



Art for the Sky

'Art Changes People – People Change the World'

'Art for the Sky' is a unique, large group, team-building experience for schools, communities, events and festivals. The end result of each art project is a giant 'living' painting made out of people – a metaphor, demonstrating the power of collaboration and the value of holding a 'big picture' view of the world.

Human 'paint drops' are organised into their places using a megaphone from a high vantage point, such as a crane. They are manoeuvred along painted lines, or pathways of wood chips, grass clippings, swirls of fabric, soil, leaves and twigs. These stunning creations seem, at first, to be just a mishmash of people, props and materials but the finished work is

not meant to be appreciated at ground level. To make sense of each piece, one must literally 'reach for the sky'.

Each project helps the participants to awaken their 'skysight' – a term coined by founder Daniel Dancer, describing a manner of viewing the world in a 'big picture' way – learning to see through the eyes of all beings; through the eyes of future generations. "With skysight we can access our highest creative potential and better solve the problems we face as individuals and as a society," he says.

Before going 'out to the field', Daniel encourages the 'painters' to learn about their chosen art form through interactive multimedia presentations – information



on the creature's plight, its significance as part of the wider ecosystem or its symbolic importance to cultural groups.

Daniel, a part-Mohawk environmental artist, author, educator, singer-songwriter and photographer, became fascinated by 'sky art', while travelling around South America and coming across the famous Nazca Lines of Peru. In the mid-80s, he teamed up with field artist, Stan Herd, who creates giant images on the earth, using a tractor as a paint brush and the crops for colour. Daniel decided to bring an entire primary school out to perform as beads on the headband of a 25-acre American Indian head. A decade later, the parents of one of the 'beads' informed him that the experience was the most memorable thing their son had ever done in school. It had taught him that things are not always as they seem and how a 'big picture' view is essential – so, in 2000, 'Art for the Sky' was born.

"In an earlier time, art was more than what someone else did for us to collect

for the walls and tables of our homes," Daniel says. "Once, we were *all* artists and doing art was a part of life, which connected us to the whole of nature. My art, events and programmes are an effort to reclaim this approach."

With hundreds of people collaborating to become an animal or a symbol from nature, each living painting becomes an act of cultural splendour. The projects help erase some of the boundaries that often exist in school or office settings and signify a promise to better care for our world and each other. "Being part of something glorious – something much bigger than ourselves – is rare in life," explains Daniel. "So, when it happens in our school years, it sets a kind of 'true north' in our internal compass, which we can always reference."

Daniel films each work from start to finish and choreographs it to his music. The videos are shown to those who took part at a gathering held at the end of each event. "When the audience get a glimpse of what their creation looks like from the sky, pandemonium breaks out," Daniel told us. "They see, for the first time, the beauty of the art that they embodied."

Native Sky: an Indian Art Rising is one of Daniel's current projects. Expected to take up to three years, it brings 'Art for the Sky' to 12 Indian Nations, as a unified response to the present environmental crisis – a message to America written on Indian lands; giant living paintings formed by living and breathing bodies of Indian people and their supporters. Daniel has also begun to facilitate river and wild land clean-ups, using the found materials as intricate parts of his images.

"This art is medicine for ourselves and the wild. It's a way to give thanks for all the beauty that surrounds us and to seek forgiveness from Earth for the damage inflicted by humankind," says Daniel. "Through story, intention and participation with others, each piece activates a healing responsiveness. Despite their impermanence and perhaps because of it, these works have real and intrinsic value... like Earth herself."

Daniel Dancer, a father of two, founded a 200-acre environmental community in 1998, called Rowena Wilds, in the Columbia Gorge of Oregon. He lives there, in an earth-sheltered home built of recycled and Earth friendly materials.



Contact: Daniel Dancer, Art for the Sky,
POBox 693, Mosier, Oregon 97040, USA
Tel: +1 541 806 3020
Website: www.artforthesky.com

Top: Daniel Dancer. Below left: a project involving Penobscot River Restoration Trust and the local Indian Nation's Elementary School, to celebrate the deep connection the Tribe has with the River Centre: the human eruption of Mount Hood Volcano, led by pupils of Westside Elementary School, dressed as hot lava!

Top right: Presidio Middle School, in San Francisco, first formed a chrysalis and then metamorphosed into the endangered Mission Blue Butterfly

Below right: human 'paint drops' from a community school in Pittsboro, create part of the Ivory Billed Woodpecker
Below: 450 students and teachers form the endangered Sierra Bighorn sheep
All photos: © Art for the Sky

