

“Gold Dust Woman Buries the Diggers’ Hearts”

12 ft x 4 ft

Oil and Copper Leaf on Canvas

Emerging from the shimmer and shadow of ancestral memory and intergenerational pain, *Gold Dust Woman* conjures a reckoning. She is not a symbol of vengeance, but a force of karmic return—an ancient and irresistible embodiment of what happens when the land, the women, and the spirits remember. This painting brings together the madness of the Klondike Gold Rush and the deeper violences buried beneath its golden shine—particularly those inflicted upon Indigenous women.

In this piece, she buries the hearts of the diggers—those who came to extract, consume, and abandon. She does not collect their heads. She takes their hearts. This gesture is not just punishment; it is relational surgery. It is the removal of that which was twisted by greed, entitlement, and desecration. These buried hearts become echoes, testimonies, and warnings. The act is ceremonial. To mourn Indigenous women’s bodies made into sites of conquest, transaction, and silence. This work arose from deep research and dreamwork. In one of many shared reflections, it was discovered that many women in the brothels of the Yukon ended their own lives in the aftermath of colonial rupture. Yet these brothels, paradoxically, had also offered some a fragile form of safety. These contradictions live in the layers of this painting.

Gold Dust Woman does not look away from the trail of damage. She is both the elegy and the reckoning. The land around her hums with the memory of stolen gold, poisoned rivers, and vanished kin. *Gold Dust Woman* rises from that trauma not as victim, but as an elemental power.

To stand in front of this work is to be asked:

What has been buried here, and by whom?

What must be unearthed to truly heal?

And what happens when the Earth’s daughters reclaim their own mythology?

A special note from Guná: Throughout the duration of creating Gold Dust Woman, sacred medicine filled the studio. Throughout the entire process of painting this work, my medicines burned slowly and the smoke would diminish fast. But on the last day of painting her, the entire half of my sage bundle burned by accident. I realize now that my medicine knew I needed to be prepared for a long night of painting in ceremony that would last until the break of dawn. It cleared the way for Gold Dust Woman's spirit to enter the room. This is how Gold Dust Woman was born.