

in the same way was the Pine Barrens in southern New Jersey, which only begins to approach that kind of Western spaciousness.⁷⁴¹

The experience of time is a key consideration of *Sun Tunnels*. It is an artwork that took Holt three years to plan and execute. She first began planning the work while in Amarillo, Texas, in 1973, at which time her husband Robert Smithson was working on another Earthwork called [Amarillo Ramp](#). While flying over its site, Smithson and the plane's pilot tragically crashed and died on July 20. Afterward, Holt completed *Amarillo Ramp* in collaboration with other artist friends and created a video work called *Boomerang* with Richard Serra in an Amarillo television studio.

The following year, she continued the plans for *Sun Tunnels* by searching deserts in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah for an appropriate site to place the work on flat ground, with a full ring of low mountains visible in the background. The site she settled on and purchased in northern Utah is the former location of an ancient body of water called Lake Bonneville. The completed *Sun Tunnels* invoke universal cycles of time through their alignment with the patterns of the rising and setting sun along the Earth's orbit. In the years immediately before Holt's death, *Sun Tunnels* also acquired unusual, circular markings within the interior of each concrete tube. Before her death in 2014, Holt surmised that these were traces of bullets shot through the tunnels by local residents of the area. Even though Holt did not plan these marks, as an artist she understood them to be a part of *Sun Tunnels'* life in its environment and thought they should be left untouched by art conservators.

Following the completion of *Sun Tunnels* and its publication as a creative essay by Holt, the artist also made a film depicting the creation of her work. In it, Holt spends considerable time showing the importance of working with skilled laborers and experts in other fields. While *Sun Tunnels* is a remote artwork that relatively few visitors have seen in comparison to similarly well-known artworks located in major metropolitan areas, Holt would carry through a number of the same interests in a piece she created over a period of five years from 1979 to 1984 in the Rosslyn neighborhood of Arlington, Virginia. Lauded at the time of its completion as one of the first permanent outdoor artworks realized with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts—in addition to funds supplied by Arlington County and nearly a dozen local businesses—[Dark Star Park](#) dramatically changed the course of a debris-ridden site that had formerly housed a gas station and warehouse. Commissioned to accompany the construction of an office building at a narrow intersection of several streets feeding traffic into nearby Washington, D.C., *Dark Star Park* is a site that communicates with visitors passing on foot and those in cars.

Made up of concrete spheres, tunnels, metal poles, circular pools, and vegetation, Holt's work is a complex sculptural arrangement that plays upon a series of framed sightlines that change with the direction and speed of the approaching viewer. Like her earlier *Sun Tunnels* in Utah, *Dark Star Park* also operates between the real time spent looking at the artwork and more permanent, celestial patterns. Specifically, the work includes shaped metal "shadows" on the ground that align with the actual shadows cast by the sun at the precise time of 9:32 AM on August 1 each year. Thus, beyond its more conventional sculptural qualities to be experienced by walking through or driving past the work, *Dark Star Park* also embodies a cyclical time calibrated to the movement of the sun.



People gather at Nany Holt's Sun Tunnels to view the summer solstice sunset on June 20, 2021.

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