



As the sun pours through the window, artist Maria Luisa de Villa adjusts her long, wavy hair and launches into a round of questions. She's begging to know what it's like to live in the territory – from what the communities are like, to what people do, how they live and how they all survive the dreaded 40-below temperatures.

At this point, our conversation has reached the half-hour mark with ease. But talking about the land is one of de Villa's greatest passions; after all, nature is at the forefront of her mixed-media works.

Since the mid '70s, de Villa has organized cultural exchanges and art forums for artists residing in México and Canada. And now she's taking part in yet another cross-cultural artistic experience as one of seven artists involved in the LLAMA Project.



Maria Luisa de Villa places gold leaf on the papers surrounding the Ted Harrison Artist Retreat, for a site-specific work of art.

LLAMA stands for Listen, Learn and Make Art. And de Villa says the group is doing just that. "It's very stimulating. You talk, you exchange. Sometimes we just joke around and make fun," she explains.

"And then we do things together, and then sometimes you discover something that you didn't know was a possibility."

Born and raised in México City, de Villa lived in Sudbury, Ontario, for about 25 years. The northern Ontario city ended up providing the link between her and Yukon-based artist and LLAMA Project organizer, Joyce Majiski.

"I thought it was a wonderful project and a wonderful opportunity for me to see the real North because I always think of the North as Sudbury," de Villa says with a laugh.

"But when you start to see everything, and you look at the map where you are, and you land here ... the vegetation and everything else ... it's the North – the real North. Everybody has to see it at least once in their life."

All seven artists involved in LLAMA will take time to visit the Yukon, create new works and then unveil them at the Yukon Arts Centre Public Art Gallery in the exhibit *Voz/Voice: The arts of resistance and resilience*, which opens this November.

De Villa's medium of choice is handmade paper. Through drawing, painting and installation works, de Villa explores her connection to nature, land and her two homes, Canada and México.

"I think my passion, my dialogue with nature in the arts, started in Canada, really," she says.

"In itself, the migratory movement became very interesting for me. And it all has to do with nature and how we relate. And that also made me very sensitive to place and this whole notion of having a sense of place, which I think, in many cases, escapes us.

We get to a place and we like it, but then we transform it into something else. The idea is to get there and communicate with it and begin to connect and find out what it's about, and go with it."

And while she attributes much of her nature-based work to her growing love for gardening, connecting with artists is just as important as linking to the land.

Art's Imperative: The Art of Nature

Written by Administrator

“It’s very important for us to get together with other artists, particularly from other cultures, and cross ideas. All the great movements in art – in New York, in Paris, in Barcelona – were at a period of time where there were unfortunately wars.

“But there was a Diaspora, and it’s very much the same as now, only not created by war,” de Villa explains.

“They came together and they exchanged ideas, so you fertilize your creative process with new ideas, new visions.”

De Villa says she’ll create two huipíls (women's traditional Mexican garments) out of paper – one for Canada and the other for México. The striking garments are carefully crafted from three paper panels with other items adhered to the surface.

At the same time, she’s been hard at work on drawings, sketches and paintings while creating at the Ted Harrison Artist Retreat. De Villa also devoted some time to site-specific works, placing gold leaf on the poplars in the area and creating a relief carving on a rock along the shoreline of Crag Lake.

“It will probably remain for a while. I wasn’t sure how it would behave, but it’s doing well,” she says, reflecting on the works.

But regardless of the space, the presentation or even the creation locale, one component is consistently a focal point in de Villa’s artistic offerings.

“I work a lot with paper because, for me, it’s a passion. I see the material and I have the idea already. And then from that I start working, but as I go along, I let the work begin to talk to me.”

For more on the LLAMA Project, go to www.llamaproject.com.

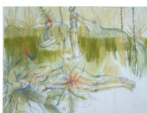
Voz/Voice: The arts of resistance and resilience opens Nov. 5 at the Yukon Arts Centre Public Art Gallery.



Melano de Cactóreas II
Mixta sobre papel japonés
Cactóreas Morning II
Mix technique over Japanese paper



Trópicos de rojo Ososca III
Red Ososca Tropics III



Flor de María
María's Flower