O'whahsa’ - Protection, Comfort and Healing

Leah Shenandoah

Abstract
Leah Shenandoah is an Oneida Nation multimedia artist, musician and scholar who conveys the concepts of protection, comfort and healing through music, sculpture, jewelry and fashion. On May 6, 2011, "O'whahsa” which translates to "hood" in the Onya'ta:aka Oneida language, was presented at the Hungerford Building in Rochester, NY. Over 250 attendees witnessed a transcendental space consisting of: five sculptures made of fabric stretched over a welded steel rod armature-painted in a vibrant and impressionistic fashion; five sets of clothing and jewelry worn by Shenandoah and four dancers; smoke, fog, multi-colored lights and a 45-minute set of original songs written and performed by Leah; and a studio loft painted to emulate outer space. Inspired by the Haudenosaunee creation story of Skywoman, Shenandoah utilizes modern and ancient concepts of extraterrestrial origins in her creations. Shenandoah's intense desire to create healing stems from her personal experience as a domestic violence survivor. Searching to regain a sense of self and healing though art and music, she utilizes the creative flow state to transmute pain and suffering into joy and healing.

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