



### **Study For Women's Dance Regalia Yoke**

graphite, handmade Lokta paper and glass beads on paper

signed and dated 2021

26 x 31 in, 66 x 78.7 cm

“Study for Women’s Dance” follows in the practice of Barry Ace using the technique of beading on paper as a way to work out and “test aesthetic concerns and motif relationships when creating intricate designs” In the study, intentionally unfinished beadwork reveals the layers of progression from ideation to conclusion. Ace states, “People often don’t have an opportunity to see how an artist resolves problems through their artistic process.” In “Study for Women’s Dance”, Ace allows the viewer an occasion to see behind the process, to reveal how he works “to explore variations and aesthetic concerns in terms of figure/ground and texture/colour relationships in the preparatory works for my textile practice.”

The yoke is the part of the regalia that rests on the dancer’s shoulders extending on the back just above the shoulder blades. The left and right front pieces buckle together on the upper chest. Ace has produced others, “Women’s Woodland Jingle Cape” (2014) as well as “Healing Dance 2” (2015) which was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada and exhibited in the NGC’s 2017 Canadian Biennial and now included in the exhibition Radical Stitch (Mackenzie Art Gallery). In “Study for Women’s Dance,” he abstracts the yoke’s form, splitting the assumed symmetry as a way to rupture the foregone conclusion of cultural stasis in the colonial perception. In the Woodland style flower and leaf motif Ace flips the light and dark tones in the internal parts of the plant and their outline. Inside the leaf’s

structure the beadwork swirls and eddies to create movement that replicates nature. The vibrant palette is set onto Lokta paper, wildcrafted and produced in Nepal by women's cooperatives using traditional methods and the fibrous bark of a shrub Indigenous to the area. For Ace, the fragility of paper speaks to the precariousness of Indigenous culture since European contact. Also, the technique of beading onto paper is a painstakingly slow process. "Every second bead is stitched down, so the paper must be rolled each time from front to back to complete every stitch." "Study for Women's Dance" demonstrates the level of care and precision Ace bestows on his work.

***Excerpt - Encoding Culture 2 Catalogue.***