



GEMINI G.E.L. AT JONI MOISANT WEYL

Michael Heizer

Born:

Berkeley, California, 1944

Michael Madden Heizer was born on November 4, 1944 in Berkeley, California to Robert Fleming Heizer and Nancy Elizabeth Jenkins. Robert Heizer, who grew up in Lovelock, Nevada, was one of the most prominent anthropologists in the country, teaching for almost thirty years at the University of California, Berkeley and authoring numerous books until his death in 1979.

Heizer was exposed to numerous influences during his youth, not only from his father's anthropological work, which took him to rural California, Nevada, Peru, and Bolivia, but also from the work of his maternal grandfather, Olaf P. Jenkins, who was a geologist. He briefly attended the San Francisco Art Institute from 1963–64 but moved to New York in 1966, where he was in contact with a number of prominent artists of the day, including Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Walter De Maria, Tony Smith, and Frank Stella. Heizer's early works had included a number of more conventional abstract paintings and sculptures, but he soon found New York constraining.

Heizer, with colleague Walter de Maria, went west in 1967, and created a new genre of "land art" or "earth art," which used as its medium the earth. Far from the confines of New York, his works reached unprecedented size, culminating in what is perhaps his most famous work, *Double Negative*. He collaborated with many of the early earth artists, even appearing in Robert Smithson's film about *Spiral Jetty*, perhaps the best-known example of earth art.

In 1972, Heizer began construction on a massive installation known as *City* in the rural desert of Lincoln County, Nevada. Since then, Heizer has grown increasingly shy of media attention, and has become known as something of a recluse. Nevertheless, he has continued to produce smaller-scale sculptures and paintings, which have been featured in numerous solo exhibitions (most prominently at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York). His works now appear in museums and public spaces worldwide.

In 1995, Heizer was diagnosed with a neurological disorder known as polyneuropathy, which reduced his ability to use his hands. Despite this, Heizer currently resides with his second wife, Mary Shanahan, near the *City* site, and continues his work on the project to this day.