

Talk for Galerie Anais on Linda Vallejo's

The Electric Oaks

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When I first saw **Linda Vallejo's** *Electric Oaks*, my immediate response was that they were singing or communicating their emotions through the colors of their auras. They triggered a memory in me of a time when I once attended the sacred Black Hat ceremony of the Karmapa many years ago in New York. Not understanding anything about what was going on, I was amazed to hear people on line in front of me speaking to each other excitedly, and saying things like: "Did you see the light show that was going on above his head? Wasn't it incredible? Weren't the colors spectacular?" I had not seen any light show, not anything at all above his head, but I was deeply affected by this revelation. Although I felt I had completely missed the essence of the ritual, there was a sense in which I also had my mind blown that day – just by learning about what some others HAD seen. Ever since then I came to believe that there might be many colorful lightshows taking place in various living things – in people, plants and trees – and that they are sacred and that they are visible to some with a gift for vision – like clairvoyants, shamans, psychics or meditators – but not to everyone. I also realized that even if I had NOT SEEN this light show it did not mean that there was no such thing going on. This runs so contrary to our Cartesian precepts about how we must doubt the things we do not see clearly and distinctly, and it runs so contrary to our sense of scientific observation that most of us would have dismissed what they heard in these conversations. Yet I was somehow intuitively convince that the Karmapa must have had an electric light show going on above his head and that this was a very esoteric and mystical phenomenon. I wanted to know more about it.

I have called the *Electric Oaks* of Linda Vallejo iconic. What did I mean by that? Rather than referring to the days of psychedelic, hallucinogenic imagery, (which is one way of explaining their iconic nature) what I had in mind was actually the way these *Electric Oaks* were icons to remind us of the interconnected-ness of all humans with non-human nature and the cosmos via the energies that are invisible to most of us with the naked eye. I was thinking of precisely the kind of energy that Linda's *Electric Oaks* depict – energies that radiate their colorful vibrations to humans and to all of nature. I was also thinking about Kirlian photography and how we now know that plants have auras – like people. We have seen these auras depicted artistically by the halos around the heads of saints in religious icons. In my article for Linda Vallejo's catalogue I spoke about her oak trees creating a rainbow lightshow and a rainbow Enlightenment. Just seeing her *Electric Oaks* triggers in me all sorts of associations. When I see the pink auras I remember having learned from my healer that pink is the color of love. I think that her trees are sending vibratory energies of love to all of nature. And it is this love that we receive from the trees and in turn send out to them via our own vibrations (as we learn from the book *The Secret Life of Plants*), via the music that we play to which plants respond, as well as via our most private thoughts, which they have been shown to pick up almost telepathically – it is this exchange of emotional energies between plants and humans – an exchange that travels through space and also extends out to the entire cosmos – that enhances the life force and creates a sense of wellbeing in all living things. In *The Secret Life of Plants* I was amazed to

read about how plants can be shown to communicate with other living things at great distances from them, things that are located across the globe or out in the sky. Everything is interconnected on a cellular, molecular, atomic, and even a subatomic level, and these brilliant colors in Linda's oak trees are iconic in symbolizing the dissolving of all clear boundaries that we might have thought separated living things from each other. On the contrary, her Oaks show us how energies and vibrations radiate out from the trees, how their color fields create powerful emotional responses in us and how they must play a vital role in nurturing all life not only on our planet but in the universe as a whole. They show us that we are not responding to the physical leaves, for the leaves are not visible in the canopies of the Electric Trees, but that we are responding to the colorful lights that radiate from the leaves and suffuse the atmosphere with the vibrations that are their way of reaching out to all of life. In *The Secret Life of Plants* we learn that plants can think. The experiments done by Cleve Backster who stumbled upon this as he was a former polygraph examiner, were written up in the newspapers in 1969 and we learned that "readers seemed to be most intrigued by the thought that an oak tree could actually quake at the approach of an axman." He showed that plants can read your mind. Luther Burbank was known to speak to plants about his love for them. He wanted to create a vibration of love and let them know they have nothing to fear.

There is much more to say about the Tree itself in terms of being an iconic image. The tree can be endowed with several meanings in Linda's work. To begin with though, we must mention that Linda's studio is above a grove of sacred oak trees. These trees are part of our planetary landscape and historically they have also provided food for indigenous peoples for centuries through the use they have made of the nutrients using their acorns prepared in different ways for food. On a more symbolic level the tree can be seen as an archetypal symbol relating to both the Tree of Life found in the mythic symbolism of many cultures as the tree that connects the earth to the heavens – and also to the Axis Mundi or World Tree sometimes called the Sacred Tree that shamans climb as they travel from the lower world to the middle world to the upper world in search of knowledge and lost soul fragments in order to perform their sacred shamanic healings. With the wisdom passed on to them by ancestors, spirit guides, and helpers from those realms – by all those in the spirit world with whom they communicated when on their shamanic journeys out of the body, they return to the middle world where we live to bring healing to those whose worlds are out of balance - in dis-ease.

Indeed as it often happens, I find myself in alignment with the themes I want to cover in my writing. As I was thinking about Linda's Electric Trees and the way in which I had first thought of them as singing – I came upon an unusual art/science show that is now at the Pacific Design Center. It is called *Soniferous Eden* and is a named that appealed to me. Its creator, Mileece, is a musical composer. She was experimenting with an instrument she created using interactive plant software written in Super Collider (an open source audio programming language) by which she put electrodes on the plants that could translate their energies as they responded to positive or negative thoughts of humans entering the room or touching them – into musical sounds. Indeed you can go visit the exhibit and experience it for yourself. If you were to have a negative thought the instrument translating the plant's reaction to that thought would make a discordant noise. But if you thought about the power of love, and felt a positive connection to the plants, then musical sounds would come out of that instrument. Mileece had wanted this to be a

scientific exhibit but scientists claimed that plants cannot think or have emotions because they don't possess a nervous system. Thus, she decided to call this an art exhibit.

I began to wonder what the music would sound like if Linda's oaks were attached to that musical instrument – and I connected that thought to the idea of the Music of Spheres. Surely we would hear a beautiful and complex orchestration of the music of nature, and we would know that the grove of oak trees was communicating with us. One among many of the amnesias of our time is the amnesia about our interconnectedness with non-human nature and about the sacred quality of that connection. These iconic oaks make the invisible visible as much great art has done throughout time. They awaken our sense to the subtle interchanges that transpire all around us, and remind us that we have not always sent loving energies to non-human nature, which is why we are in a time of eco-cide and eco-crisis right now. They show us the potential of our positive interactions with trees, and reveal the beauty that we are capable of creating in our communications with trees, as well as the intensity of their emotional responses to our intentions, thoughts and acts. In some sense they are the trees' prayers and intentions made visible to us.

Relating these ideas about how we communicate with trees and plants to our communication with water, since we are 70% made of water – I thought about the work done by Masaru Emoto who has shown that our thoughts also affect the shape of water crystals. He has traveled all over the world photographing water – to sites of pollution and degradation and to sites of sacred waters where people come to pray – and he has proven through his photographs of the crystals that water also responds to our thoughts in a way similar to the way plants and trees do.

In Linda Vallejo's iconic *Electric Oaks* the archetypes of the Tree of Life and the World Tree are made visible in the way she has depicted the natural Oak Tree and shown its essence to be of spirit residing in and radiating out of the physical body of the tree. Trees are beings in so much of Linda's work where she carves the being or the persona within the tree making its sentience visible to us so that we may never again forget our interconnectedness with the spiritual beings that communicate to us in subtle ways. Thank you Linda for making visible the sacred energies of trees and for reminding us how we are in constant communication with them as they broadcast their emotions and their feelings, primarily the power of love to every living thing in all parts of the universe. You are teaching us to see in an important way, and it is something that we can all think about as we work towards greening our world right now.