



“Dreaming of Water” - Alexander Lewis (LX)
Sample sculpture concept, small-scale

Project Description

“Dreaming of Water”



“Dreaming of Water” is a carved Manzanita wood sculpture that depicts a Native American woman whose ancestors have been stewards of the land in Mariposa County for time immemorial. The statue will consist of Manzanita wood and iron, with a cement base to stand the art piece on level ground. The approximate dimensions of the sculpture will be 8-9 ft and 4-5ft in width. The sculpture will have a water fountain-like capacity during the rainy season: Rainwater will fall onto the sculpture, which will flow from the woman’s iron feathered headdress onto her hands, then flow or trickle onto scorched, burnt wood below.

Wildlife imagery will be carved near the base of the sculpture. The nested dress will have different wildlife creatures and critters carved and blended into it to give people a greater understanding that humans do not only use the Forest but creatures and critters have lived with it for millions of years. The sculpture’s face, hands, and creatures will be realistic so the viewer can better appreciate it. Some of the creature’s heads, such as a bird, an eagle, a raccoon, and a squirrel, will be carved.

“Dreaming of Water” tells a story of balancing our energy and resources, which is essential for all living beings, including the trees of the forests. The element water is necessary for life. When humans use this element for agriculture and working lands, it brings trees, plants, and everything in its ecosystem to life to sustain everyone who lives in Midpines/Mariposa County. The art project will beautify the place and share a message to the community through its visual aesthetic about the importance of caring, respecting, and sustaining the woodlands that provide for all living beings in many aspects of agriculture and working lands.

Above: Artist’s Sketch

Water flow concept

Material



Above: Artist's Sketch
Sculpture structure

Manzanita wood and other natural materials will be used to make a human body, dress, and jewelry accessories.

The bottom of the dress will be woven together in a nest-like texture with the help of willow and other basket-making materials that will help tie it all together as one. The dress will be burnt and scorched, tapering off from a non-burnt Manzanita wood that makes up the entire nested dress. The burnt part resembles a lost, forgotten forest and the inhabitants that once thrived in the wooded areas they called home. She'll be wearing a traditional Native American feathered headdress made from metal.

The body will mostly be made of Manzanita wood, which has reddish to brown colors but will have some hints of stone and iron. The wood sculpture will sit on a bedrock or concrete base and be secured by bolting down.

The starting point will be at the foundation, which is the sculpture's base. The cement foundation will consist of metal iron, made into a Native American face, Top Knot feathers, and will also be the spine, which will work as an armature for the whole foundation and the sculpture itself. Once the cement foundation, iron spine, and iron face are set in place, the weaving of Manzanita wood, willow, and other organic material will become a nest shape providing texture, forming into the sculpture's body.

Work Sample
Manzanita Wood Carving



Theme + Artist Statement

"Dreaming of Water" is a statement piece through the lens of a Native American perspective of how we as human beings need to start appreciating the water that we have now in 2023, as Indigenous people of the past followed the water as a way of life. Therefore, we use it in our ceremonies and practice it daily. Water is known to be the creator of life; it's all around us for all living beings. When we are dreaming, we all commonly think it comes from our inner thoughts and brain, so, in the sculpture, I have the woman tilting her head slightly as she's praying as her head tilting her top knot iron feathers, which will be funneling water down in the waterfall formation to her the palm of her hands then the water hits the base of the Manzanita wood dress. Dreaming of water is what we as modern human beings think about today, as water is sacred to all people of North America. The theme is water, as the essential element that gives life and protects the forests and inhabitants relying on trees, meadows, and natural resources for all life in and out of Mariposa County.

The Manzanita wood sculpture will represent the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN), Mariposa County, and all its community members because it conveys the importance of working lands for the sustainability of all people of diverse cultures. I'll include information about the SSMN and how the natural woodlands are part of their ecosystems, like harvesting acorns, cedar bark, baskets, materials, tools, and other natural resources from nature and its environment in this area.

Work Sample
Metal and Wood
Sculpture



Artist Biography

Alexander J. Lewis is a Cheyenne River Sioux/Diné contemporary artist. He is an enrolled tribal member with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. LX's primary medium is carving a hardwood called Manzanita, but also carves cedar, pine, oak, and black walnut. In his artwork he depicts his Indigenous culture to communicate stories to the art viewers. In 2021, LX accomplished his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe New Mexico. In 2019, LX was awarded the Southwestern American Indian Association (SWAIA) fellowship in which he worked with his son on a jewelry art project. Throughout LX's art career he has participated in the SWAIA market, The Gene Autry Museum Market, the Heard Museum Market, and the Sierra Art Trails. He believes that in one way or another his woodcarvings play a big role in sharing his Indigenous identity.