

## IN ONE VOICE

A sound installation by Pacia Sallomi, 2001

This work is about contemplation, solitude and community during times of conflict, separation and discord. It reaches back through historical time and geographic space to connect with a common core of humanity. The fact that the text of this piece is over 4,000 years old attests to the long history, and lack of resolve, in the human desire to reunite "our clan".

### Background:

The text of this work is a fragment of a 4-5,000 year old Akkadian document, a translated prayer to the goddess Ishtar. Ishtar is an undifferentiated goddess, in the sense that she contains aspects of the generator of life as well as it's destroyer, thus, she symbolizes both death and rejuvenation.

The structure of the ritualistic prayer utilized in this installation is formatted as follows: a period of calling to the deity by her various titles and aspects, a naming of the difficulties needing grace, a request for favor and finally, closing with a plea for a joyful spiritual existence.

I first came across this writing in 1995 and was moved by the universality of the requests and obstacles identified in the text. The sense of pain and separation that existed then, and that still exists today as well as the request for unification, clarity and understanding which is perhaps even more urgent now then it was when these words were first uttered.

Over a period of several years I asked individuals who entered the sphere of my work environment in a small, Midwestern town, to translate this document into their native tongue which I recorded and with the help of Vault Studios, mixed the various voices to create the sound included on this disk. The installation is in a small, dark room lit by a candle on a concrete pedestal in the center of the room. The candle sits in a bowl-like indentation in the top of the pedestal that is filled with water. The first sound one hears is Arabic and the last is English.

This work has been exhibited 3 times. Perhaps the most significant feature of this installation is the circumstances of its exhibition in light of the content of the work. It was first installed as part of a four-person exhibition titled: "*In The Rooms Of Our Ancestors*", at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design. This show opened on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The opening reception was that Friday, also the day of the national candlelight vigil. It was then exhibited the following September in two venues (one in my hometown and the other in Wyoming as part of a larger exhibition on Spirituality and Art).