

Here's Your Guide to Visual Art at FORM Arcosanti 2017

BY SATIVA PETERSON

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A barn owl projected on the UCLA campus, part of *Animal Land* by artists Lauren Strohacker and Kendra Sollars. *Animal Land* uses projected imagery to encourage dialogue about the displacement of wildlife.

Animal Land, artists Lauren Strohacker and Kendra Sollars



The FORM Arcosanti festival is back this weekend with an eclectic musical lineup that includes performances by Solange, Father John Misty, Skrillex, Thundercat, and James Blake to name a few.

But there's more than musical performances happening in the eco-city outside of Cordes Junction. "It's a really immersive event," says Sean-Paul vonAncken, Arcosanti public relations representative and resident. There are the official time slots for performers, sure, "but a lot of creative things are happening all over. That's the whole point."

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At this experimental festival, visual arts offerings and cultural programming are part of the mix, including discussions, art installations, film screenings, yoga, meditation, explorations in environmental activism, hikes, and more.

"The truly exceptional thing about FORM Arcosanti, what sets it apart from every other music festival on the planet, and what gives it its air of ecological sanity, is that it takes place within and around the prototype buildings of Arcosanti," says Jeff Stein, co-president of the Cosanti Foundation, in a press release.

The community, designed by visionary architect Paolo Soleri, combines architecture with ecology, a philosophy Soleri called "arcology." Since the 1970s, the Arcosanti experiment has been concerned with how architecture can deliver on the social promise of creating efficient, human-scale, mixed-use (meaning many functions going on within one structure), and public space-oriented architecture.

The visual arts offerings at FORM's 2017 edition include installations and interactive art hosted by the Phoenix Art Museum. Attendees can see Phoenix-based mural artist Andy Brown working on-site, as well as *Animal Land*, an ongoing project by collaborators Lauren Strohacker and Kendra Sollars. *Animal Land's* video projections of black and white, inverted images of native wildlife

Luna's video projections of black and white, inverted images of native wildlife species in urban spaces reimagine and re-visualize biodiversity loss. The projections are evocative and ghostly.



Arcosanti Festival '77, a celebration of health and healing, had a lineup that included Jackson Browne and David Lindley, McCoy Tyner, Gary Burton, The Paul Winter Consort, Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, EON, David Liebman, and Tom Rush.

Ivan Pintar

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"For us, the experience is really just a reminder of the desert landscape," Strohacker says. "We want people to be reminded that we share this [urban place] with non-human animals." She and Sollars agree that Arcosanti is a great place to think about the built environment and human interaction.

At FORM, *Animal Land* will set up two projections, of a herd of javelina facing each other. Festival

Don't Expect Fyre Festival-Style Drama at FORM Arcosanti

of a herd of javanna, facing each other. Festival attendees will walk through a passageway and be immersed in the projections, juxtaposing human bodies and animal bodies.

FORM's cultural programming includes Pathways to Paris, a collaboration between musicians, artists, and activists highlighting climate change through climate-centered panels and performances. Solange's Saint Heron collective will present artist talks and the multidisciplinary experience *The Secret Life of Plants*, as well as a meditative jam session called *Soul Cleansing*. Planned Parenthood will host a panel discussion, and screen its virtual reality experience *Across the Line*, an immersive VR film that puts viewers in the shoes of a patient trying to access health care amid abortion clinic protesters.

Screenings of the documentary films, *Chasing Coral*, about vanishing coral reefs around the world, and *Whose Streets?* an account of the Ferguson, Missouri, uprising after the killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown, will also be shown during the festival. *Whose Streets?* was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. (Here's the [full schedule of events](#).)

"Festivals are high-intensity," Arcosanti's vonAncken says. "People are partying, people are speaking and collaborating and networking, so it's a very magnified event to begin with, but it's really so lovely, as a resident, to see the architecture act as it should. We're trying to build the skeleton, the infrastructure, the framework, to have the soft stuff, the social theater stuff, take place on top of that."

If the structures and buildings of Arcosanti reimagine the relationship between our built environment and the natural world, FORM, an artist-run music and arts festival, seeks to reimagine what the festival experience can be. At FORM, there's artist activism, dialogues, and a cultural series on social justice, but there's also a dynamic element of music which encourages cross-pollination

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music, which encourages cross-pollination and innovation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Curious Incident of the Dog In the ...
Fri., Jun. 23, 7:30pm **TICKETS**

Cheech & Chong
Fri., Jul. 21, 8:00pm **TICKETS**

Bring It! Live
Sat., Aug. 12, 8:00pm **TICKETS**

Steve Martin & Martin Short
Sun., Aug. 13, 8:00pm **TICKETS**

Halau O Kekuhi
Sat., Apr. 28, 7:00pm **TICKETS**

As vonAncken puts it, "It's really the curatorial structure, the number of people on-site, and then, the intention of the space is to be completely immersive."

This year FORM is expecting around 1,500 attendees, the largest crowd in the festival's four-year history. But this is not the first time Arcosanti has drawn large crowds to its location outside of Phoenix.

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Arcosanti Festival '78 – "Art and the Environment" – had a lineup that included Todd Rundgren & U2, Stephen Stills

ARCOSANTI FESTIVAL TO ART AND THE ENVIRONMENT had a lineup that included Todd Magnanoli & Steps, Stephen Sims, Richie Havens, Tom Rush, Gary Burton, Ronee Blakeley, and more. Approximately 10,000 people were in attendance.

Tomiaki Tamura

According to Soleri archives manager Hanne Sue Kirsch, there is a history since the mid-1970s of having musical events here. There has always been cultural programming at Arcosanti the whole time, over its nearly 50-year history. Kirsch says, "FORM right now is the biggest thing that happens here, but we have 10 to 12 **events** in the year, and more that are kind of unscheduled because we seem to be getting music groups that come overnight and put on a performance, just because of the space."

At an exhibition called, "The Architectural Vision of Paolo Soleri," which opened at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in February 1970, there was a model of Soleri's plans for Arcosanti. Next to the model was an invitation: "We are starting to build an arcology in Arizona, come join us." The exhibition later traveled to the Whitney Museum, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, and the UC Berkeley Art Museum. That is where some of the first Arconauts came from – from seeing that invitation.

"It worked," Kirsch says. "But, it's not only that, it's that this place was not built by a construction company. All of it has been done by workshoppers, by volunteers, by lunatics, by lots of really, really interesting people from all over the world. All ages, all backgrounds, so to us it's like we built this. It's our baby. Slow and steady."

FORM Arcosanti takes place from May 12 through 14.

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