

## **THE HARRISON STUDIO**

**Helen Mayer Harrison/Newton Harrison and Associates**

### *SANTA FE DRAIN BASIN: LESSONS FROM THE GENIUS OF PLACE, 2002-2005*

We first came to the Santa Fe Art Institute to give a lecture on our work followed by a workshop. We found many people distressed by the destruction of their river, their problems with water and the fact that nothing could get done. Seeing the destruction of the river and being asked by the workshop to “do something,” with their help (primarily permaculture people), we first realized that the basic problem was not the water, but the earth, which from generations of over-grazing and misuse had been eroded. Working with Hispanics, Native Americans and Anglos like ourselves, teenagers, engineers and permaculturists, among others, we offered five proposals and six considerations to restore the ability of the soil to retain moisture. Among these proposals were a “genetic diffusion” system to restore life in the arroyos and the regeneration of 7 miles of virtually dead riverbed. “raising the riverbed”. Several proposals addressed the urban ecosystem and the dying of the Pinons. These proposals took the form of large and small maps, drawings and texts, a 70-foot long aerial photograph, video stories and an extended sculptural array of Tewa water symbols telling the story of water. Ultimately the Tewa symbols were designed to add sinuosity to the riverbed. The core elements of the work were moved out of the gallery and into the city plan. The river is being raised and the arroyos have begun to be planted.

### **Bio**

We have been collaborating on ecological projects since the early 1970's when we began with "The Survival Series," making earth and then portable farms, orchards and fish farms grown indoors under lights, since we felt that farming might well become a survival skill. We have done projects with areas as small as a series of tiny street gardens in Santa Monica for "California Wash: a Memorial". We have had an exhibition in four countries in four languages, sponsored by the European Union, several government agencies and at least four museums, called "Peninsula Europe: Bringing Forth a New State of Mind".

Although we rarely show in galleries, we have been with Ronald Feldman Fine Arts since 1974. Since the mid-eighties we have done much of our work in Europe. We have been in two Sao Paulo Biennals and two Venice Biennales. We were in Documenta 8 and later had a DAAD in Berlin. We have been working on the subject of Global Warming or climate change since 1974 and now have a grant from an agency of the British government for a work called "Greenhouse Britain: Loosing Ground, Gaining Wisdom". Always we begin with "How Big is Here?" and search for visual and verbal visions that will increase the well-being of all living things from the life in the soil to the people who live on it. Most of our projects land on the ground, either with us, or often long after we have gone, done by others.

Illustration: drawing for an overstory for a neighborhood of trees that would have changed the weather patterns and the way water soaked into the ground. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

