Place and Voice: Artist-In-Residence
Chaco Canyon National Historical Park, New Mexico

Fran Gardner, Professor of Art and Art History
University South Carolina Lancaster
803-313-7045
fgardner@mailbox.sc.edu

Awarded $12,649.83
Provost’s Creative and Performing Arts Grant Program

To fulfill the requirements of the Provost’s Creative and Performing Arts Grant, I submit this final report which summarizes my experience and provides a brief description of creative accomplishments.

For three weeks in July 2012 I lived and worked in Chaco Culture National Historical Park as the Artist-In-Residence. My objective was to produce a body of work as an installation for the Chaco Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center museum, offering visitors an artistic interpretation of this ancient site. Already in place were scientific and archeological interpretations. In my proposal to the park I suggested that my work would “offer an artistic layer through which this significant number of visitors may view this location and consider how this ancient civilization inhabited their world.” In agreement with the National Park Service requirement that artists-in-residence donate a work of art to the park, I more than adequately fulfilled this requirement by donating the sum total of my entire three-week experience – a large work measuring 18 inches x 12 feet – now the artistic complement to the Visitor Center. This successfully fulfilled two of my goals: “to provide artistic interpretation of this remote and ancient historic site for park visitors” and “to foster the continuing appreciation of the National Parks through art, acknowledging that through their paintings, American artists have played a role in the development of the National Park System.”

The Artist’s Residency at Chaco Culture National Historical Park offered an opportunity to have my work viewed in unprecedented numbers. During the three week residency my work was viewed by an estimated 2850 park visitors. I spoke directly with an estimated 400 people about my work and the park. Nearly every person I spoke with inquired into my work as a university professor at USC Lancaster! As mentioned, it was my intention to make and donate a substantial and meaningful piece to the park, a place that has held personal artistic significance. My work is now included with interpretations of the archeology, geology, astronomy, and architecture. Many visitors mentioned that an artistic interpretation is a fine complement to the current largely scientific interpretations. This piece will be viewed by an estimated 40,000 park visitors per year fulfilling my goal “to gain national level exposure for my work and for USC Lancaster, an avid supporter of my creative contributions.”

While at the park I began my days in the ancient Chacoan ruins of the great house Pueblo Bonito. I concentrated my work on that specific architectural site since it is the largest, most thoroughly excavated, visible and accessible ruin in the park. Working on site in the mornings and in my make-shift studio in the Visitor Center in the afternoons, I produced a series of thirty small mixed-media pieces that integrated painting, drawing and stitchery. These multiple views
of Pueblo Bonito were mounted together creating the overall 18”x12’ final work. Because of the intense New Mexico heat, I started my work promptly at 7am. In the early mornings I was often alone in this ancient and desolate place – a rare opportunity. In the afternoons, while in the studio, I spoke with numerous park visitors who were most inquisitive and enthusiastic about my interpretation of the site. Without question, this was one of the most important artistic experiences of my career fulfilling my goal “to produce an evolving installation work that challenges me artistically to interpret a site of ancient historic importance.”

The Creative and Performing Arts Grant provided funding for travel, supplies, shipping and salary for this creative work. The grant was managed by Sherri Gregory in the USC Lancaster Office of Grants Coordination.

Because of their interest in my work, the National Park Artist’s Residency, and/or my growing reputation, I have several forthcoming exhibits and publications.

- I was invited to exhibit at the Jean and James Fort Gallery of the Black Creek Arts Council in Hartsville, South Carolina, in April 2013. This gallery exhibits artists from around the United States, most from the southeast. As a Hartsville native, I was pleased to accept this invitation.
- I was invited to exhibit in March 2014 in the Rose Room Gallery of the Peabody Auditorium in Daytona Beach, Florida. This is a major performance venue and houses the gallery which is open weekdays and evenings prior to performances in their 2500 seat auditorium. This gallery exhibits regional, national and international artists.
- My work was accepted for publication in Textiles: The Art of Mankind, by Mary Schoeser published by Thames and Hudson, London. According to the description “Thematic illustrated sections present in-depth knowledge and sweeping insights into the role textiles have played throughout all human civilization, and illuminate the ways in which structure or surface decoration or embellishment enhance this most tactile of arts.” This book was released in December 2012.
- Plans are underway to produce, along with my students, an installation piece at the USCL Native American Studies Center in Spring 2013. The students will be studying the role of public art in our culture.

In addition to the many park visitors that I spoke with directly while on site at the park, I also presented an overview of my Chaco Canyon work to my home campus and community. The Native American Studies Center was interested in hosting my presentation as a part of their Native American Studies Week series of lectures, events and movies. Approximately 40-50 students, faculty, staff and community members attended the presentation on November 7. The flier announcing the event is at the end of this report.

Without question, the Provost’s Grant Program is an invaluable resource and I am most appreciative, as a Regional Campus faculty member, for the opportunity to take my work to a national audience and to bring recognition to the University of South Carolina and to my home campus in Lancaster.
Flier for public program presented 11/07/2012.

Place & Voice:
FRAN GARDNER

WHAT DOES AN ARTIST DO DURING A NATIONAL PARK RESIDENCY?

NOVEMBER 7TH AT 5:30PM
NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER OF USCL
119 S. MAIN, LANCASTER, SC 29720
(803)313-7045