

## ***Seven Magic Mountains Interpretive Facts***

In the background to the east is Jean Dry Lake, which since the early 20th century has been used for fashion shoots, automobile ads, and from the 1960s has served as an important site for artists creating performances and Land Art.

Jean Dry Lake is an ephemeral lake, holding water only during rainy periods. The dry lake—in Spanish the *playa*, or beach—is the perfect blank slate for inscribing temporary marks on the land.

The first modern artwork was created by Swiss-borne French artist Jean Tinguely, who lived from 1925 to 1991, and his partner Niki de Saint-Phalle. They created a Happening on the lakebed in 1962. Titled *Study for an End of the World No. 2*, Tinguely and Saint-Phalle built a sculpture out of found junk and blew it up with dynamite. The art event was broadcast live by NBC and featured in *Life* magazine and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Michael Heizer, the noted American artist, started working on Jean Dry Lake in 1968. His most famous work on the playa was *Rift 1*, the start of a 530-mile-long series of sculptures he called *Nine Nevada Depressions*. *Rift* was a zigzag trench fifty feet long, a foot wide and eighteen inches deep that was designed after a photograph of derailed train cars.

In 1970 Guido Deiro leased the surface rights of the playa for a year for \$50, so Heizer could continue to use it to make art. Heizer used a motorcycle that year to draw enormous circles on the desert floor. *Circular Surface Planar Displacement Drawing* became the basis for related artworks placed from New York City in 1972 to Switzerland in 2012.

Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains* consists of thirty boulders weighing from — to —, stacked into seven towers. They form totemic figures — feet to —-feet tall. They are meant to evoke contrast and continuity from nature to culture, hence their bright colors, which are typical of Rondinone's sculptures.

The largest modern art rock moved was Michael Heizer's *Levitated Mass*, which transported a 340-ton boulder in 2014 one hundred and six miles from a quarry in Riverside, California to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Santa Monica.

The largest single stone objects ever moved by humans are the sixty-foot tall Colossi of Memnon in Egypt, which were moved 420 miles up the Nile. One of the two statues fractured during an earthquake in the first century B.C.E. and was reconstructed by the Romans, who used several pieces—but the intact statue weighs an estimated 720 tons. The Colossi were originally painted in bright colors.

Ugo Rondinone first created massive stone figures in 2013. The nine figures of *Human Nature* were carved from Pennsylvania bluestone, stood 16- to 20-feet tall, and were installed on Rockefeller Plaza in New York City for eleven weeks before being sold and moved.

On the horizon to the east are the McCullough Mountains. Just over the ridgeline is Sloan Canyon, which hosts thousands of petroglyphs, or designs pecked into rocks. Some of the rock art is prehistoric, some historic—but all of it the oldest kind of Land Art humans have made.