

ARCHIVES

Navigating the Land

Participatory Art at Sagehen Creek Field Station

Nate Reifke is among the artists and art collectives who have participated in the ArtSciConverge residency at the University of California, Berkeley's Sagehen Creek Field Station in the Sierra Nevada near Truckee, California. During his residency, Reifke hiked the landscape, selected rocks, inscribed them with tribal-inspired designs, and discreetly returned them to their original environments. He then mapped each installation site, and this map was later displayed at the field station.

Searching for these rocks became a participatory game, transforming visitors into collaborators and encouraging them to engage more intentionally with the land. Reifke's project functioned as a navigational puzzle—one that sparked curiosity, invited discovery, and deepened connection to place.

The ArtSciConverge residency has supported dozens of interdisciplinary projects that merge art and science to foster discovery, strengthen community relationships, and drive social engagement. The program was influenced by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's 2014 report *Enhancing the Value and Sustainability of Field Stations and Marine Laboratories*, which identified a major challenge: Although field stations produced essential research, many were losing funding due to limited public visibility and engagement. By integrating art and community participation into its mission, Sagehen's ArtSciConverge program has built a model for bridging scientific research with public awareness, action, and policy.



Nate Reifke, *Stacked Geodes*, 2016, digital print, 24.5 x 19.5 inches. Permanent collection of the National Academy of Sciences.

This photograph is featured in *The Eureka Moment: Unveiling Metaphors of Discovery*, on view at the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, through May 29, 2026.