

***Linda Vallejo: A Prayer for the Earth Eco Installation***

Artist's Statement

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"Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye, it also includes the inner pictures of the soul."

-Edward Munch

My first memory of painting was at four years of age and it has continued as my life's dedication. My goal as an artist has been to consolidate multiple, international influences gained from a life of study and travel throughout Europe, the United States and Mexico. My creative influences are many and varied. They include the surreal, violent, and spiritual images of Picasso, Goya, and Dali, Turner's mysterious and glorious skies and cloud formations, Rothko's distant horizons and soft edges, the monumental forms and brilliant coloration of the Mexican muralists Rivera and Siqueros, and the sensual power of Georgia O'Keefe's landscapes. I have also been deeply influenced by international contemporary artists such as Kaoru Arima's (Japan) haunting manipulated newspaper collages, Ana Mendieta's (USA) uncanny use of nature and natural materials combined with photography, Lee Bontecou's (USA) nature-inspired, mixed media "crystalline" sculptural forms, Harum Farocki's (Czechoslovakia) monumental digital photographs and videos, Isa Genzken's (Germany) complex digitally-based mixed media sculpture, and Mangelos' (Croatia) postproduction digital paintings and sculptures. Finally, I have always had a keen interest in ancient architectural sites, history, and mythology. I have visited several sites in both Europe and Mexico, studied ancient philosophy and symbolism, and participated for the past twenty years in indigenous ceremonial rights. All of these influences have been brought together to create two environments entitled A Prayer for the Earth and HOPE, In the Midst of War, Death and Destruction.

During the first twenty years of my career, my painting and sculpture investigated humanity's fundamental and metamorphic relationship with nature through the completion of over 200 "fantastic realism" landscape oil and acrylic on canvas paintings and 50 earth-based sculptures made of found tree fragment and handmade paper. As I continued to explore images to articulate the significance of our relationship to the natural world, I began looking for ways to incorporate these paintings and sculptures into a three-dimensional presentation. After much investigation and experimentation, I produced A Prayer for the Earth and HOPE, In the Midst of War, Death and Destruction.

A Prayer for the Earth was originally presented at The Carnegie Art Museum in California. This first environment combined paintings representing the beauty of nature; earth-based mixed-media sculpture focusing on a symbiotic relationship to nature; a central "mandala" of manipulated photographs with images of pollution juxtaposed with images of international indigenous cultures in the act of ceremony and prayer; all surrounded by a mixed media assemblage depicting earth, water, fire and air. A Prayer for the Earth has been successfully installed at the Los Angeles Natural History Museum, the Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum, and the Orange County Center of Contemporary Art in 2006 and 2007.

HOPE, In the Midst of War, Death and Destruction, an installation originally produced in 2003 in response to 9/11, is a political and spiritual statement focusing on the reconciliation of opposites: the spirituality and tranquility of nature juxtaposed to the carnage and violence of war. This original installation combined paintings inspired by Goya's Desastres and a central "mandala" of manipulated photographs containing images of war dead (Civil War, WW I and II, Korean Conflict, Vietnam, Iraq, Auschwitz and Hiroshima) surrounded by an assemblage of natural forms and symbols representing HOPE.

After continued research and development, both A Prayer for the Earth and HOPE, In the Midst of War, Death and Destruction have become environments with accompanying mixed- and multi-media sculpture and collage components. This newest series of digitally based works have been designed to reveal the complexity and obscurity of postmodern life and experience, and to serve as "juxtaposing" elements within the environments. Censored, GTMK?, The Ferris Wheel, Postmodern Trash, and Earth's Altar utilize pre-produced wood and plastics, newspaper pages, and recycled products in combination with mixed media and manipulated digital images taken from the Internet and my own paintings. The environment is installed in one or two rooms, with paintings and collages placed on walls, sculpture placed on walls and pedestals as appropriate, and the central "mandala" composed in the center of the floor space. Walls and floor may be painted in brilliant colors to unify the multiple aspects of the environment.

A Prayer for the Earth and HOPE, In the Midst of War, Death and Destruction present interlocking, juxtaposing painting, sculptural and collage elements that surround the viewer, pressing them to search for the question: "What is the value of nature in calming and resolving the confusion and losses created by the far-reaching postmodern problems of raging pollution and war?" The environment draws the viewer into a space where their attention is divided between images that portray the loss of natural resources and human life juxtaposed with images of the beauty and solace of nature and the natural world. My goal is to create a space that communicates the idea that without nature humanity, history and culture as we know it are lost, that nature is the thread that encircles and describes all of us, regardless of gender, race, age, or creed, and finally, that nature is beyond politics, religion, market, and even art!

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