων του '60 και στη δεκαετία του '70 η έγνοια για τον φυσικό περιβάλλοντα χώρο επικεντρώνεται, σε αντίθεση με τα “γεγονότα” σε κλειστές γκαλερί και εργαστήρια, σε ανοιχτές δραστηριότητες στο ύπαιθρο

και επεμβάσεις στο τοπίο που ονομάστηκαν “Land Art” ή “Earth Art”. Όπως ήταν φυσικό, τα έργα αυτά εντάχθηκαν, έστω και χαλαρά, στον “μινιμαλισμό” μιας και εκινούντο μέσα στο πλαίσιο της αναζήτησης πρωταρχικών εννοιών ή αρχέγονων συμβάντων σε σχέση με τον πλανήτη Γη και τις θεωρίες του Buckminster Fuller.

Η “Γήινη Τέχνη” έχει και αυτή, όπως ό,τι φτιάχνει ο άνθρωπος με τα χέρια και τον νου του, μακριές ρίζες. Ένα απλό αεροπορικό ταξίδι μας αποκαλύπτει τις αιώνιες επεμβάσεις του ανθρώπου πάνω στην επιφάνεια της γης, που ενώ συνήθως καθορίζονται από ωφελιμιστικές χρήσεις έχουν πάντα ένα αισθητικό αποτέλεσμα. Κάτω από τα μάτια μας απλώνονται οργανωμένα πεδία που διαφοροποιούνται μορφολογικά από τους φυτεμένους όγκους, τα σπαρμένα χρώματα, τα σκοτεινά χαντάκια και τα λάμποντα νερά. Στις μέρες μας ο “μηχανικός σχεδιασμός”, με γεωργικά μηχανήματα, αναπτύσσεται σε συναρπαστικές γραμμικές

κές διαδρομές και σχήματα. Στους αιώνες της παντοδυναμίας των αρχόντων οι σχεδιαστές-κηπουροί δεν αρκέστηκαν να βάλουν “σε τάξη” τον φυσικό χώρο, ώστε οι κύριοί τους να περιδιαβάζουν ανενόχλητοι, αλλά με τη σύμπραξη καλλιτεχνών και αρχιτεκτόνων δημιούργησαν, σε τεράστιες κλίμακες, πάρκα με ειδικά σχήματα στα φυτέματα, υπολογισμένες και περίπλοκες προοπτικές με κέντρα έντασης και σημεία φυγής, έργα δηλαδή τα οποία συνδέονταν άμεσα με τους εικαστικούς προβληματισμούς του καιρού τους.

Η σύνδεση της “Γήινης Τέχνης” με την απο-ατομικοποιημένη έκφραση του “minimal” συμπίπτει με τις πρώτες φωτογραφίες της Γης που έφτασαν σε μας από το Διάστημα. Οι εικόνες αυτές άλλαξαν αυτόματα, όχι μόνο την αντίληψη της κλίμακας του γύρω κόσμου αλλά, και τη σχέση μας με το αντικείμενο τέχνης, ανοίγοντας τον δρόμο σε μνημειακές επεμβάσεις στην επιφάνεια της Γης, που θα υπήρχαν σαν ένα ελάχιστο σημάδι – μέρος αυτού του όλου – και θα ζούσαν μια στιγμή σε αυτήν τη χαρμής ηλικίας της ίδιας της Γης.

Ακολουθώντας αυτή την ιδέα, άλλοι τράβηξαν δύο ευθείες γραμμές στην έρημο (Walter de Maria 1968), άλλος σχεδίαζε χωμάτινη σπείρα μέσα στο νερό (Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970), άλλοι σάβριζαν πέτρες σε απόπτες κορυφές ή σχεδίαζαν σάρατες για τους άλλους διαδρομές (Richard Long, 1974). Η ίδια η κίνησή τους μέσα στα συνήθως έρημα και ακατοίχτα τοπία ή η ανίχνευση των διαδρομών τους, τους έδιναν την εντύπωση πως ανακάλυπταν ξανά, σαν τους αρχαίους λαούς, τη σχέση της τέχνης με την απεραντοσύνη του χρόνου και του χώρου του σύμπαντος.

Οι τρεις Ελληνίδες που δημιούργησαν την *Αναπνοή της Ερήμου* στην τοποθεσία El Gouna της Αιγύπτου ξεκίνησαν σε μια ανάλογη περιπέτεια, αλλά με την ωριμότητα των νιτών τους. Δηλαδή, χωρίς τις ψευδαισθήσεις των χρόνων του '70, με την ανεξίτηλη και προσαρμοστικότητα του '90 και τη δική τους άνεση, αλλά και ευκρίνεια στη σύλληψη και εκτέλεση του σχεδίου τους. Η επιλογή του χώρου, αχανούς και αδιάφορου, όπου μπορούσαν ν' αφήσουν ανενόχλητες τα σημάδια τους, προκαθορίζει και



Αναπνοή της Ερήμου. Από τις εργασίες κατασκευής του έργου και δημιουργίας κώνων



Desert Breath. Work in progress

την κατοπινή "ζωή" του έργου τους, και αυτό γιατί, το "ρευστό" υλικό της άμμου ενώ μπορούσε κάθε στιγμή να "προδώσει" τη σχεδιαστική και γλυπτική τους επιπόηση, ήταν αυτό που θα εξασφάλιζε στη συνέχεια την αργή, έτσι όπως τη φαντάστηκαν, εξάλειψή της.

Ξεκίνησαν με ένα απλό σχήμα: μια διπλή σπείρα. Η σιγουριά τους πως το έργο τους θα γινόταν μέρος του τοπίου βασίζονταν στο ότι κειρίστηκαν, έπλασαν και έστησαν, το ίδιο το γύρω υλικό της άμμου, χωρίς όμως να το βιάσουν σε σχήματα έξω από την ίδια του τη φύση. Πράγματι, κάθε επέμβαση στην έρημο, φυσική όπως ο άνεμος, ή τεχνητή όπως η διάνοιξη ενός δρόμου, καταλήγει στη συσσώρευση μικρών ή μεγάλων κώνων. Η απόλυτη ανυπαρξία άλλου "επεισοδίου" στο τοπίο της ερήμου προσδίδει μια ειδική σημασία σε αυτή την "άρνηση" της επιπέδης επιφάνειας και σίγουρα υπήρξε η αρχή της πυραμίδας: ένας ανθρώπινα χτισμένος λόφος από άμμο που θα έκρυβε τον νεκρό, αλλά και θα συμβόλιζε τη νίκη πάνω στην οριζόντια στάση του θανάτου.

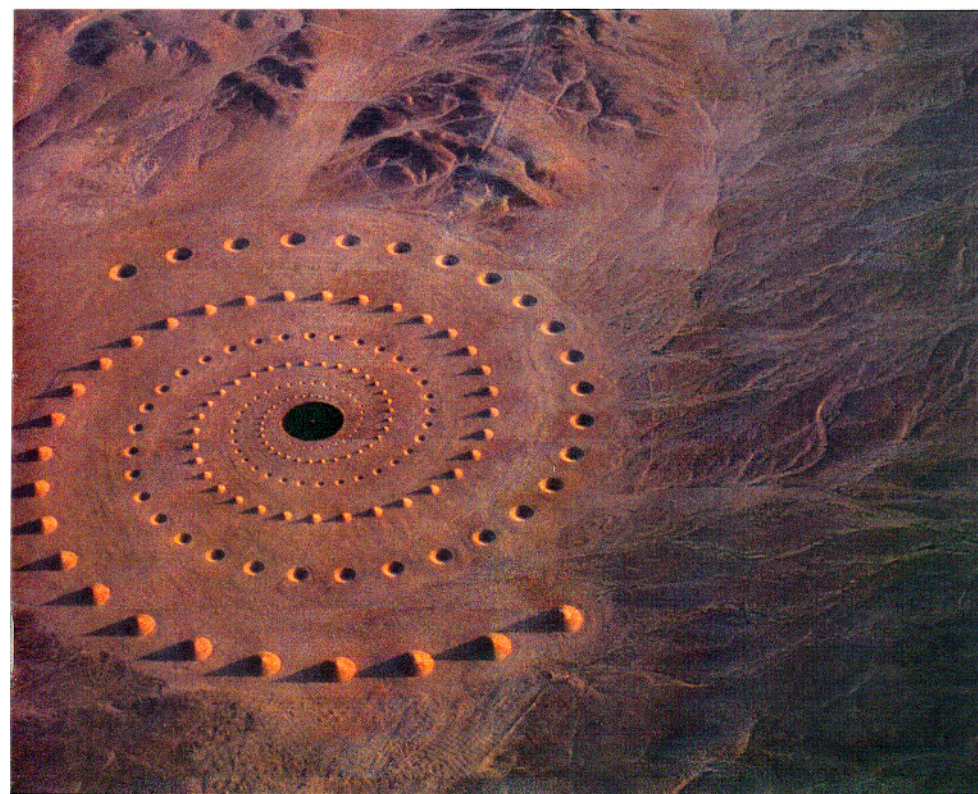
Οι τρεις της ομάδας Dast, η γλύπτρια Δανάη Στράτου, η industrial designer Αλεξάνδρα Στράτου και η αρχιτέκτων Στέλλα Κωνσταντινίδη, ξεκίνησαν μέσα σε δύσκολες, πολλές φορές απάνθρωπες, συνθήκες δουλειάς, να στήσουν το έργο που οραματίστηκαν με μόνο εκέγγυο, αυτή την αρμονική συνύπαρξη με τον γύρω χώρο.

Σε αυτό το βασικό απλό σχήμα έδωσαν, με την ανάπτυξη των μεγεθών και με την αλληλουχία των "αρνητικών και θετικών" κώνων, πολυσύνθετες δυνατότητες και γοντευτικές παραμέτρους. Υπολόγισαν ιδιαίτερα έντεχνα την κίνηση του θεατή προς το κέντρο, έτσι ώστε κάθε στιγμή αυτής της διαδρομής να αποκαλύπτει σχέσεις σχημάτων αναπάντεχες και εικόνες μαγικές. Η "υγρή καρδιά" της στρογγυλής λίμνης περίμενε σαν μια υπόσχεση τον περιπατητή, αλλά ήταν και μια συνεχής, σε κάθε μετακίνηση, λαμπερή υπόμνηση του ουράνιου χρώματος, όπως και οι μικρές γαλάζιες καθρέφτινες σταγόνες στην κορυφή κάθε κώνου.

Όλη όμως αυτή η διαδρομή μέσα σε τούτο το πρωταρχικό σχήμα δεν θα ήταν τόσο ικανοποιητική, αν το έργο δεν ήταν τόσο άμεμπτα υπολογισμένο και εκτελεσμένο. Για τον υπολογισμό και τις συμμετρίες έρχεται να εγγυηθεί η χρήση από την ομάδα Dast της σύγχρονης τεχνολογίας - Υπολογιστές - που τους επέτρεψε, σε αυτόν τον



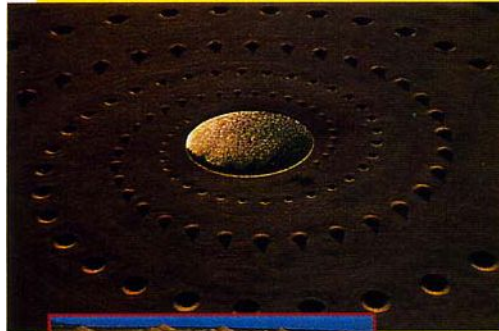
Αναστροφή της Ερήμου. Άμμος, νερό, καθρέφτια
 Ανάπτυξη του έργου σε επιφάνεια 100.000 τ.μ., June '96-March '97
 Μέγιστη διάμετρος σπείρας 370 μ., μέγιστη διάμετρος κώνου 15 μ.,
 μέγιστο ύψος 3,75 μ., διάμετρος κεντρικού κώνου (λίμνης) 30 μ.
 Desert Breath. Sand, water, mirrors
 Overall surface 100,000 sq. m.
 Greatest diameter of spiral 370 m, greatest cone diameter 15 m,
 greatest height 37.5 m. Diameter of central cone (lake) 30 m



χρόνο, όχι μόνο τη μαθηματική πραγμάτωση του κλειστού αυτόνομου έργου, αλλά και τη λύση προβλημάτων, όπως ο υπολογισμός της κλίμακας, σε σχέση με τους όγκους των γύρω λόφων κ.λπ. Η άμεμπτη όμως εκτέλεση βασίστηκε στη δική τους φανατική σε ένταση προσοχή, τόσο στη λεπτομέρεια, όσο και στη συνολική εικόνα. Μια περιδιάβαση με το φως της αυγής απεκαλύπτει τις καθοριστικές εντάσεις των ακμών και το θαυμάσια συνθεμένο παιχνίδι των σκιών. Όπως το προβλέπουν στο τόσο περιεκτι-

κό κείμενό τους, την "επόμενη μέρα" είδαμε κιόλας με ένα αίσθημα ιλιγγίου μικρά ανεπαίσθητα κυματάκια άμμου να γλύφουν τα γεωμετρημένα σχήματα. Έτσι, όσοι από μας είχαμε την τύχη να δούμε αυτό το έργο, θα παρακολουθούσαμε νοερά τη γιγανθία απορρόφσή του από τη γύρω έρημο. Η φωτογραφία, μέρος αναπόσπαστο αυτού του είδους της τέχνης, ελπίζουμε να μας κρατάει ενήμερους για τη "ζωή" ενός έργου που μήκεια δυναμικά στο "φανταστικό μουσείο" μας.
 Εφη Ανδρεάδη

Earth Art Survives Desert Deluge



Aerial view of *Desert Breath*, 1997, near El Gouna, Egypt, with detail of compacted-earth cones.

Mar. 7-10, 1997, marked the second (and this time successful) inauguration of *Desert Breath*, a 25-acre configuration of earthen cones near the southeastern resort of El Gouna, Egypt. The intricately patterned land-art project, currently one of the world's largest, can be viewed either from the air or, more kinesthetically, on foot.

Situated on a plain between the Red Sea and its bordering mountains, 13 miles from the airport in Hurghada, *Desert Breath* consists of 178 geometrically precise cones. These forms are distributed in two

interlocking logarithmic spirals—one of mounds, one of incised depressions—that center on a 100-foot-in-diameter artificial pool. The W-shaped interior of the freshwater pool, from which the top of a semi-submerged cone protrudes, is to be filled to the rim four times per year via a nearly one-mile-long buried pipeline from a nearby oasis.

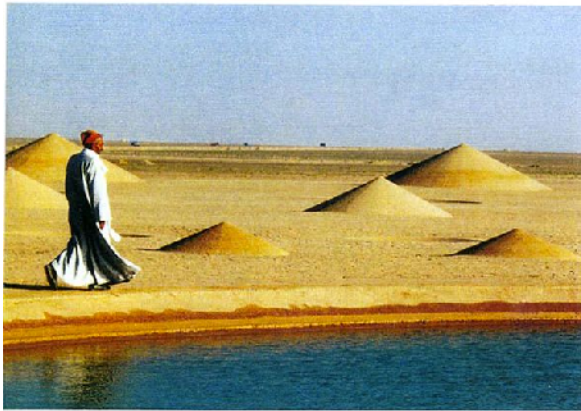
Viewers walking the nautilus-shaped labyrinth experience a subtle visual rhythm, as the cones change incrementally in size from a height (and depth) of 13 feet at the periphery to 1½ feet at the center. The mounds, evocative of barren peaks and of pyramids, were created with compacted sand displaced from the corresponding funnel-shaped holes, creating perfect positive-negative matches. Each above-ground cone is capped by a tiny mirror, reflecting the usually cloudless desert sky.

The project is the brainchild of three Greek women, known collectively as D.A.S.T.: Danaë Stratou, 33, a sculptor; Alexandra Stratou, 27, an industrial designer; and Stella

Constantinides, 28, an architect. In September 1995, the trio met with Samih Sawiris, president of the Egyptian-based development company Orascom P.T.D., who immediately accepted their proposal. He offered to supply materials and earth-moving equipment, plus the services of company experts and rotating crews of up to 70 workers. Over the next nine months, D.A.S.T. finalized its plan with Orascom surveyors and engineers. Actual construction began at the end of June 1996 and continued until Nov. 16. On that date, just 13 days before the work's projected completion, a natural catastrophe of biblical proportions struck the site.

During the next three days, an area that averages .04 inches of rainfall per year received almost 7 inches of downpour, causing severe flooding and erosion of the *Desert Breath* cones. Ironically, D.A.S.T. members had always conceived the natural deterioration process as an integral part of the work. (They intend to document future changes in photographs and films, just as they have done with the construction phase.) Barring future floods, the transformation of the pristine, hard-packed cones into more "organic" dunelike rises and hollows will now be accomplished primarily through wind erosion and the drifting of airborne silt over an undetermined period of months and years. —Richard Vine

Desert Breath: A Land Art Installation by Three Greek Women Artists



In the eastern desert of Egypt, between the blue of the Red Sea and the red of the blue skies at sunset, Danaë Stratou, sculptor, Alexandra Stratou, industrial designer, and Stella Constantinides, architect, installed their monumental, nine-month project, *Desert Breath*, by excavating the earth like impatient archeologists. Through the process of completing this immense work the three were led to a treasure of knowledge of how to live and work with and be defeated by the powers of nature.

Desert Breath was conceived in-situ by D.A.S.T. (the acronym under which the three artists work collectively). In a flat area of 100,000 square meters between the Red Sea and the eastern mountains, close to the district of El Gouna in Egypt, D.A.S.T. dug up and displaced 8,000 cubic meters of sand. The extracted sand was used to build protruding conical volumes, which were placed in a spiral sequence.

Positive and negative coincided in the center, where a 30-meter-in-diameter negative conical volume embraced a positive conical form, creating a W shape in cross-section. The void around the central cone was filled with water to the rim of the negative space, and only the flat top of the central form protruded from the water's surface.

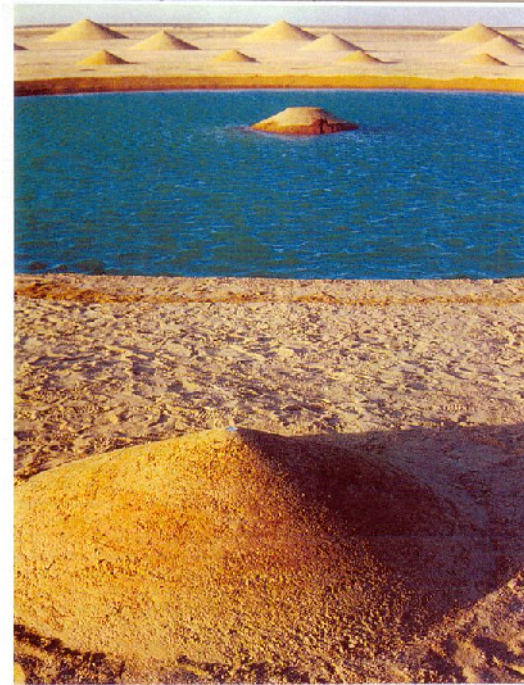
The cone shape was inspired by the natural accumulation of sand in conical forms, and was transferred by the artists into precise geometrical designs with the points replaced by small mirrors. One hundred and seventy-eight conical volumes of unequal height, depth, and diameter were arranged in the shape of two interlocking logarithmic spirals; one spiral consisted of protruding cones and the other of excavated ones. When strolling around the conical volumes, the viewer could hardly miss the shape and fleshy tone of a female

breast, topped with a round mirror in the place of the nipple. Mirrors were used as interfaces to extend the interaction of the work with basic natural elements: earth, sky, water, light.

The spiral, the other major form used, symbolized life, evolution, and eternity. By walking through *Desert Breath's* spiral, viewers experienced an interplay of relationships that started from what was visible: positive-negative, open-closed, small-big, up-down, in-out, nothingness-fullness, motion-immobility, dry-wet, and light-shadow, dichotomies that inevitably led to comparisons with ancient civilizations like those of Egypt, Mexico, and China. The conical sand shapes also referenced an hourglass, and the moment that the precise geometrical forms were completed, their degeneration began counting time's passage.

The lack of objects in the surrounding area created a major problem for the artists in determining scale, distance, and orientation for viewers of the piece. To solve the problem, the basic natural elements were used: earth for gravity, sky for motion, light for change.

During the implementation stage, heavy-construction and high-tech equipment was used to tame the natural materials at hand, sand and water. New tools were invented ad hoc to accommodate other needs that arose. A 1.5-kilometer pipeline from the nearest oasis became the main construction tool, providing water to compact the sand. Nature provided the mechanism for the final stage: disintegration. The six months originally planned for completion were also interrupted by nature's intervention: 13 days before the inaugural, scheduled for November 29, 1996, an early winter storm (an event that had not happened in the area for 90 years) caused considerable damage to the site.

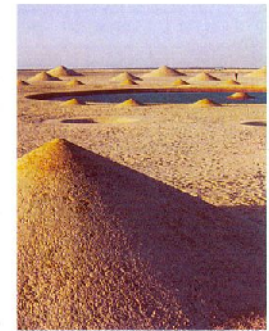
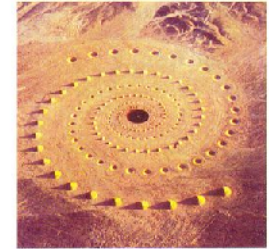


It took three more months to reach total completion. The artists used the untended delay to improve construction techniques and to increase the project's resistance to erosion.

Comparison between this contemporary work and the ancient monuments of the area is inevitable. Both have mathematical precision, but *Desert Breath* depicts the continuous evolution of life, in contrast to the ancient relationship with death embodied in the pyramids. Viewed from the top, *Desert Breath* brings to mind some of the structural elements and dynamic processes of our universe: the spiral shape of our galaxy; centrifugal and centripetal gravity forces; explosions and implosions giving rise to supernovae and black holes; the segmentation of matter in particle and energy "packages," in the repetition of the cones; and matter and antimatter, in the alternation of protruding and intruding cones.

The artists' statement reads: "The experience of walking within the installation was central to its conception: the goal was to create a reality which would be experienced through time and become part of one's physical memory. The rhythm that builds up while walking inside the spiral pathway compels towards the escape of our earthbound condition in order to view it from above. On the one hand [it is] an 'energy field' which lives by and imposes its own codes of perception and on the other a living organism that absorbs outside stimuli to either reinforce them, like the shadows cast by the sun, or to be changed by them, like the displacement of the sand by the wind." For those fortunate to wander *Desert Breath's* pathways, the work stimulated both mind and eye in a manner not often experienced in today's art world.

Zoe Kosmidou writes for Sculpture and is based in Athens, Greece.



Opposite and above: Ground-level and aerial views of *Desert Breath*, 1997. Sand, water, and mirrors, 100,000 sq. m.

REVIEWS

wittily excoriated some of the pieties of Catholic Ireland. Yet the same show also included work with a far less specific focus. A case in point is *Shark Lady in a Ball Dress*, 1988, a pint-sized, cast-bronze portion of a shark, perched on a voluminous woven-bronze dress and gamely parading both its male and female aspects for all the world to see.

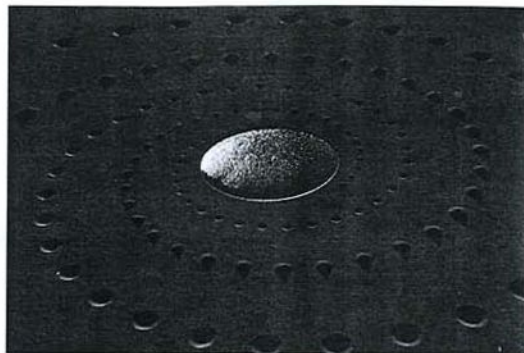
A similarly ambitious attempt to shuttle between cultural specificity and the collective unconscious characterizes the punningly titled "Udder" ("udder" is pronounced not unlike "other," at least in Ireland) series of the early '90s, which might reasonably be subtitled "A hundred and One Improbable Uses for a Cured Cowhide." In *Freud's Couch*, 1993, a limp and wrinkled cowhide is draped over a psychiatrist's couch preposterously suspended a few inches above ground-level on a makeshift wooden frame. The deceased cow's teats bristle out of the spot where the analysand's head should lie, while at crotch-level an eighteen-inch solid glass penis lolls dumbly but provocatively on the couch, its evident fragility at odds with its overblown self-importance. *Freud's Couch* relies for its effect on little more than a basic familiarity with the popular representation of analysis, something that can be safely assumed in most contexts in which it is likely to be shown. An installation such as *Croquet*, 1994, which has been exhibited in a variety of locations in Britain and Ireland, as well as the United States, is a different matter entirely. The significance of this work no doubt varies considerably according to viewers' familiarity with the national and class-cultural associations of the lawn-game to which its title refers.

Over the past few years Cross' udders and cowhides have been superseded by a variety of stuffed snakes, with, if anything, a consequent raising of the symbolic stakes. Yet her treatment of these enduring objects of fear and fascination is notably tender. In *Lover, Rattlesnakes*, 1996, two literally heartless rattlers (their hearts have been removed and cast in silver) entwine in an eternal embrace that is at once deathly and death-defying. A comparable ambivalence is illustrated by an untitled photographic work from 1995 that at first glance appears to be a simple X-ray image of a human skull. Closer inspection reveals a human fetus nestling in its cranial cavity. This work seems to represent either the threat of a macabre, deadly malignancy or the metaphoric dreaming of a future life.

—Caoimhin Mac Giolla Léith



Foreground: Dorothy Cross, *Arms*, 1996, silver-plated bronze. Installation view. Background, left to right: *Crucifix*, 1996; *Mantegna*, 1995, color photographs. Installation view.



DAST, *Desert Breath*, 1997, sand, water, and circular mirrors. Installation view.

EL GOUNA, EGYPT

"DESERT BREATH"

DAST

Last March, three Greek artists, Danae Stratou, Alexandra Stratou, and Stella Constantinides (calling themselves DAST, an acronym formed of their first names), completed an ambitious Land Art installation entitled *Desert Breath*. This project entailed nine months of intense labor and a contingent of some eighty workers, foremen, and engineers equipped both with construction machinery and specially designed wooden and aluminum tools. The chosen site was an austere, sandy plateau between the Red Sea and Egypt's Eastern Mountains, near a road running from Cairo to Upper East Egypt. Covering approximately one million square feet of desert bordering the sea, the project involved the displacement of some 300,000 cubic feet of sand.

Desert Breath imposes geometric order on a barren landscape. It consists of two interlocking logarithmic spirals—one formed of eighty-nine cones of sand, and the other of eighty-nine conical depressions cut into the surface of the desert (the protruding cones are made from the earth that was removed when the incisions were made in the sand)—circling outward in the shape of a nautilus shell. The artists chose the spirals not only for their formal appeal, but also in an obvious homage to Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. As one approaches the interior, the cones decrease in height and diameter (from twelve feet in height and forty-six feet wide to around one foot in height and five feet

wide). Placed in the center of the work is a large pool, filled with water from a nearby oasis and containing a submerged double cone ninety-eight feet in diameter intersected by a protruding cone forty-nine feet in diameter. The level of the rim of the incised cone coincides exactly with the point where the tip of the protruding one was cut off, six inches below its apex. Finally, small mirrors on the top of each cone in the installation accentuate the shape of the spirals, while "dematerializing" the conical volumes by reflecting the blue of the sky and simulating water: according to the artists, the mirrors are intended to serve as points of intersection between earth and sky. As it is exposed to steady erosion by the wind, this masterfully executed work incorporates chance and the irreversibility of time.

Both organic and geometric, the spirals seem to flow into the surrounding environment. At the same time *Desert Breath* echoes the power and authority of the Egyptian pyramids, adding a sense of bravura to this eccentric project. Its elegant design also encroaches on the desert's amorphousness, in a terrain that is ragged and rocky rather than picturesque. What *Desert Breath* delivers most successfully is a powerful statement about determinacy and endurance: it "grows" with an impressive certainty, combating the environment only to merge with it. When viewed from a distance, the installation resembles a fantastic village embedded in the desert, while, through its proximity to ancient ruins and a tourist resort, it also seems to testify to the eventual disintegration of all civilizations.

In order to fully experience *Desert*

Breath, it is necessary to walk along the spirals of displaced sand—a swirling pathway designed to bring the viewer closer to his or her body. Thus, human contingency binds this finite work to infinite space, inviting one to meditate not only on materiality, but also on the possibility of a momentary escape from its limitations.

—Marek Bartelik

DESERT BREATH

Three young women have transformed the landscape of the Sahara with an astonishing installation of sand and water. Their spiraling cones, seen here from the air, cover an area the size of 21 football pitches. Text: Sarah Howell. Photography: DAST





Each cone-shaped hole exactly mirrors a standing cone. The sand dug out to make the cones was used to build the mathematically exact standing cones



A chain of barren mountains makes a backdrop for the installation and



means that it can be seen from above as well as from a nearby road or on foot

'All the arts come crashing together in an installation,' says Danae Stratou. 'Some people think installations are dead; we think they have only just started. Any other art form seems dry and static in comparison.' She and her friend Stella Constantinides and her cousin Alexandra Stratou – their average age is 29 – have just pulled off an astonishing and magical coup of an installation called *Desert Breath*, made on a sweeping Cecil B. De Mille scale. They took on the most inhospitable landscape imaginable, the flat, burning Sahara desert, a site between the Red Sea and a range of mountains, and utterly transformed it. The desert's like a blank page, we were attracted by the infinity of it,' says Stella.

The three young women have christened their group DAST after the initials of their first names. They are all elegantly cosmopolitan Greeks – deceptively fragile looking – who were educated abroad. Danae studied sculpture at Central St Martin's, Alexandra is an industrial designer who trained in the USA at the Rhode Island School of Design and Stella still has a year to go at the Architectural Association in London. They share a formidable energy. Years ago they began dreaming of the desert, exploring ideas, working out the complex geometry, trying to find the right site. 'But we couldn't really imagine what we were getting ourselves into,' says Stella. They also produced computer-generated images of the installation they hoped to build which are astonishingly like the real thing.

They had the luck and cleverness to find an extremely generous sponsor. He is Samih Sawiris, the director of an Egyptian construction and development company called Orascom; he is building a resort complex on the Red Sea a few miles away from the site. Sawaris was bowled over by their enthusiasm and offered to supply workmen, accommodation, materials, earth-moving equipment and technical advice.

The women aimed to construct two interlocking spirals, one of geometrically precise cones of varying sizes mirrored by a second spiral of cone-shaped holes – perfect positive-negative matches. The sand dug out to make the holes would be used to build the standing cones. The biggest of these was to be 3.75m high – about twice the size of a man – giving a human scale to the hugeness of the desert. As the cones get nearer the middle of the spiral they gradually get smaller. A round pool 30m in diameter is the focal point of the installation. In its centre the tip of a final cone shows above the surface of the water. As the water evaporates gradually, the cone in the pool protrudes further and further.

The very first thing DAST tackled when they arrived in Egypt

was getting water to the site. A friendly Bedouin showed them a source of brackish, undrinkable water which they had piped to make the central pool. They found that it evaporated far more quickly than they had expected; it takes only ten days to empty, and they now plan to refill the pool four times a year. I wondered if any bemused local ever went for a swim in it. 'Only the artists are allowed to bathe there,' they say, laughing.

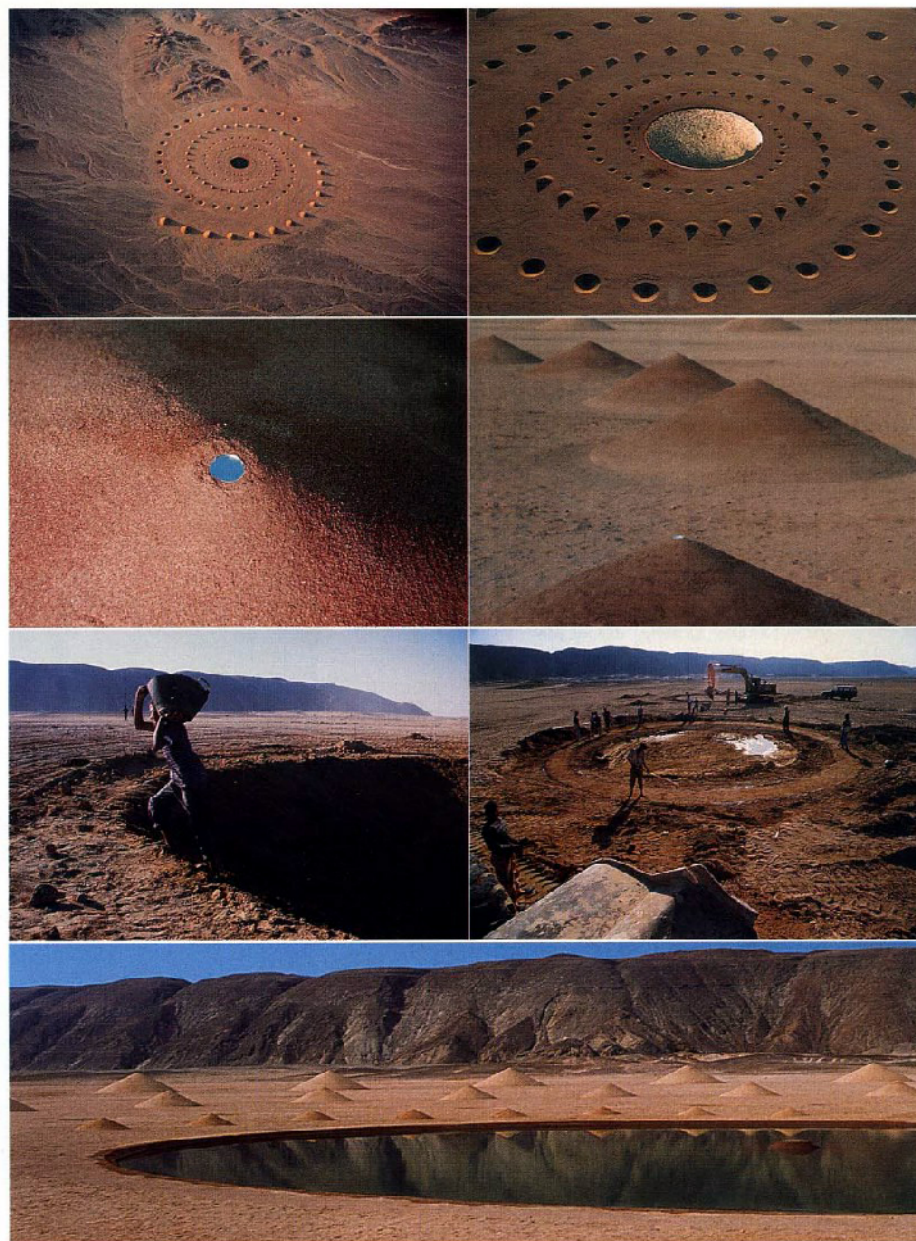
Making precise cones out of sand in a windy, sweltering atmosphere was not quite as impossible as it sounds. The desert where they worked was quite stony and the earth hard and compacted rather than soft and fluid like a beach. 'We built up the cones in tiers like wedding cakes,' says Stella. To complement the borrowed excavators, they invented their own rather Heath Robinson machine for forcing down and smoothing the sides of the 'wedding cakes'. The three of them worked on the site for seven days a week from sunrise to sunset, from August 1996 when construction work started until the job was finally finished in April this year, two years after their first exploratory visit to Egypt.

Originally they were due to finish work last November and until then the gods had been ardently on their side.

But only 19 days before the completion date there was, out of the blue, an enormous storm. It hadn't rained so hard in the Sahara for 100 years. All their immaculate cone-shaped holes were filled with mud and flooded – huge amounts of sand had been washed down from the mountains almost obliterating their work. Anyone less driven would have given up, but Danae, Alexandra and Stella just took a break for a couple of weeks and then went back and built it all over again.

They photographed and videoed the making and remaking of *Desert Breath* and plan to record its gradual decay and disintegration. Barring more floods this could be a life's work. It could well last 50, even 100 years. One wonders what wild myths will have grown up around it by then. In DAST's film it already looks extraordinarily serene and strange especially as the sun goes down and the shadows lengthen and the cones seem to vanish and reappear. It could be some mysterious ruined prehistoric temple. On her last visit to Egypt Stella hitched a lift from a truck driver who was going from Cairo to the Red Sea. After she had discouraged him from detours to the sphinx he said triumphantly that he would take her to see some modern pyramids instead. It must have been satisfying to tell him that it was she who had built them ■

To contact DAST, fax Stella Constantinides on 0171 731 7687



Above, from left: Stella Constantinides, Danae Stratou and Alexandra Stratou. Opposite: *Desert Breath* under construction and after completion, including, top right: the pool in the installation's centre. Second row, left: each cone is topped by a mirror reflecting the sky and echoing the central pool. Third row: workmen constructing the central pool. Bottom: the pool before the water evaporates. Only the very top of the final cone can be seen above the water

La spirale du Sahara

En Égypte, entre mer et désert,
trois femmes ont fait surgir du sable
Desert Breath. Une œuvre que
l'histoire du land art avait oubliée...
jusqu'à ce qu'un satellite
ne la redécouvre.

PAR SOPHIE PINET

Pendant que l'artiste Andy Goldsworthy alignait des cailloux sur l'herbe verte de quelques champs anglais, tenant au passage de nous faire oublier les racines un brin plus musclées du land art américain, trois jeunes filles manœuvraient, elles, des tractopelles au milieu du Sahara. Alexandra Straton (architecte), Danae Stratou (artiste) et Stella Constantinides (architecte) ont ainsi conçu de 1995 à 1997, au sein de leur collectif DAST Artcam, pour faire surgir du sable égyptien deux monumentales spirales imbriquées gravitant autour d'un lac aux contours recessinés pour former un cercle parfait. Pourquoi parler de cette œuvre aujourd'hui ? Il aura suffi d'un clic sur la toile et d'une balade sur les rives de la mer Rouge, via Google Earth, pour que *Desert Breath* souffle sur les lieux communs : non, le land art ne s'est pas concentré sur les plaines au nord du tropique du Cancer ; non, l'Égypte n'est pas que la terre d'accueil des mille et une merveilles de l'Antiquité qu'on lui connaît ; et oui, le fantôme de l'explorateur Robert Smithson s'est visiblement aventuré jusqu'à ces contrées. Impossible en effet de ne pas entrevoir dans *Desert Breath* les contours de la *Spiral Jetty* qu'il fit émerger du Grand Lac Salé en 1970, 500 mètres de boue, de cailloux et de sel, récupérés à l'aide de monstres d'acier, lorsqu'ici, il aura fallu déplacer 8 000 m³ de sable sur 100 000 m², creuser 89 cônes pour constituer la première spirale, avant de former 89 cônes pour la seconde. Mesurer la distance, jouer sur les ➔

UN LAC ROND, 89 cônes en creux et 89 cônes en bosse, c'est *Desert Breath*, une œuvre d'Alexandra et Danae Stratou et Stella Constantinides.

« DESERT BREATH »
s'étend sur 10 hectares de
désert, à quelques kilomètres
de la mer Rouge.



hauteurs, les diamètres, tasser, sortir
un niveau, mesurer à nouveau, et puis...
observer. Observer le ciel qui défile
au dessus de l'œuvre avant que le vent
ne la fasse disparaître, et, contre toute
attente, constater qu'elle a finalement
résisté aux lois de la nature.
Danaë Stratou parle de forces
spirituelles pour expliquer cet état
de conservation miraculeux. De celles
qui auraient préservé les pyramides de
Gizeh? Peu importe, il flotte, selon elle,
dans ce cadre où « l'immensité de la
mer rencontre l'immensité du désert », un
halo de mystère, qui préserve les traces
de l'homme de l'érosion naturelle.
Ici le temps s'amuse de ses intervalles.
Ici là, c'est Google Earth qui le dit. ☺

**Zoom sur le plan miroir
du lac,** dont les contours
ont été redessinés pour qu'il
soit parfaitement rond.



Greece Finalizes Deal With Troika; Samaras Wants €14.6B on 4/1

By Andy Dabakis
ATHENS — Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras said on Monday that his government has finalized a deal with the Troika (the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) to hold down social and political costs.

Samaras said the deal, which he said would be announced on April 1, would allow the government to request a €14.6 billion loan from the Troika to help cover the country's budget deficit.

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Caratzas Targeted by Greek Justice Dept.

By Andy Dabakis
ATHENS — The Greek Justice Department has announced that it is investigating the activities of former Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis and his family, including his son, George Karamanlis.

The investigation is part of a broader effort by the Justice Department to investigate the activities of high-ranking officials and their families.

TNH Honors 2014 and Past Grand Marshals of NY Greek Parade

By Andy Dabakis
NEW YORK — The National Herald (TNH) held a reception at its headquarters in New York City to honor the 2014 and Past Grand Marshals of the NY Greek Parade.

The event was held at the TNH headquarters and featured a reception and a dinner.

JHU Creates Dracopulos Directorship

By Constantinos K. Sotiropoulos
BALTIMORE — Johns Hopkins University (JHU) has created a new directorship to honor the late Dr. George Dracopulos.

The directorship will be held by Dr. George Dracopulos, who was a prominent scientist and leader in the field of cancer research.

50 Wealthiest

WITH THE NEW 50 WEALTHIEST LIST, WE REVEAL THE NAMES OF THE 50 RICHEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. FROM BILLIONAIRES TO PHILANTHROPISTS, WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE LIVES OF THESE POWERFUL INDIVIDUALS.

Desert Breath: Three Greeks, Two Years, One Million Sq. Feet of Sand

Continued from page 1

While it is not yet clear how the desert will affect the lives of the three Greeks, the desert is expected to have a significant impact on the region's economy and environment.

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Government Raids The Athens Home Of Greek-Ame. Expat

By Aris Papadopoulos
THE STATE DEPARTMENT has announced that it is investigating the activities of a Greek-American expatriate in Athens, Greece.

The investigation is part of a broader effort by the State Department to investigate the activities of high-ranking officials and their families.

Protopsalti's MMA Event Raises Funds For Children

By Demetrios Tsakal
NEW YORK — Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) event Protopsalti has raised funds for children in need.

The event was held at the Protopsalti arena and featured a variety of MMA fights.

Onassis Series: Truth and Lies In Feminism

By Constantinos K. Sotiropoulos
ATHENS — The Onassis Series, a collection of essays and articles, explores the complexities of feminism and the role of women in society.

The series is edited by Constantinos K. Sotiropoulos and is a must-read for anyone interested in the topic.

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Maria Iliou's Both Sides of the Aegean Continuation of her Smyrna Film

Continued from page 1

Maria Iliou's film, "Both Sides of the Aegean," is a powerful and moving story that explores the lives of people who have been displaced by war.

The film is a continuation of her previous work and is a must-watch for anyone interested in the topic.

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Sad Adieu for Explosion Victim Panagopoulos

By Constantinos K. Sotiropoulos
NEW YORK — A sad adieu was held for the late George Panagopoulos, a prominent scientist and leader in the field of cancer research.

The adieu was held at the Protopsalti arena and featured a variety of speakers.

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Salt Lake City Parish Shall Stay Unified

By Theodore Kalmoukos
SALT LAKE CITY — The Salt Lake City Parish shall remain unified, according to a recent decision by the church's leadership.

The decision was made after a period of internal conflict and is a positive sign for the future of the parish.

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3 Greeks and 1 Mil. Sq. Ft. of Sand

By Constantinos K. Sotiropoulos
ATHENS — Three Greeks and one million square feet of sand are the focus of a new project in Greece.

The project is a joint effort by the Greek government and private industry and is expected to have a significant impact on the region's economy.

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Mysterious Egyptian spiral seen on Google Maps

By Marc LotMonito / Published February 25, 2014 / LiveScience



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To some viewers, it looks like a landing strip for extraterrestrial spacecraft or perhaps the portal to a parallel universe, if not an ancient monument to a benevolent deity who had a keen eye for design and symmetry.

But what people are actually seeing in the desolate reaches of the Egyptian desert, just a short distance from the shores of the Red Sea, is in fact an environmental art installation. And it's been baffling tourists and armchair travelers since it was constructed in March 1997.

Danae Stratou, Alexandra Stratou and Stella Constantinides worked as a team to design and build the enormous 1 million square foot piece of artwork called Desert Breath to celebrate "the desert as a state of mind, a landscape of the mind," as stated on the [artists' website](#). [See Photos of the Stunning 'Desert Breath' Spiral]

Constructed as two interlocking spirals one with vertical cones, the other with conical depressions in the desert floor Desert Breath was originally designed with a small lake at its center, but recent images on Google Maps show that the lake has emptied.

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The entire structure, in fact, is slowly disintegrating as the sand that forms the art piece slowly blows off its cone-shaped hills and fills in its depressions, making it "an instrument to measure the passage of time."

The art piece joins other mysterious images and environmental artworks that fascinate viewers on Google Earth, Google Maps and other online platforms. For example, the wind-blown steppes of Kazakhstan are home to a [large pentagram](#) etched into the Earth's surface on the shores of a desolate lake.

The five-pointed figure bedeviled viewers' imaginations until it was revealed to be the outline of the roads in a Soviet-era park. The star was a popular symbol in the U.S.S.R., and Kazakhstan was part of the former Soviet Union until that union dissolved in 1991.

And etched onto the desert floor of New Mexico are two large diamonds surrounded by a pair of overlapping circles. This is reportedly the site of a hidden bunker belonging to the [Church of Scientology](#), according to the author of a book on the religious group.

The creators of Desert Breath have no political or cult-like aspirations, however. "Located at the point where the immensity of the sea meets the immensity of the desert, the work functions on two different levels in terms of viewpoint: from above as a visual image, and from the ground, walking the spiral pathway, a physical experience."

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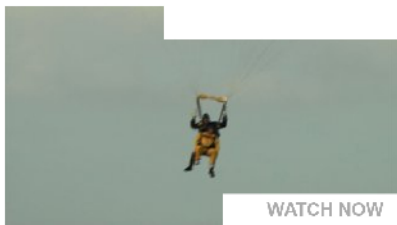
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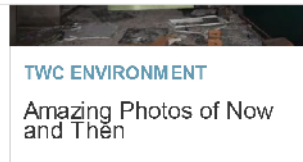
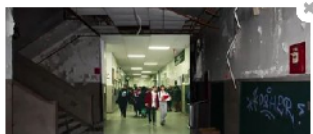
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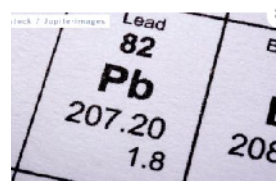
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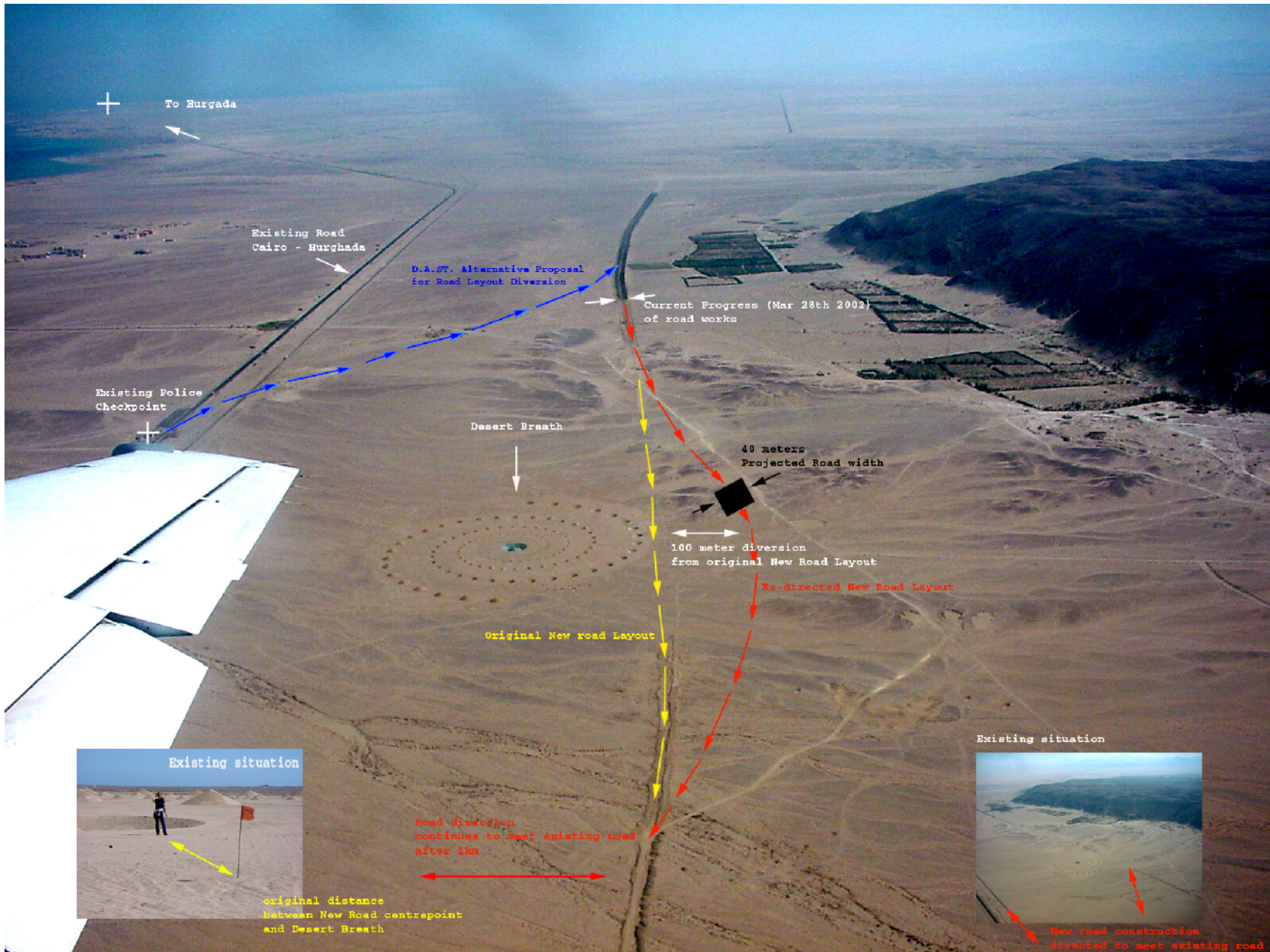
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D.A.ST. diagramm for protecting Desert Breath in 2003 from projected road building. The governorn accepted D.A.ST. proposal.