

MARIANELA FUENTES

Multidisciplinary Artist — Sculpture, Painting, and Ritual Installation

01 — ARTIST INFORMATION AND BIOGRAPHY

Marianela Fuentes

Marianela Fuentes is a multidisciplinary artist based in Mexico City, whose practice unfolds at the confluence of sculpture, painting, ancestral cosmology, and ecological regeneration. Born in the Coahuila desert, a land that was once an ocean in prehistoric times. Fuentes developed an early fascination with desert landscapes and their deep geological memory, an affinity that has shaped much of her artistic practice. "Her work operates as a living continuum between the material and the spiritual, where metal, natural pigments, stainless steel, stone, resin, glass, and crystal beadwork become vehicles of ancestral memory and contemporary resonance.

Her visual language arises from a dialogue between Indigenous cosmologies, meditative processes, and the poetics of transformation. Each work is conceived as a threshold: a site where time takes on physical form and where the visible and the invisible coexist in fragile equilibrium.

Fuentes has created permanent installations for Google Headquarters (California), The National Mall (Washington D.C.), and the Navy Yard (Philadelphia), where her work *Alpha Sacred Beings* —a collaboration with artists from the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Nation— reinterprets a *Parasaurolophus* dinosaur skeleton as a ceremonial body. Her work has also been exhibited at the National Palace and National Library of Mexico, Zona MACO (Mexico City), and Petit Cul-de-Sac (St. Barths).

She is an artist-in-residence at the Eaton Workshop in Washington D.C. (2019–2021), where she deepened her research into art as a vehicle for ceremony, ecology, consciousness, and collective reflection. She is also co-founder of Savia, a native-species nursery and reforestation initiative in Tepoztlán, where art and ecology converge as acts of restoration and devotion.

Between 2017 and 2019, Fuentes developed installations at Black Rock City, Nevada — the same desert that is home to the Gerlach Trailhead — establishing a direct, long-term relationship with the landscape, the community, and the spirit of this region.

Lahontan

— *the name of the prehistoric lake that covered the entire Black Rock desert thousands of years ago*
The final name will be developed in collaboration with the tribe. If the proposal is selected, we will reach out directly to the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe (or to the County committee, which already works with them) and propose the name as a collaboration.



Lahontan — sunset view, threshold to the Black Rock desert landscape.



Night view — the interior lighting illuminates the perforated patterns: constellations, animal tracks, spirals, and ancestral figures.

Comparative studies of form variants (angular, curved, and hybrid) developed during the design process are also available as supplementary material upon the review committee's request.

Project summary

Lahontan proposes a monumental sculptural gateway in corten steel, sited at the start of the Gerlach Trailhead of the Washoe Artrail. The work marks the meeting point between the trail, the community, and the landscape of the Black Rock desert — a symbolic threshold that invites the visitor to cross into their experience on the Artrail.

Its two vertical forms, open to the sky, frame the horizon and surrounding landscape, while perforated patterns on its surface —constellations, animal tracks, spirals of water and wind, and ancestral motifs— narrate the geological, cultural, and spiritual history of the region. The work is an altar to the beings who inhabited this land in the past, the present, and those yet to come. This space acts as a sacred portal separating the earthly world from the divine.

Lahontan acts as a meeting point between the trail, the community, and the landscape: a symbol of welcome, orientation, and respect for this ancestral land. Its open forms frame the landscape and the sky, reminding whoever crosses the threshold that they are part of something far larger and more ancient — the same Black Rock desert that has held, for centuries, cycles of water, migration, ceremony, and collective memory.

By day, the work functions as a visual marker and point of orientation; by night, it becomes a beacon lit from the ground, visible from a distance across the dry playa.

If possible, and if it feels right to the committee, at the unveiling we could invite the Paiute tribe who still inhabits this land to perform a ritual of union.

04 — PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTWORK

Physical description

The work consists of two asymmetrical vertical forms in corten steel, leaning toward one another to frame a central threshold through which visitors pass as they begin the trail. The surfaces are perforated with motifs representing constellations visible from the Black Rock desert, local animal tracks, spirals evoking water and wind, and petroglyphs and ancestral symbols of the region — together telling a story: that of creation, union, and life.

At night, interior light filters through the perforations, casting patterns of light onto the surrounding ground and transforming the piece into a beacon visible from the trail. The work is designed to integrate directly with the landscape: its location at the trailhead orients the traveler and welcomes them to the Artrail experience.

05 — ESTIMATED DIMENSIONS

Estimated dimensions

Height: 5.5 m (main pillar) — **18 ft (≈ 18'1")**

Total width (between both forms): 5.5 m — **18 ft (≈ 18'1")**

Depth / thickness of each form: 1.4 m — **4.6 ft (≈ 4'7")**

Proposed materials

Corten steel (weathering steel), 6–12 mm gauge, natural finish — chosen for its durability in extreme desert climates, its progressive patina that harmonizes with the tones of the Black Rock landscape, and its weather resistance without ongoing maintenance.

Reinforced concrete foundation with concealed structural anchoring, sized to withstand the wind loads characteristic of the dry playa.

Low-consumption integrated LED lighting, resistant to dust and extreme conditions.

Lighting concept

The work incorporates warm light integrated into the ground, directed toward the perforated surfaces. During the day, the perforations act as natural light filters, casting shifting shadows throughout the day. At night, the interior lighting turns the piece into a beacon marking the trailhead from a distance, reinforcing its role as a point of reference and orientation for residents and travelers.

Power source: Solar.

Approximate weight

[Pending final estimation by structural engineering, once the exact steel gauge and selected form variant are defined. This will be included in the complementary technical proposal.]

Artistic philosophy and intention

For Fuentes, art is both invocation and gesture of healing: a means to reactivate what has been forgotten, to honor what still breathes beneath the surface, and to imagine new ecologies of being. Her practice does not represent the landscape — it activates it as a living archival system, where stone, water, metal, and light record the intertwined histories of human and non-human life.

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Sketches and representations of previous works



Alpha Sacred Beings

8 × 4 m —
Stainless steel,
resin, fiberglass,
and crystal
beadwork —
Permanent
installation,
Navy Yard,
Philadelphia,
USA



10 — SELECTED SCULPTURAL WORK (PREVIOUS PIECES)



Arrow of Time

1.5 × 4 m — Black marble, ball bearings, and stainless steel — St. Barthélemy, France





Ichiro Sacred Beings

9 × 4 m — Steel, resin, fiberglass, and crystal beadwork — Black Rock City, Nevada, USA





Ichiro Sacred Beings — Google Headquarters

9 × 4 m — Steel, resin, fiberglass, and crystal beadwork — Permanent installation, Google Headquarters, Mountain View, California, USA



Flecha del Tiempo

1.5 × 4 m — White marble, stainless steel, and ball bearings — Macroplaza, Piedras Negras, Mexico



Ha Mawari

235 × 600 ×
125 cm —
Steel, resin,
fiberglass,
crystal
beadwork, and
quartz —
Sinaloa Art
Museum,
Mexico

TAU

3 × 4 m —
Steel, resin,
fiberglass, and
crystal
beadwork —
Cuatro
Ciénagas,
Coahuila,
Mexico



Full trajectory

2026

- Amity, Art Baja, Los Cabos, Baja California, Mexico — Group Exhibition
- Art Week, Mexico City, Mexico — Group Exhibition

2025

- Autódromo H. Rodríguez, Mexico City, Mexico — Public Exhibition
- Amity / Drops of Remembrance, Mexico City, Mexico — Group Exhibition, Art Week

2024

- Parque Bicentenario, Mexico City, Mexico — Public Exhibition
- Los Pinos, Mexico City, Mexico — Public Installation
- Post Human, Jagarhouse, Los Angeles, USA — Group Exhibition
- Art Week, Mexico City, Mexico — Group Exhibition
- Museo Nacional de las Culturas, Mexico City, Mexico — Group Exhibition

2023

- Ojai, California, USA — Permanent Installation
- Caleta Gallery, Art Week, Mexico City, Mexico — Public Exhibition

2022

- Petit Cul-de-Sac, St. Barthélemy, France — Permanent Installation
- Navy Yard, Philadelphia, USA — Alpha Sacred Beings, permanent installation
- Evolsie 3.8, Mexico City, Mexico — Public Exhibition
- National Library, Mexico City, Mexico — Public Exhibition

2021

- Google Bay View, Mountain View, California, USA — Permanent Installation
- Eaton Hotel, Washington D.C., USA — Permanent Installation
- Haab Project, Mexico City, Mexico — Solo Exhibition

2020

- Discovery Museum, San José, California, USA — Public Installation
- Haab Project, Mexico City, Mexico — Solo Exhibition
- 180 Woz Way, San José, California, USA — Public Installation

2019

- National Palace, Mexico City, Mexico — Solo Exhibition
- Museo del Desierto, Coahuila, Mexico — Solo Exhibition
- Black Rock City, Nevada, USA — Installation
- Eaton Hotel, Washington D.C., USA — Solo Exhibition
- National Mall, Washington D.C., USA — Public Installation
- Casa Cultural Ome, Mexico — Installation

2018

- Macroplaza, Piedras Negras, Mexico — Permanent Installation
- Black Rock City, Nevada, USA — Installation
- 50 Bowery, New York, USA — Solo Exhibition

2017

- Petit Cul-de-Sac, St. Barthélemy, France — Permanent Installation
- Black Rock City, Nevada, USA — Installation
- Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico — Public Installation