



## Land Art In the U.S.A. (Sculptors)

*William Malpas*

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LAND ART IN THE U.S.A. A new study of land art in North America, featuring all of the well-known land artists from the 'golden age' of land art - the 1960s - to the present day. This book considers all of the major land artists working in America - Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, James Turrell, Robert Morris and Alice Aycock - as well as chapters on land artists from overseas who have created work in the U.S.A., such as Andy Goldsworthy, Christo and Richard Long. Fully illustrated, with a newly revised text for this edition. Bibliography and notes. ISBN 9781861714053. 328 pages. EXTRACT FROM THE CHAPTER ON ROBERT SMITHSON Robert Smithson is the key land artist, the premier artist in the world of land art. And he's been a big favourite with art critics since the early Seventies. Smithson was the chief mouthpiece of American earth/ site aesthetics, and is probably the most important artist among all land artists. For Robert Smithson, Carl Andre, Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, Dennis Oppenheim and Tony Smith were 'the more compelling artists today, concerned with 'Place' or 'Site''. Smithson was impressed by Tony Smith's vision of the mysterious aspects of a dark unfinished road and called Smith 'the agent of endlessness'. Smith's aesthetic became part of Smithson's view of art as a complete 'site', not simply an aesthetic of sculptural objects. Smithson was not inspired by ancient religious sculpture, by burial mounds, for example, so much as by decayed industrial sites. He visited some in the mid-1960s that were 'in some way disrupted or pulverized'. He said he was looking for a 'denaturalization rather than built up scenic beauty'. Robert Smithson said he was concerned, like many land (and contemporary artists with the thing in itself, not its image, its effect, its critical significance: 'I am for an art that takes into account the direct effect of the elements as they exist from day to day apart from representation'. Smithson's theory of the 'non-site' was based on 'absence, a very ponderous, weighty absence'. Smithson proposed a theory of a dialectic between absence and presence, in which the 'non-site' and 'site' are both interacting. In the 'non-site' work, presence and absence are there simultaneously. 'The land or ground from the Site is placed in the art (Non-Site) rather than the art is placed on the ground. The Non-Site is a container within another container - the room'.

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