FIVE OAKS MUSEUM

SOCIAL MEDIA TAKEOVER:
DAKOTA YAZZIE

SEPTEMBER 6, 2021

DAY 1 Yá'át'ééh(greetings),

My name is Dakota Yazzie, I come from the Diné of occupied Arizona. I'm a multi-disciplinary artist currently living in Dewey, Arizona, in the midst of Apache territory. I have two loves in my creative life which is my art @juddpaulsteven and my music @earthsurfacepeople

This week I will be showing ya'll some background on my art and music and the intersections between each. I have a strong need within my art for collaboration, community, and storytelling. I'm grateful to be living in a time where Indigenous arts are being celebrated and noticed for the power they possess. I've had the honor of working with many different tribal peoples throughout my career including Caddo, Diné, Hopi, Ipai, Kumeyaay, Menominee, Tewa, Mohawk, Shawnee, Cheyenne, Mandan, Hidatsa, and I've learned so much from all these peoples that intersect into the art/community we've made.

I'll be touching on aspects of community building thru music, how ancestral stories are perpetually relevant to us(as indigenous people) and the things we create, and about my experiences in intergenerational healing thru art and celebration of my ancestors(my matriarch Tiana Bighorse).

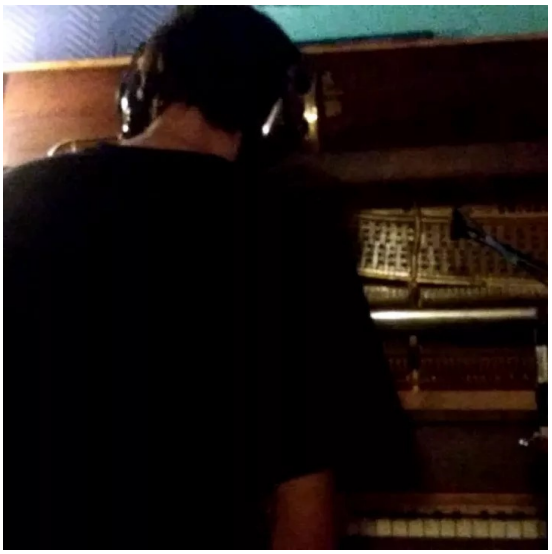
I hope we can all learn something together,
Ahéhee'(thank you)

please stay updated on what's happening with our relatives dealing with Line 3

follow @resist_line_3 for updates, mutual aid, and a place to direct your resources

SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

DAY 2



[slide 1: Zachary Dominguez and Jai Ram Rideout recording a song at Garage.wav studio]

[slide 2: Larry Yazzie and Cody Yazzie performing a Peyote song at Raven Sound Studio

[slide 3: a snowy day in so called Sedona (Anasazi territory)]

[[slide 4: on set before "@__woven__" at the Institute of American Indian Arts]

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DAY 2, Continued...

I recall the smell of cedar and a sort of petrichor coming from the soft dirt, two dark men hunched over clutching a staff, gourd, and a moose hide drum, soft vibrations in tow. They would play to the rhythm of the fire and the cosmos flickering above as the outer flaps of the teepee gaited in the wind. My first memories with the spiritual music known as Medicine(Peyote) Songs.

My father would later tell me about his father who would run Peyote Ceremonies in the Grand Canyon back when it was outlawed. And my mother's family would talk about the Navajo medicine singers in our family, which is not to be mistaken with Medicine(Peyote) Singers.

From what I gathered there were stories, history, action, place, and spirit in all these songs I heard. When I was 23, after years of self taught music, I decided to make a music collective with some relatives and close friends: @earthsurfacepeople

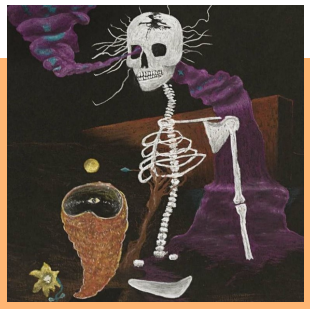
During our first EP "Juniper" I decided to speak on my great great grandfather's story of being captured and enslaved by Mexican raiders. This happened two years before the Indian Removal Act of 1886, which resulted in the genocide of the Diné People, The Long Walk.

His name was Gus Bighorse. He was a horse trader, gambler, rambler, and was a communal man with deep ties to his home, Dinétah. He was so friendly that eventually he became friends with his slave owners and they allowed him to come back home.

The song "Verde Bayou" speaks on that story. The song expresses a need for camaraderie between the two peoples, the Diné and the Mexicans, who were indicted into bitter wars through colonization. A song of forgiveness and empathy.

Earth Surface People has an EP coming out this October 2021, a debut album in April 2022, and more showings of their intertribal conceptual show @__woven__v

SEPTEMBER 8, 2021



DAY 3: What was an experience in your family that informed a deeper part of yourself?

[image 1: "Flight of the Rooted Tree"]| [image 2: "The Navajo and Hopi Land Dispute"] |
[image 3: "God is a Caddywampus Cat"] | [image 4: "Post Colonial Theory"] |
[image 5: "Maneki Neko and the Eternal Death Machine"]| [image 6: "Monster Slayer"]

When I was 21 I revisited a book from my childhood written by my great grandmother, Tiana Bighorse, called “Bighorse the Warrior,” a collection of stories about her father, Gus Bighorse. Gus had became a headman for the Diné at the age of 16 after returning from enslavement in Mexico, he returned to a war torn country in Dinétah. The Americans had just signed off on genocidal legislature, the Indian Removal Act of 1886.

In his childhood Gus had been taught by his Cheí about all the holy mountains and the landscapes of their homelands, locations, names, plants, animals. It was due to this knowledge that Gus was able to help his people find refuge from the American terrorists who scoured the lands and burnt crops to ash.

This story was burrowed deep in my psyche, it held all the answers that I had been yearning for. I was called by Diyin to find myself again. At the time I was buried in self-hatred and addiction. It was those stories that returned my body to the land; brown skin became as beautiful as red sandstone in the evening light. I was called to tell the stories that lived in my bones and in the legacy of my family who struggled in revolution against the United States Government.

So over the next few years I started to branch out and collaborate with all creatives who had a similar vision in mind. Through these avenues we created Earth Surface People, Woven, Nations of the Moon, and I had started my official art in oil and illustration.

All the art forms involve connection to place, history, and culture. My most recent works in 2D art have been commentaries on colonization and the symbols that arise from combating colonial systems throughout history.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

DAY 4:

All great art works require a lot of observation, study, and self reflection in my experience. I start most art pieces with a question, a dream, a vision, or an idea I'm curious about.

Some questions I've asked recently in music and art:
Why isn't there more union between the Hopi and Diné? They share so much rich history and communion with one another, why aren't there more connections and celebrations between the two? (My short and very incomplete answer: the Navajo and Hopi land disputes) Why is the Christian God known as a selfless omnipotent being excused when they kill their own Kin? Isn't the act of allowing death of your own family considered barbarism, isn't that the excuse for colonization, that these people are too barbaric and archaic for their own good? (see on last post: "God is a Caddywampus Cat")

I center my work in my Diné culture, but I also branch out to other cultures for answers and questions because they too are a part of the human experience. I try to understand the intricate details of history that led to colonization and different unions between people. For instance, when the Choctaw people sent 170$ to the Irish people 170 years ago during the Potato Famine the Irish would return the favor decades later by helping to raise 1.8 million for the Navajo and Hopi during the Covid-19 pandemic. There are so many small details like this that are brushed over in history...that peoples can still come together despite their pasts; let's not neglect that the Irish were brutally colonized by the English.

I come from a family that is very proud of being Diné but retains a certain altruism towards all other cultures despite history and colonization. I think in a true post-colonial world we do celebrate all cultures in the richness that they have to offer to the human experience, with the exception of genocidal regimes and totalitarian systems. There is beauty in the ugliest of situations, which comes directly from Diné philosophy. As long as the inheritors of these systems can find humanity within themselves the world can return to some semblance of understanding, which I believe all begins with art and music.

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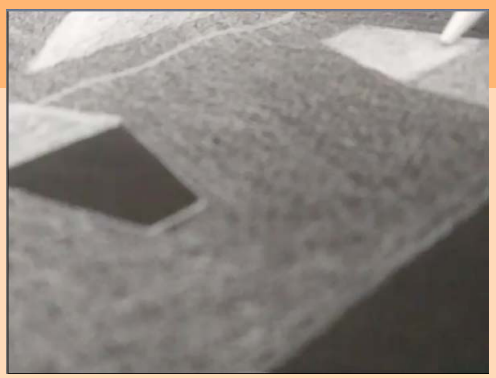
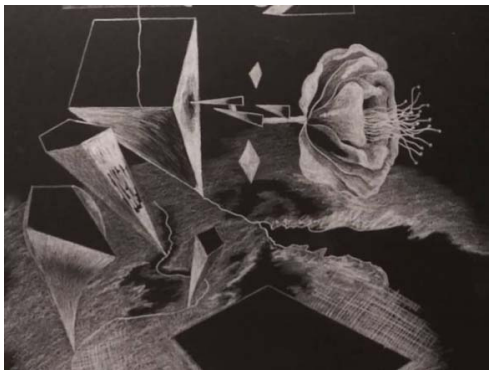
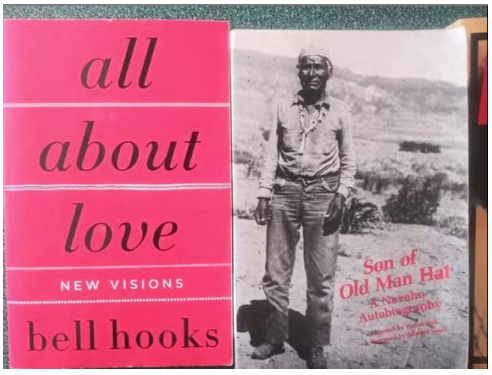
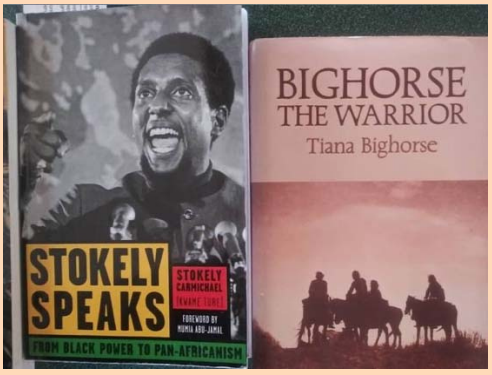
TIANA BIGHORSE :: WARRIOR





52 Eugène Amoureux
67 L'idylle d'Onésime


all about love
NEW VISIONS
bell hooks
Son of Old Man Hat
A Navaho Autobiography


STOKELY SPEAKS
STOKELY CARMICHAEL
FROM BLACK POWER TO PAN-AFRICANISM
BIGHORSE
THE WARRIOR
Tiana Bighorse

SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

DAY 5: One of my favorite pieces I did was a commission for an indigenous heavy metal band, @mercilessndns , for their new single “Monster Slayer.” At first I had wanted to do a tribute to Goya with a study of “Saturn Devouring His Son.” It seemed to fit the aesthetic but Corey, the lead singer, felt like something better could be made, so I started from scratch.

I started to recall the stories of Born for Water and Monster Slayer, how the world was at inhabited by large monsters who were eating the people, it was a time of death and decay for the people. The monsters were large beings, towering over villages and mesas.

I hadn’t picked up a brush since 2017, this commission pushed me to get back into oil painting. My technique for my oil/india ink mixed media pieces is: drawing a rough draft of the piece in pencil on cold pressed water color paper, after all sketches are finalized I outline the whole drawing in India ink, after the India ink is laid I erase all the pencil drawing and begin the oil painting.

The challenge of doing my oil pieces is it requires a certain mindset which is much different than my colored illustrations, my oil pieces are intense, bleak, violent, and cathartic. With those qualities comes a different mentality....its much different than drawing cute cats and opossums with humor and irony(see @juddpaulsteven)

Overall I enjoyed getting back into oil paintings, I plan to work on an entire series for the remainder of 2021 and hopefully showcase them next year along with my colored illustrations.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2021

DAY 6: Conclusion.

[image 1: Dakota in the "Won't Stop" music video]
[image 2: Imani, Audri, and Sky in the "Won't Stop" music video]
[image 3: Cody and Larry in the studio performing Peyote songs]
[image 4: Chris and Ryan in "Woven" perfomance in Santa Fe, NM]
[image 5: Maiyah, Chris, Kevin, Dakota in "Woven"]
[image 6: "Woven" logo]
[image 7: "Butterfly Man"]
[image 8: "Holy People See You"]
[image 9: "All Our Rockets Go To The Moon"]

PC image 1, 2: @greezy.lens
PC image 4, 5: @natanehriver
Artist for "Woven" logo: @dezbah.rose

Thank you all for taking time to read about the art I'm doing, it feels great to share these details and the process with you.

Please take time to read into Line 3, Oak Flats, and other struggles that indigenous people are facing across our lands.

I cherish all the collabs I've been able to do in the past few years with some very talented, skilled people. I encourage you to support them and their art. They are tagged in all the photos.

I encourage any artists and musicians to always reach out and collaborate with their immediate community, all the collabs I've shared have always allowed me to grow and further my understanding of the communities I'm inhabiting.

Take care ❤
- Dakota Yazzie

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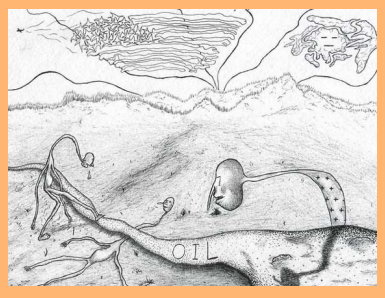
DAY 6, CONTINUED...