

LIA CHAVEZ: WATER THE EARTH

Foundation for Spirituality and the Arts Performance Commission
Presented in New York City
November 18, 2023

For more inquiries, please contact FSA at info@fsa.art

When the ocean of consciousness is no longer fed by the streams and rivers of the universal experience, it becomes stagnant. One must undam the streams. One must allow for the natural flow of the creative spirit, or one limits not only one's experiences, but the experiences of others, condemning them to one form of stagnation or another. In the slime of the stagnated stream and the stagnated ocean, one finds a return to the primal forms. The wellsprings dry up, the sea becomes a barren land, and the land is no longer fed. An entity dies, unrefreshed, unfed, unnourished.

The solution lies within the ability of consciousness to force new pathways, to open up new tributaries, to feed the ocean of consciousness freely. For consciousness itself is stagnating. We speak of the earth consciousness, the consciousness of humankind becoming parched, barren of symbols, barren of images, denied the refreshment of new rains.

Perhaps this is the anxiety that is being felt by some people, the knowledge that the wellspring is drying while others try to hold the last drop of water of consciousness to them, to protect it, to call it their own. By doing so they condemn themselves and others to the final drought. Perhaps the great droughts that are predicted by your prophets, by your seers, by your shamans, are not droughts that will destroy the land, but droughts that are already destroying the spirit, denying the nourishment that is primary to universal growth.

— David Paladin, Navajo Medicine Man

INTRODUCTION

The arc of my artistic program represents a revitalization of the archaic visionary consciousness of primal religious experience and a direct revelation of the transcendent, which is every being's birthright. From performances and immersive installations to neuroscience research and cutting edge technological invention, my multidisciplinary work harnesses the full range of ecstatic rite, devotional methodology, cross-cultural spiritual discipline, botanical medicinal practice, entopic phenomena, and superconscious pictographic awareness to connect us with the sacramental nature of life, the primacy of the inner world, and the potential for the body to invoke a radical awareness of Divinity. Traveling across the physical, spiritual, celestial, and astral realms of light, I serve as a bridge between heavenly and earthly dimensions to reveal the power that art holds for healing the the soul and unearthing the core human vocation of divine life on earth, which is, in essence, worship.

"LIA CHAVEZ: WATER THE EARTH" PERFORMANCE

My new performance commission explores how the sacred possesses a unique capacity to serve as the ideal crucible for this experimentation, unveiling dimensions of our cosmic reality which lie beyond our gross perception and materialist philosophies. The links between spirituality and environmental consciousness, in particular, are deep, rich, and multivalent, and thinkers in this tradition have had a profound influence on my approach. From the Sufi poet Rumi to the medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen to the Vedic philosopher Sri Aurobindo to the father of eco-spiritual futurism, Teilhard de Chardin, the great explorers of the inner world have participated in a prophetic tradition which has paved the way for spirituality to be explored as providing an ethical orientation to reshape our attitude and values towards the environment: the recurring notion of the divinization of matter explicitly brings out the point that Nature is not merely inanimate material, but should be looked upon as a divinely imminent foundation for all life forms. The reintegration of matter and spirit is inherent in this sacramental vision, as the Navajo shaman David Paladin so eloquently alludes to in the above discussion of droughts.

In my own personal journey, this pursuit of the sacred is innately yoked to the love of Wisdom – philosophy – and particularly, to the archetypal figure of Natura Sophia, the personification of God in embodied, female form. In my new performance work, I become a conduit for this Divine Wisdom energy and presence to reinstate the idea of the sacred or spiritual in terms of the natural, material universe. My new work, "Water the Earth" (2023), rests upon the above foundation and explores the intrinsic eternal Divine Wisdom in Nature, humanity's role in the regeneration of the universe, and the latent possibilities in the human being for divine transformation.

THE ACTION

Few behaviors are as spiritually cathartic, intriguingly human, and yet complexly opaque to the scrutiny of science as the act of shedding emotional tears.

Research scientists have established that crying releases oxytocin and endorphins, draining and purifying us from stress hormones and other toxins. We know these chemicals help ease both

physical and emotional pain, but future research is needed to characterize the neurobiology of this engrossing, cryptic, and often private human behavior. While the existing knowledge of emotional tears indicates that crying provides basic insights into human nature, the enigmatic and highly interior nature of crying invites our current modes of understanding into a greater cosmological expanse.

The performance “Water the Earth” functions within this terrain, harnessing and ritualizing the mysteriously regenerative power of releasing emotional tears as an offering to the earth. On one level, the performance invites participants to explore the complex subjectivity of crying behavior, which includes vocalizations, tear production, the involvement of facial musculature, emotional intervals, emotion regulatory behaviors, and social behaviors – as a purgative act which points to an inner regeneration. On another, more numinous, level, the performance approaches the act of releasing tears in the breadth and depth of its confounding, and infinite, potential—as a transmission of universal healing. Our personal tears combine with the tears of all the mothers, the tears of the whole cosmos, and the tears of Divine Wisdom herself as a regenerative offering to the wholeness of what is.

For this performance, I will facilitate the transmission of this sacred energy. The tear will be my primary art material. I will perform a durational weeping of 5 hours in length. Accessing states of superconsciousness which draw upon my practice in extreme physical exigency to soften the heart and sharpen the mind – including darkness meditation, prayer, fasting, and sensory purification practiced in preparation prior to the performance – I will traverse the physical, spiritual, and astral dimensions of light to serve as a conduit for universal healing tears. I will serve as a channel for creating a milieu that allows for connection with spirit and the emergence of this sacred awareness. Participants are invited to join me both in the specially designed program of preparatory rituals leading up to the performance, as well as in the performance of weeping – acts that will serve as a collective transmission which may result in greater courage, expanded vision, or healing. Together, we will journey into deep time to open ourselves to the holy cataract of Wisdom’s flow, in order to make what is unconscious, conscious and what is implicit, explicit.

The performance draws inspiration from a long-held fascination with goddess icons – Mesoamerican ceremonial statuettes and shamanic vessels, the *Sedes Sapientiae* (the Throne of Wisdom) phenomenon of the High Middle Ages, and the Pietà – as they relate to the mystic universal figure of cosmic Wisdom. Recent research trips to Mexico, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy to study pre-Columbian, Gothic, and Renaissance objects in detail has provided ample fodder.

The setting of the performance, the chapel of General Theological Seminary, will bear the mystic signature of Nature’s vegetal intelligence in the form of a regeneratively sourced olibanum anointing oil which I will formulate especially for the occasion. The oil derives from the *Boswellia Carterii*, a tree known for shedding tears of frankincense resin, a substance imbued with healing power across numerous cultures and religious traditions. The aroma of frankincense is positively correlated with the ability to regulate emotions, and the exposure to frankincense is scientifically implicated in an increased willingness to spend time in open areas, where feelings of vulnerability enjoy expression.

– Lia Chavez, July 20, 2023