



LINDA VALLEJO

Selected Exhibitions:

Frazier Museum, Kentucky; Patricia Correia Gallery, Los Angeles; University of Judaism, Marjorie and Herman Platt Gallery, Los Angeles; Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), Los Angeles; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Art Museum of South Texas; Anchorage Museum of History and Art; The Bronx Museum of the Arts; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Antonio Museum of Art; Mexico City Modern Art Museum; Galeria Las Americas; The Women's Building; Self Help Graphics and Art, Inc.; Santa Monica Museum of Art; and Carnegie Art Museum, Oxnard.

Selected Major Publications and Media:

Art Business News, ArtNews, Southwest Art, Saludos Hispanos, Nuestra Gente National Magazine, Latin Style Magazine, Los Angeles Times, Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Art 2002 (Arizona State University).

Artist's Gallery Talk:

Linda Vallejo Sunday, November 7 — 2pm
www.lindavallejo.com



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*"A spiritual aura
 hovers around these
 provocative images
 going deep enough to
 tap a collective
 subconscious"*

— ARTWEEK



*Woman, tree
 fragment,
 handmade paper
 and mixed media by
 Linda Vallejo, 1987.*



a Prayer for the Earth

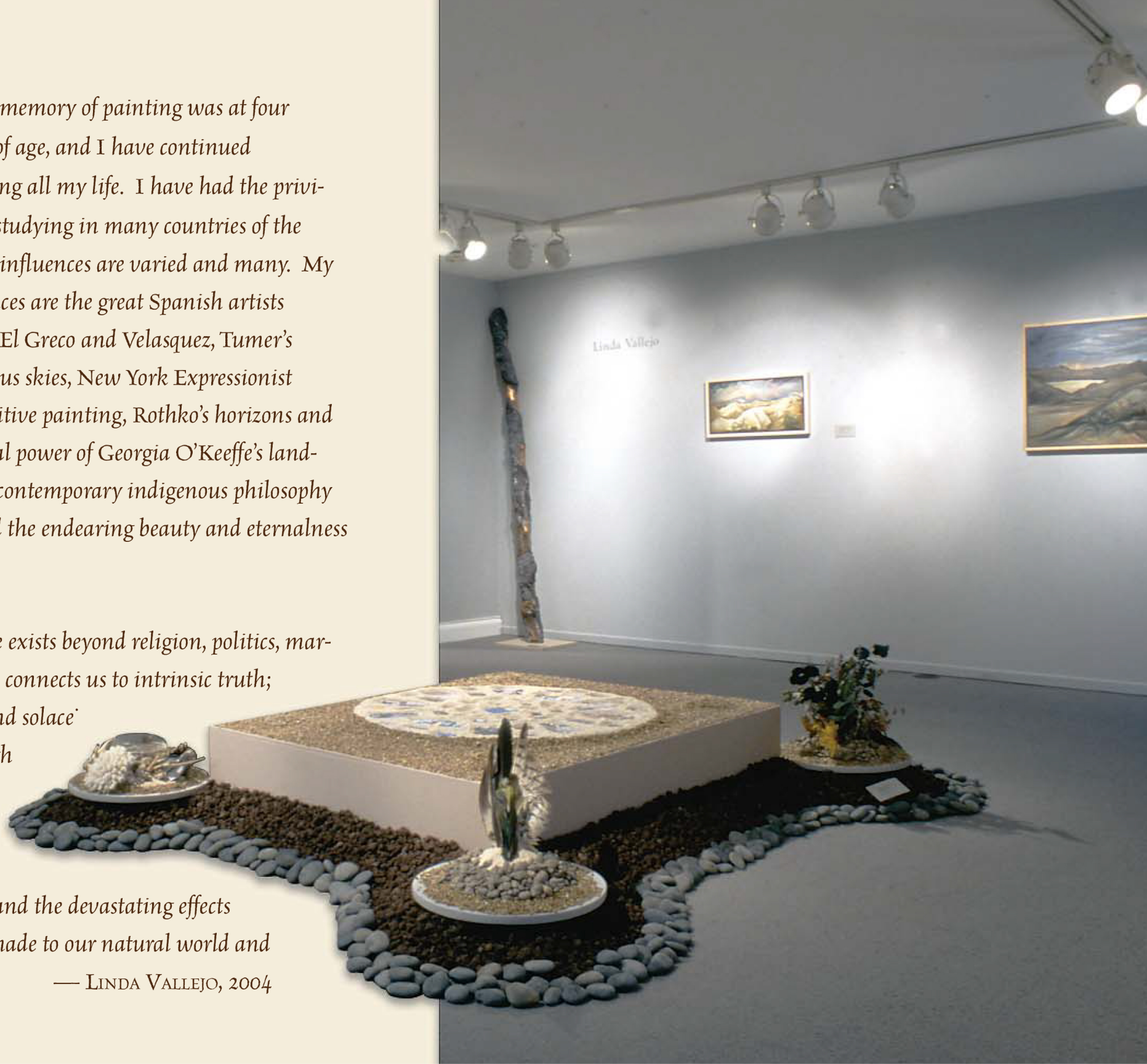
paintings & installation by **Linda Vallejo**

SEPTEMBER 11 - NOVEMBER 21, 2004

My first memory of painting was at four years of age, and I have continued painting all my life. I have had the privilege of visiting and studying in many countries of the world, therefore my influences are varied and many. My chief artistic influences are the great Spanish artists Picasso, Goya, Dali, El Greco and Velasquez, Tumer's immense and glorious skies, New York Expressionist automatic and intuitive painting, Rothko's horizons and soft edges, the sensual power of Georgia O'Keeffe's landscapes, ancient and contemporary indigenous philosophy and symbolism, and the endearing beauty and eternalness of nature.

I believe that nature exists beyond religion, politics, market and art. Nature connects us to intrinsic truth; offering meaning and solace to our lives. Through "A PRAYER FOR THE EARTH" I offer a memory of the beauty of the earth and the devastating effects that pollution has made to our natural world and natural selves.

— LINDA VALLEJO, 2004





California Horizons: Death Valley's Ubehebe Crater, oil on canvas by Linda Vallejo, 2004.

Linda Vallejo's paintings express a tradition of respect for the healing power of nature. Over the past twenty-five years, she has investigated humanity's valuable and fundamental relationship to the natural world, and conversely, the destruction of the human spirit as nature is destroyed. Vallejo's art is a finely honed process of observation, recollection, and production focused on helping the viewer to re-member and re-collect a sublime experience in nature in hopes of confirming need for the natural world.

A Prayer For the Earth powerfully coalesces a career long investigation of diverse media and contextual interests in nature and, as art critic Suzanne Muchnic noted in *ArtNews*, in "the feminine unconscious and issues of religion and morality." This installation unites her early work in assemblage sculpture and relief using handmade ... painted paper with her more recent



Olmeca Ancestor, tree fragment, handmade paper and mixed media by Linda Vallejo, 1988.

landscape paintings. Through these and her intuitive knowledge of ceremony, Vallejo explores the irreconcilable visions of nature as tranquil beauty, and, nature as the devastated victim of humanity. Leah Ollman of the *Los Angeles Times* has observed, "For Vallejo, a Los Angeles native with a deep interest in the function of ceremony, these works serve perhaps, as acts of prayer. For the viewer, they are at the least a soothing poultice."

Born in California, Linda Vallejo has traveled extensively studying painting, printmaking and art history. She studied lithography at the University of Madrid, Spain, and received her MFA in Printmaking from California State University Long Beach. Her work has been exhibited at: SPARC in Los Angeles, Armand Hammer Museum,

Laguna Art Museum, The Bronx Museum, Museum of Modern Art New York, San Antonio Museum and the Santa Monica Museum. She has been a guest lecturer and instructor at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Fresno Art Museum, California State University Long Beach, Santa Monica City College and the University of California at Irvine.

Between 1980-1990, Vallejo created a series of over one hundred earth-based sculptures entitled, *Tree People*, dedicated to the concept of a metamorphic relationship with nature, that begged the question, "How would humanity appear if we were acknowledged our fundamental relationship to

nature?" These sculptures were made of found tree fragment from the sprawling urban center, hand-made



paper, and mixed media. “Tree people” represented the tree with its human counterpart as aspects of nature’s pantheon of the gods of the earth, water, fire, and air.

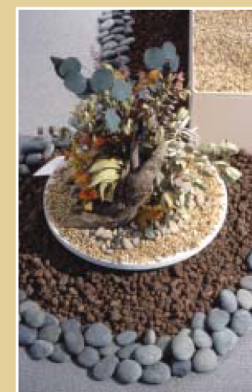
In 1993, a series of gouaches entitled *The Death of Urban Humanity: A World Without Soul* invaded these tranquil earth images to focus on the devastation of the urban center, the destruction of nature, and concurrently, the destruction of humanity’s “*natural spirit*.” Between 1996-2004 Vallejo returned to painting completing two suites entitled, *Los Cielos* and

Nature and Spirit. These portfolios contain giant, luminous skies; pristine, living oceans; and broad landscapes to depict the beauty of and humanity’s intrinsic connection to nature.

In 2003, Vallejo combined these two irreconcilable images to create her first political, ecological, and spiritual work of art focusing on the reconciliation of opposites: the beauty and tranquility of nature with urban violence and carnage. An installation assemblage was created entitled *HOPE, In the Midst of War, Death and Destruction*,

combining tragic images of war dead inspired by Goya’s *Desastres*, with the hope and solace offered by nature.

Now, in 2004, Vallejo presents *A Prayer for the Earth*. This new installation creates a complete environment through a combination of paintings representing the beauty of the earth; sculpture focusing on our metamorphic relationship with nature; a central mandala of manipulated photographs containing tragic images of the earth’s destruction; all surrounded by an assemblage containing symbols of Earth, Water, Fire and Air. It is through these four simple, yet fundamental elements of the natural world that we find “*A Prayer for the Earth*”.



A Prayer for the Earth: Central Mandala Installation, photographic montage, found object assemblage, stone and mixed media by Linda Vallejo, 2004.



Full Moon at Dusk, oil on canvas by Linda Vallejo, 2000.



BROTHER TREE, tree fragment, handmade paper, and Procion dyes, 30"x14"x10", 1990



THE ROCKET, Tinkertoys, prints of original paintings, recycled Styrofoam, Mylar, yarn, and rubber tubing, 64"x32"x10", 2008



EARTH'S ALTAR SILVER, prints of original paintings, wooden structure, gold leaf, plaster, Styrofoam, Mylar, Plexiglas, velveteen, plastic beads, and yarn, 40"x24"x20", 2008



THUNDER, LIGHTENING AND RAIN, oil on canvas, 48"x48", 2006



ELECTRIC OAK SPRING EQUINOX, oil on canvas, 30"x30", 2007



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LINDA VALLEJO
A Prayer for the Earth Eco Installation

Linda Vallejo's art grows out of her experiences with different cultures over the course of decades of far-flung travel and careful study. The daughter of an Air Force colonel, she spent several years in Europe as a child and young woman, absorbing Western traditions in the great museums and ancient sites. She turned to painting and drawing at an early age: "Art and artistic expression were my first language," as she puts it. When she returned to the U.S. after attending high school and college in Spain, Vallejo became interested in contemporary Chicano culture. She and her husband also spent time traveling through Mexico, visiting Mayan and Aztec ruins and learning the history of that civilization. And from her home base in Topanga Canyon, California, she has been involved with Native American and Mexican rituals and ceremonies for the past 25 years.

That makes for a rich and heady brew of influences, all of which become distilled in Vallejo's hands into compelling installations, paintings, sculpture, and collages. But the starting point for this varied and visually rich output is almost always nature. For many years Vallejo has been involved with participating in and presenting Native American ceremonies, some of which take place in remote locales, far from so-called civilization. "You're literally in the middle of nature," she says, "and more often than not you are participating in a ceremony that allows you

to look at sky and landscape for hours and days on end." Some of the magical, almost hallucinatory quality of those experiences makes their way into her paintings, such as *Thunder Lightening and Rain* (2006) and *California Horizons, Boney Ridge* (2006).

Ceremony and nature are also at the heart of Vallejo's installations, particularly *A Prayer for the Earth Eco Installation* (2008), which brought together so many different components of the artist's vision. In part the theme was the devastation done to the planet, but the work also touches on the healing powers of ceremony and the interaction of the basic elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Vallejo invented a powerful ritualistic site of her own in this work, a modern-day space for contemplation that nonetheless echoes the kinds of totems and sacred places we associate with Native American traditions.

Trees are another aspect of the natural world that have a deep significance for the artist, and as she has pointed out, almost every culture has some

COVER:
**A PRAYER FOR THE EARTH
ECO INSTALLATION** includes paintings,
sculpture and central mandala. Central
Mandala, manipulated photographs, stone,
volcanic rock, shell, coral, feathers, ash,
obsidian, tree and plant materials.



TWIN HEARTS, tree fragment, handmade paper, and Procion dyes, 48"x 30"x 11", 1990



GOLDEN YUCCA, oil on canvas, 40"x 30", 2006

sort of Tree of Life symbol. When she focuses on individual trees, as in *Golden Yucca* (2006), she gives them the dignity and mystery of portraits. The artist lives in an area surrounded by venerable but endangered oaks, and these have become the basis for a series of "electrified" paintings: the trees appear to glow with an almost otherworldly light. "When I look back on these works now, I can see that what's happened is my almost supernatural vision of the tree," Vallejo says. "The electric trees echo my experiences with ceremony." They also recall the reverence and animation that artists like van Gogh and O'Keeffe brought to their paintings of the natural world.

In spite of her involvement with indigenous cultures of the American West and Mexico, Vallejo's exposure to European art still plays a role in her iconography. The altars she has been making in recent years reference the richly gilded polyptychs of Gothic art, particularly the International Style, but Vallejo recycles her own images as digital prints and turns these into shrines commemorating the rapidly vanishing beauties of our wild spaces. Western religious art also underlies the shapes of her "Postmodern Trash" series, which recycles the detritus of our daily lives – in particular, Styrofoam – into deeply ironic shrines and votive objects.

And throughout her recent art appears a figure who also has a religious significance: the voluptuous female Vallejo calls the Mud Woman.

She is a substantial, earthy character, a surrogate for the artist but also a symbol of Every Woman, and she recalls the fertility goddesses that have appeared in just about every culture since the dawn of time. She is the Eternal Feminine who in some works appears ready to be worshipped and in others seems to be sadly presiding over the waste and devastation around us.

That Vallejo is able to channel and draw on so many aspects of her multicultural experience without breaking stride or overloading the viewer is a testament to her strengths as an artist. And her recognition that culture is no longer a matter of one dominant tradition makes her very much part of a mainstream that is constantly looking to expand the borders and boundaries of contemporary art and life.

ANN LANDI

Ann Landi is a contributing editor of ARTnews and author of the four-volume *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Art*.



DEATH VALLEY, STOVEPIPE DUNES, oil on canvas, 12"x 60", 2006



CALIFORNIA HORIZONS, BONEY RIDGE, oil on canvas, 18"x 72", 2006