

Project Proposal: “Voices From the Circle: Women’s Ritual Art”

“I have come to believe that the ancient technique of storytelling is one of the most effective ways of nourishing our hearts and reaching us in times of crisis. Girls and the women they become must find their voices, tell their stories and begin to remake the endings for themselves.”

Lynn Carol Henderson

I am a visual artist, a feminist storyteller, a peace and justice activist, and an art professor with an interdisciplinary doctorate in Women’s Studies and Art History, specializing in Women’s Ritual Art from the Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. Over the last 30 years I have used storytelling and art projects to encourage and empower transformation and growth. I invite you to bring me to your community and classroom and I will change your students’ lives!

I will be accompanied by my new traveling art exhibit, **“Voices From the Circle: Women’s Ritual Art.”** This is a portable art installation and performance art project that weaves the elements of visual art, storytelling, and group ritual to embody the spiritual ideas and forms of the Women’s Spirituality Movement.

Description of Presentations

Each presentation examines an aspect of ritual and myth in art using techniques and symbols related to the show “Voices from the Circle Women’s Ritual Art.” Choose the presentations that best suit your curriculum.

1. The Women’s Spirituality Movement, History and Context of Women’s Ritual

A participatory presentation deals with the background of “Voices From the Circle : Women’s Ritual Art” and demonstrates how to use the space in rituals of healing and empowerment. It includes the experiential elements of storytelling, music, guided meditation and a time for reflection and personal sharing.

2. Women, Art, and Ritual: Women’s Spirituality in the Contemporary World A presentation covers the areas of visual symbols related to Mythology, Goddess Studies, and the Women’s Spirituality Movement, it’s relationship to Feminism and Women’s Performance Art. It surveys the work of Riane Eisler, Elinor Gadon, Marija Gimbutas, Patricia Monaghan, Vicki Noble, Layne Redmond, Monica Sjo, Barbara Mor, Starhawk, and Barbara Walker, and other leading authors in the field.

3. Expressive Arts and Spirituality A program on the use of Storytelling and Visual Arts for empowerment and healing. It includes storytelling and Expressive Arts in a workshop format in which I demonstrate various healing techniques. It is supported by a discussion of wholistic and integrative medicine and the work of contemporary organizations using Expressive Arts for women’s healing.

4. Art and Ritual: The Use of Symbolism and Goddess Mythology in Women’s Ritual Art This interdisciplinary Women’s Studies program discusses images related to ritual from the point of view of Religious Studies, Psychology, Anthropology, Theater, Art History and Visual Arts. It includes a slide lecture on the meaning and impact of ritual which surveys the work of contemporary women ritualists over the last 30 years, tracing the development of Mary Beth Edelson, Donna Henes, Vijali Hamilton, Jay Goldspinner and others.

5. **Storytelling Practicum** A storytelling workshop in which I perform a story in which the participants have a part, explain how to learn and tell a story, and then using participatory exercises, have the participants learn and tell a story for themselves. My story would have as its theme unity with nature and the web of life.

An Expressive Arts Component can be added to any of these presentations.

Suggestions for Art projects include using pastels and black paper, creating designs related to the concept of the Mandala and women's symbols; embellishing a wooden box which may result in a container, a treasure chest, or a shrine or altar; or creating a hand-sewn book [journal] and print a nature-inspired image on each page using stamping, drawing and texture-rubbing techniques.

Project Description

The Art Installation, "Voices From the Circle: Women's Ritual Art" consists of 13 3' x 6' banners arranged in a circular pattern. They are reproductions of acrylic images related to women's spirituality such as spirals, circles, elements associated with the cardinal directions and visual symbols connected to Goddess mythology. They are lightweight, weatherproof, made of polypropylene material, and are displayed on free standing metal stand. A cloth covering embellished with a serpentine pattern leads to the center of the circle where a circular basin holding a light sculpture and sand located.

Lighting: White rope lights line a processional path around the circle made by the banner. Additional gallery lighting will be used when available. If possible candlelight will illuminate the installation during the storytelling performances and rituals.

Educational Materials: Hand-outs including prose, poetry, and lyrics to music for use in the ritual space will be provided to visitors as they enter the exhibit area. Relevant hand-outs with information from the Study Guide will be distributed in classes and workshops. Workbooks will be available for use with selected audiences.

The Gallery Space: For periods when there is no presentation, a VHS video on a continuous loop will be available with explanation of the women's ritual art and clips from previous rituals performed in the art installation space. (14 minute)

The Ritual: Incorporates the stories learned in Goddess studies and storytelling investigations and will blend the visual and the experiential, using dance, chanting and art, as well as storytelling, to foster group participation. The stages of ritual discussed and demonstrated will include psychological preparation, preparing the space, creating a central fire, creating an altar, welcome, procession, purification, crossing the threshold, casting the circle, calling the directions, leader's introduction, storytelling performance, magical working, guided meditation, sharing, commitment, action/artwork, power raising/healing, grounding, closing, opening the circle, and celebration. Each of these elements serves a special function which will be explained in the presentations and further expanded in the Study Guide. Some ritual practices related to Women's Rituals may include. burning of incense or medicinal herbs, trance journeying, and energy healing, chanting, drumming, dancing, and sharing stories, guided meditation, and healing visualization. Workshops may also include an Expressive Arts component.

“Voices From the Circle: Women’s Ritual Art”

Suggested Presentation Formats

I am available for a 3-day presentation, 1-day presentation, or an evening presentation

Suggested 3-Day Program

- Wednesday morning or afternoon: Guest workshop leader or speaker in class on Women’s Ritual Art (one of the topics above)
- Wednesday night: Art Show and Gallery talk includes introduction to ritual
- Thursday morning or afternoon: Guest workshop leader or speaker in class on Women’s Ritual Art (one of the topics above)
- Thursday evening Women’s Ritual Conducted in the space “Voices From the Circle : Women’s Ritual Art”
- Friday afternoon : Ritual conducted at a Women’s Shelter or Treatment Center with women clients and accompanying students
- Friday evening: Public Presentation in the ritual space “Voices From the Circle: Women’s Ritual Art”

Suggested 1-Day Program

Guest workshop leader or speaker in afternoon class on Women’s Ritual Art (one of the topics above) followed by evening presentation

Fee Schedule

All classes and Presentations are participatory, are designed for the age group involved and may or may not include an Expressive Arts component. Fee schedule is negotiable.

Evening Program: \$500 + expense of airfare

One Day: \$1000+ expense of airfare

Three days: \$2000 + expense of airfare

I will pay the expenses of my own room and board. For workshops with accompanying art project I will supply all of the art materials up to 15 participants.

Additional rituals with community women’s groups: Donation to women’s group or to Pro-Nica, a Quaker Development Program supporting women’s health in Nicaragua 130 19th Ave. SE St. Petersburg, FL 33705 Suggested donation: \$100 per gathering

Installation Assembly and Logistics:

The artist will transport, assemble and disassemble the installation before and after her visit. All parts of the installation are designed to be lightweight and portable yet durable, easily assembled and disassembled. The school or gallery will be responsible for TV/VCR set-up, electrical outlets for lighting, security, and insurance.

Accompanying Educational Materials

You may choose to purchase the following texts and reproductions in anticipation of my presentation or afterwards for follow-up with your community.

Study Guides and Illustration packets

Study Guides: accompanying the show are available for class preparation. They may be purchased before or after my visit.

These 90-page spiral bound documents complete and complement the installation. The content includes the findings of the artist/scholar -- women's stories, Goddess myths and ceremonies of experience -- along with black and white reproductions of original artwork and photographs from rituals related to the art installation. They also offer further rituals, art exercises, and ready-made stories applicable to women's rites of passage and empowerment.

Black and White Study Guides \$15.00 each + shipping

Colored postcards of panel images are available for insertion into Study Guides. These packets of 13 (4"x 6") full color reproductions can be glued directly over the black and white reproductions in the Study Guide or used separately as individual postcard sized artwork.

Colored postcard packets of panel images, 13 cards per packet \$10.00 per packet

Reproductions of panels 3'x 6' (unframed) \$350.00 + shipping

Panel Stands \$175 + shipping

“Voices From the Circle: Women’s Ritual Art” Project Goals and History

My work is based on my studies in the United States, Mexico and Guatemala into the healing power of story, music and imagery to impact self-esteem and cultural continuity. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I researched the philosophies of three major branches of the contemporary Women Spirituality Movement: the Dianic Wiccan movement, Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, and the Pan-Indian Spirituality Ritualists. The first presentation of “Voices From the Circle: Women’s Ritual Art ”was the culminating project of my doctoral work. It took place at the Elliott Gallery at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, where I serve as an adjunct professor of art. Believing this to be a worthy project for its students and the larger community, Eckerd College allowed me free use of the gallery for the month of June 2003. I presented 3 programs to over 300 participants from Eckerd’s students and faculty, the Tampa Bay Community, and teachers from the Florida Council for the Humanities. Since that time I have been presenting similar workshops throughout the Tampa Bay Area, including a five workshop series at All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg and a Quakers in the Arts Program at the St. Petersburg Society of Friends and the Women’s Circle of St. Peter’s Cathedral.

My present goal is to present my art installation and use the findings of my research as well as my studies in Expressive Arts as a guest lecturer in Women’s Studies and/or Art Departments at various universities and learning centers to link women’s Spirituality to wider women’s issues. I wish to teach about various aspects of women’s symbolism, imagery, Expressive Arts and the relationship of art, storytelling and Women’s Spirituality. You may wish to involve women in the local community with this program.

It my hope that in the future I will have students accompany me to an Expressive Arts program with women in the local community. This might include joining with women’s spirituality groups, women’s and girl’s treatment groups, in hospitals and or possibly incarcerated women and girls in group homes and residency programs. In this way, the college students will learn first-hand about the healing power of stories and art. It is my hope that they will experience women’s issues through the stories of women who are actually experiencing them and as a result will want to extend this project after my visit, becoming feminist leaders, continuing to work with the women’s’ communities.

I believe my ritual and expressive arts programs reach out to a diverse spectrum of audiences in a way that more static approaches do not. They have the potential to empower both the students and the community, providing the students with a link between theory and practice and the communities with aid in developing and pursuing their own goals of empowerment and self-sufficiency

Using my artwork installation as a stage and visual aid, I will be happy to come for 3-5 days to present a variety of experiential and lecture-formatted programs on the Women’s Spirituality Movement and related topics. I have included a list of suggested presentations with this proposal. Along with the more traditional teaching format, my presentations include a storytelling ritual for women’s empowerment, a public gallery talk and various educational workshops designed for a variety of age groups and academic levels. A demonstration video of the art show and storytelling with samples of my presentations is available upon request from my website: EnigmaArtStudio.com

Biographical Information

Lynn Carol Henderson
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Education

2003 Ph.D. from Union Institute, Cincinnati, Ohio
Interdisciplinary Studies with a specialization in
Art History and Women's Studies :Women's Ritual Art
1971 MFA in visual arts and teaching certification K-12:
Washington University, St. Louis
1970 BA: Art and Art History
University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia
Foreign Studies, Italy, France, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Chile

Work Experience

1989-Present: Adjunct Professor, Eckerd College, U. of Tampa
Courses: Magic, Myth and Ritual in Art,
Altars and Mandalas,
Mythology and Storytelling
Art Appreciation, Collage,
Insider/Outsider, Multicultural Art

Teaching Experience

Dr. Henderson has taught at all levels of the educational system, from K-12 in the public schools and as an adjunct professor at St. Petersburg Junior College, Eckerd College, and the University of Tampa. A multi-media artist and storyteller, at present she creates installations in which she conducts presentations and rituals. She is well-known in Florida for her combination of peace activism, feminism and women's performance art.

1973-Present: Art and Storytelling Workshops for children and adults
Art Centers throughout Florida
Elder Hostels sponsored by Eckerd College and St. Petersburg Junior College
Museums: Salvador Dali Museum, the St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts,
Pinellas County Public and Private Schools K-12

1980-Present: Ritual leader in Women's
Spirituality Groups and Drumming Circles

Professional Associations

PAVA Pinellas Association of Visual Artists
SLMM Society of Layerists in Multi-Media
NOW National Organization for Women

*Art Installation and Presentations
By Artist & Storyteller & Teacher
Dr. Lynn Carol Henderson*

Contact: www.EnigmaArtStudio.com

(727) 867-3933 St. Petersburg, Florida

*Invite me to your school and community with my art installation,
my storytelling, and my art projects and I will change your students' lives!*

**VOICES FROM THE
CIRCLE:
WOMEN'S RITUAL
ART**

*Storytelling, Art,
and The Women's
Spirituality
Movement*

All classes and presentations include audiovisuals, are participatory, are designed for mixed gender groups, and tailored to the age of the participants.

Choose the presentations that best suit your curriculum.

- **Demonstration Ritual for Women's Empowerment**
- **The Women's Spirituality Movement, History and Context of Women's Ritual**
- **Women, Art, and Ritual: Women's Spirituality in the Contemporary World**
- **Expressive Arts and Spirituality**
- **Art and Ritual: The Use of Symbolism and Goddess Mythology in Women's Ritual Art**
- **Storytelling Practicum**

An Expressive Arts Component can be added to any of these presentations.