

Ablakela – **1st rough draft.**

Artist Statement by Dana Claxton

Ablakela means calm in the Lakota language. This new conceptual performance work is an articulation of prayer and will investigate elements of Lakota spirituality within the construct of western performance art, specifically the language of an endurance ritualistic practice. Further, this work will interface ancient Lakota beliefs and sounds with high technology through a CD-ROM project and a live feed to the Internet.

In Lakota way of life, the burning of sweetgrass is a way to communicate with Wakan Tanka – Great Spirit – everywhere spirit. A braid of sweet grass is one of the most sacred elements of Lakota prayer and ceremonial practices. The braiding of sweet grass is a sacred place of being. The endurance element of this performance consists of braiding bear grass for 45 minutes. I have chosen to braid bear grass, as its general use is for utilitarian purposes. Another element to a Lakota spiritual practice is the drum, often described in the aboriginal community as the heartbeat of mother earth. The drum is also valued as a sacred entity, along with the rattle. The sounds of the water drum, rattle and healing and social songs will add to the live element of braiding with renowned Peyote singers Primeux and Mike, accompanying the performance. During the entire performance there will be a large projection screen with a live feed of a close up shot of my hands weaving the grass, while the Peyote singers play both social and healing songs.

This new work is a further continuation of my investigation into an endurance practice with a ritualistic analysis. My last performance Buffalo Bone China, in which I smashed fine bone china for 50 minutes, then made 4 bundles of “bones” and placed the bones in a metaphoric sacred circle and honoured the great buffalo nation. The performative element supported the video installation of mixed media; combining smashed fine

bone china, 8 stanchions and video projection of a looped 8-minute articulation of the buffalo nation.

This new work is also a departure from the dialectical act of smashing fine bone china in which to make a poignant critique of how finer bones of the buffalo were used to make English fine bone china and the implications of such gentry's irreverence. The departure point leaves the dialectical act of smashing to an act of calming, through the natural sounds of voices, water drums and rattles, coupled with the image of braiding elements of earth.

The live Internet feed of the entire performance is an intervention into technology and to present a tactility of Lakota spiritual sounds to a site that contributes to the electronicalization of human contact.

The accompanying CDROM project will have documented performance elements and sound track of all the songs, as well, an essay contextualizing the performance by Dr. Bea Medicine – Lakota Cultural Anthropologist. She will write an essay concerning a Lakota spiritual practice and the history of the Peyote Church. Another essayist will be Marcia Crobsy who will frame the work in contemporary/////////??????????????