

# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

JANUARY  
2012

*all the right moves*

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# centerfold

Ball-Nogues Studio's latest installation is disappearing before our eyes

## A Mojave Mirage



**Top, from left:** An early computer rendering shows artist Andrea Zittel's property in California's Mojave Desert with Yucca Crater. Its plywood was previously formwork for a public sculpture in Edmonton, Alberta. The enclosure rose over the course of five days. **Bottom, from left:** Ball-Nogues Studio staff and volunteers made up the eight-person team. Urethane spray foam turned the crater inside the enclosure into a swimming pool. Solar-powered LEDs came on at night.



**Near Joshua Tree National Park** and a Marine Corps base, in the middle of California's Mojave Desert, the site of Yucca Crater is light years away, mentally, from Los Angeles, Houston, or New York, all loci of other installations by Ball-Nogues Studio. The Mojave is also the diametric opposite of Edmonton, Alberta, home to a sister installation. Yucca Crater's frame is the reincarnation of formwork previously used to secure the stainless-steel components of a public artwork commissioned by the Edmonton Arts Council. To give the formwork a second life, in the interest of conservation, Benjamin Ball and Gaston Nogues specifically designed the two projects simultaneously. The plywood was disassembled, trucked to the desert, and reassembled.

Part sculpture, part earthwork—a plywood enclosure surrounding a deep pool of saltwater—Yucca Crater is Ball and Nogues's take on the idea of decay. For their source of inspiration, they looked back into the history of the American West, when people built the shacks now dotting the landscape, in various stages of ruin. "Those are powerful forms," Ball says. More recently, Nogues notes, "Tons of houses and developments were built in Southern California. When things tanked, entire neighborhoods were abandoned." Suburban swimming pools included.

Along similar lines, Yucca Crater was conceived with the briefest of life spans in mind: just one weekend at the invitation of High Desert Test Sites, an organization cofounded by artist Andrea Zittel to create experiments that remain in their context. But what a party that weekend was. "Before we knew it, 30 people were swimming and cannonballing in the middle of the desert," Nogues recalls. Ball adds, "A week later, locals were still exploring it. It had developed a mystique." Its current state? On the way to becoming a hole in the ground. —*Edie Cohen*

**THROUGHOUT** BIRD HAPPOLD, STRUCTURAL ENGINEER, PENDERGRASS TRENCHING, EXCAVATION CONTRACTOR, DEROUICHEY URETHANE CREATIONS; URETHANE CONTRACTOR

UNFOLD →

*Clockwise from top:* Yucca Crater faced the San Bernardino Mountains. It stood 30 feet tall. Swimmers could dive or use a ladder to get into the 8-foot-deep pool, holding 7,000 gallons of saltwater.

