

## **COYOTE DANCE WITH ME – LITAR NEČOOVA YAKEENAX**



This series centers on ceremonial interventions into the landscape. Specifically, my exploration in land owned by my non-Native American grandparents in the hills of Malibu, where I spent a great deal of my childhood. I activate this site, which was originally Tongva land, using organic materials, such as sage, ochre, feathers, quartz, cinnamon, red yarn and the skins of coyotes and foxes—materials that are traditionally used in ceremony and ritual along with introduced materials—to create moments of vitality.

My work explores the construction of culture and origin stories as outcomes of the need to tie one's existence to the land. My heritage as a member of the Gabrielino Tongva tribe in Los Angeles connects me deeply to the landscape of California. I am interested in the problematics of living in a place that once belonged to your ancestors, a place you feel connected to, yet have lost access to. Our tribe has no federal recognition, and therefore no reservation land and no gathering place.

This lack of physical space to congregate in and use for ceremony creates a collection of individuals constantly challenging and grappling with authenticity and inclusion/exclusion from the larger group. By working in spaces I am connected to, I engage ideas of authenticity, ceremony and community.

I create humble interventions in the landscape, using the camera to re-open portals of memory, to reconnect with and to heal the land. I work with a medium format film camera that was passed down to me as working with film allows me to respond to what is in front of me and my surroundings without an immediate response of a digital image. I feel the use of the camera is also important because of the implication of evidence that the image holds.

I explore culturally significant sites in Southern California in order to make a new personal narrative. This is necessary because much of our culture was systematically

erased. I hope to create a narrative that mixes truth and fiction in order to tell my personal history in conjunction to my cultural ancestry believing that the imagined can be equally as powerful as facts.

Assimilation, time, Los Angeles, death, shame: they have all worked to gnaw holes in my cultural heritage. My work is a product of weaving back together the loose ends that have been passed down to me, filling in the cracks with mud, yarn and cinnamon and making a new whole.”