

ARTIST'S TALK/SLIDE SHOW FOR SYPOSIUM COMPONENT OF:

# "RETHINKING THE SACRED IMAGE"

## "UMANE"

### THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In the spring of 1990, three Atlanta woman teamed up to produce "RETHINKING THE SACRED IMAGE"; a multi-disciplinary project consisting of three visual art exhibitions (at Georgia State University, the Arts Exchange & New Visions Gallery), a symposium, a rammed-earth amphitheatre and an hour-long musical dance performance, "UMANE", (created for the amphitheatre space). As one of the three artists/collaborators, my participation was as performance director, composer, performer, performance & musical producer and visual artist.

My visual art pieces were the three musical instruments that I designed and made for use as elements of the performance. I also sampled them, electronically, and recorded/co-engineered them for the hour long musical score, "UMANE". "Umane" is a Lakota word, that is the name of the symbol that stands for all the earth's unused forces.

The TORSO DRUM, the DREAM SERPENT and CHAC WHEELS were the three instruments. The Dream Serpent was used by the processional dancers to lead the audiences from the auditorium to the entrance of the amphitheatre, where it was mounted on two dogwood tree "Y" trunks thus serving as a portal to the performance experience.

I submitted sketches at the beginning talks of the project team in the spring a year earlier...but had no idea how or where I could get a HUGE "Y" fork out of a tree, so I started looking for fallen ones that weren't rotted. ALL OF THE MATERIALS FOR THE INSTRUMENTS CAME FROM MIDDLE GEORGIA. I searched May 1989 thru July with no luck. In late July, I arrived home one day to find the whole LIVE top of a huge oak tree across my driveway (in Indian Springs, Ga.). The trunk of this tree has had large gashes running from top to bottom for years, from repeated lightning strikes. (Many Shamans will only use wood for drums that comes from trees struck by lightning.) The unusually wet weather had made the top too heavy for the damaged trunk to support. It had lost the middle, main top without killing the tree. At that time, we just cleared the driveway & didn't even see "my drum". I left immediately for a performance in Sweden and was gone for 3 weeks. I returned to find all the leaves gone & the perfect "torso"! It even had a female side with a belly! Some serious chainsawing had to be done to cut thru a tree this size. When we had finally cut and freed it, we had torn the bumper off a corvette & burned up 2 massive ropes skidding and retying it all the way down a 1/2 mile long driveway to the house (with me running behind eating dust, trying to keep it in the road, nearly getting a broken foot as the rope wore thru the first time). It was all 2 people could do just to roll it, or position it to tie the rope and lastly, get it into standing position. To start to hollow it out...green oak is HARD...we tried burning it with coals...maybe in 3 to 4 years!!!! Next we used a chainsaw, too dangerous, but got the surface chewed enough to start. An axe was used for the first 3-4" in the middle, then a combination of axe & chisels for next 5-6". This took about 32 hours. The impenetrable core posed a barrier that only a drill could pierce before becoming possible to chisel.

After removing about 40 pounds of chips, the drum was moved with great difficulty to my studio in Atlanta to be worked on all winter. One Sears Best Heavy Duty drill & two 15" lifetime guaranteed bits were worn out before spending 40 hours & going as deep as possible (risking wrist-

cracking situations). About 60 more pounds of chips were removed & used for BBQs. It still weighs about 300 pounds!

The next step was soaking, cutting, stretching & attaching a rawhide head, which has a wonderful tone. The belt has bones & crowsfeet etc on female side. The hambone circles, were used to put on the kids' little finger to "pacify" when I grew up . (My kids were given the same. My daughter, Lisa still wore hers, (whenever we had cured ham for breakfast) to "pacify" herself in traffic driving to Northside High.) The taste lasts for days. The Eucalyptus buttons were gathered in San Bernadino, California. (They were used in 1972 to boil for a head cold. When they were drilled for the drumbelt, I found them still good!) The male side of the drum has more recent/commercial symbols....38 bullet casings, Mercedes emblem, Egyptian Ank, swastika, Coca Cola charm, youth button, mummy, etc.

I feel the TORSO DRUM was a gift to the project that literally fell from the sky.

The DREAM SERPENT was a trunk of a Grape Myrtle tree from the same acre of land that the TORSO DRUM fell from. The tree was killed in a freeze several years ago, at which time I cut them all & stacked them in a pile to dry with no immediate intent of use. It already looked like a snake to me. I sanded & ground only in places that enhanced the natural curves.

The bamboo chimes came from a natural "stand" that covers about two acres down the road from my home. It is so far back in the woods, it can only be reached by "dirt bike" motorcycle. This can be quite a problem, skidding 15 foot lengths of bamboo while holding onto the driver for dear life with one hand! It is also very difficult to cut "just the one you want", which happens to be in the middle of the patch, then lay it down while in there, not to mention getting out of the dense maze to where you thought you left the motorcycle, while threading the non-pliable poles thru a non-yielding, dense forest of poles! Needless to say it's rough on the exposed skin too...also yellow jacket nests wait under large rocks that you disturb.... The coins come from all over the world, leftovers from trips. The most sacred image of our time.

The CHAC WHEELS were for the Dancers in the processional to "call" Chac, the Mayan God of Rain, for the rainstorm in the score that starts the core of the performance. The soundtrack for the turning of the CHAC WHEELS is a sampled rattlesnake. The streamers have various fine wine & champagne caps sewn on to their ends.

The TORSO DRUM has been shown in Atlanta in the Mattress Factory Spring Sculpture Show and at the initial opening of the Tula Foundation Gallery. Throughout 1993, it was used/shown throughout the Southeast in Pyramid of Lights Outreach presentations.

Without the assistance of my husband and sometime-collaborator, Howard Deutsch, none of these instruments could have been started or completed. Howard served as the photographer and performance technical director of "Rethinking the Sacred Image".

Sandy Corley 1990