

CROSS-CULTURAL RITUAL AS ART

THE PERFORMANCES OF ARTURO LINDSAY

SAMELLA LEWIS

Born in the City of Colon in the Republic of Panama, Arturo Lindsay moved to Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York, at the age of thirteen.

Lindsay's first formal artistic experience was in the theater—first as an actor and later as a director. While a student at Central Connecticut University, he decided to change his area of concentration from theater arts to the visual arts.

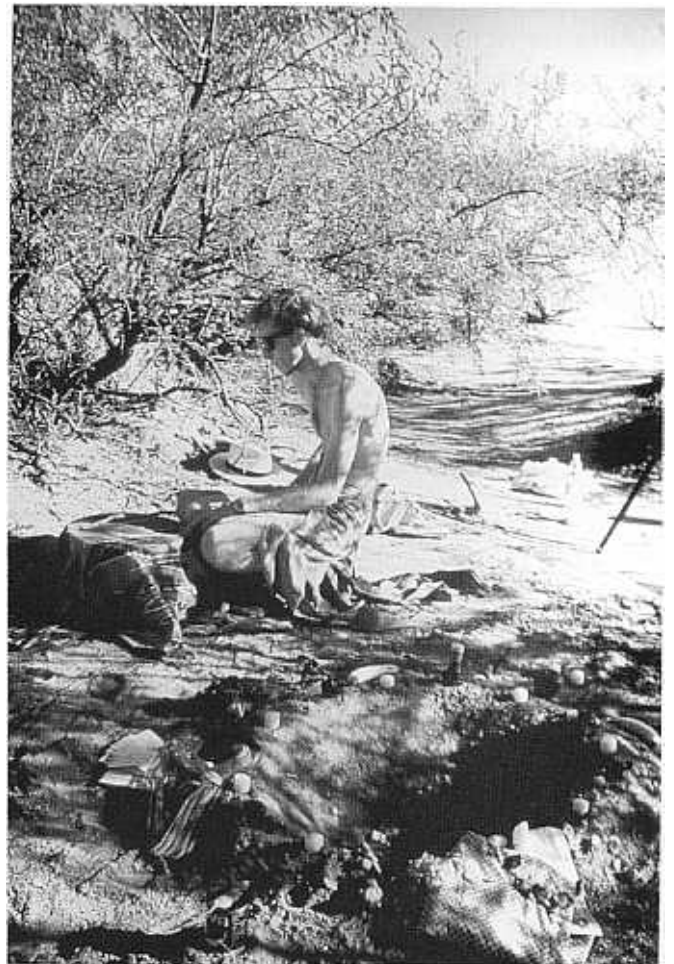
Arturo Lindsay earned a master's degree at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he studied with illustrious professors such as Leonel Gongura (a Colombian artist) and Nelson Stevens (an African American artist). While at Amherst, Lindsay was able to reexamine both his ideas and emotional feelings about Africa. He seriously contemplated traditional African culture and the impact that it has had on international contemporary art.

ARTURO LINDSAY
*Feeding Earth Mother After Hugo
and the Frisco Quake, detail*

1989, performance installation
Sonora Desert, Tucson, Arizona
Collaborating artists included graduate art
students from the University of Arizona, Tucson

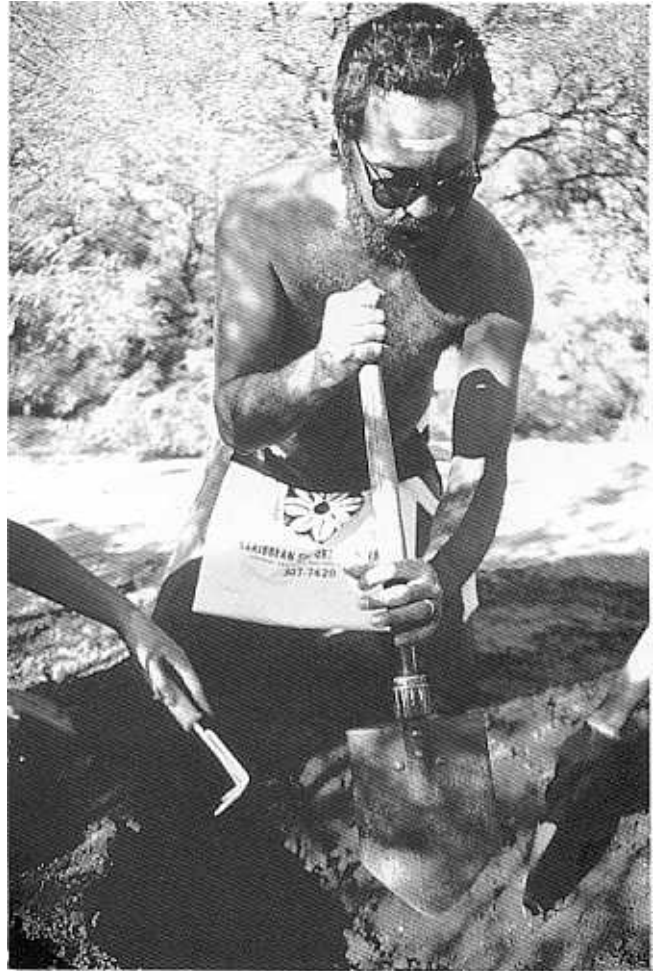
This piece was created shortly after hurricane Hugo and the San Francisco earthquake in the fall of 1989. Fruits, bread, money and "valuable" icons were selected by the performers and "offered" to the earth in a metaphoric feeding.

Performance art, often identified as contemporary art, is actually more closely linked to ancient traditional cultures of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Arturo Lindsay's background and understanding of both African and Latino rituals provide him with a rich array of resources and strengthen his art. He approaches his work by acquiring increased understanding of the *old* while utilizing the language of the *new*.



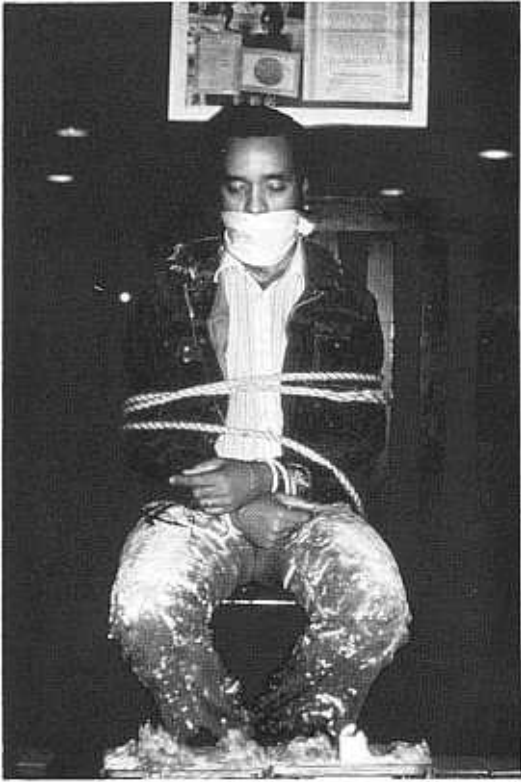
In the majority of the world's cultures, rituals are essential components of life and power. Performed to assist in maintaining and reordering the universe, they are conceived as forming a link between the spiritual and material worlds — the past and the present — the old and the new. The evolution of performance as *art* fulfills a spiritual function; through the mind and body of practitioners such as Arturo Lindsay, it can be communion with the infinite.

Although Arturo Lindsay considers himself to be an African artist, he reserves the freedom to utilize symbols from any society (tribe) he chooses because, as he contends, "I can never be sure in what society my ancestors are resting. As a result, I take no chances. Actually, this freedom to choose makes working [making art] a lot more exciting and challenging."



ARTURO LINDSAY
Feeding Earth Mother
After Hugo and the
Frisco Quake,
detail

1989, performance
installation
Sonora Desert,
Tucson, Arizona



ARTURO LINDSAY

Artist Contemplating the Fate of Those Who Speak of Freedom

1986, Kenkeleba Gallery, East Village, NYC

1987, Fashion Moda, South Bronx, NYC

1987, Franklin Furnace (performed at the Manhattan Terminal of the Staten Island Ferry)

Collaborating artists included Lorenzo Pace, Carlos Lazarus, Vernita Nemec, Sandro Dernini, Albert DiMartino, Juma Santos, Barnaby Rhue

For periods ranging from 15 minutes to 3 hours various artists sat bound and gagged in shrine-like installation of candles, glass, bricks, photos and sheets of text, related to the deaths of children in South Africa, while a taped recording announced their names, ages and circumstances of death.



ARTURO LINDSAY

Plexus Co Opera #4: The Serpent of Stone

1987, multi media/multi discipline art ritual
The Sanctuary of Sa Itra, Sardinia, Italy

Plexus Co Operas are international art events wherein individual artists from all disciplines and various countries collaborate in a creative production. Lindsay's contribution was a performance art ritual entitled "Plexus Bond of Fire." This consisted of creating an installation, "The Ancestral Landing Site," and performing the role of the Ancestral Messenger. Collaborators from Greece and the United States painted his body as poet Miguel Algarin read a poem. The performance culminated with the burning of a sculpture in the form of a painted box containing the names of over 120 international artists who participated in the Co Opera.