

MITAKUYE OYASIN

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When we say Mitakuye Oyasin – “All Our Relations” – the word Mitakuye means relations and Oyasin means more than family, more than a Nation, more than all of humankind. Everything that has a spirit.¹

Chief Arvol Looking Horse

THE 2012 SYDNEY BIENNALE – THE THEME

The title of the 2012 Sydney Biennale, “All our Relations,” springs from the sense of wholeness and connection implied by the concluding phrase of all North American healing prayers and chants. The phrase “All my Relations” dedicates these invocations to all physical and spiritual relations that are part of the Great Spirit. When viewed in this light, the acknowledgement metaphorically describes our universal connection.

As humans, we engage in three primary modes with which we view and experience knowledge. Firstly, via the *objective*: the physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force. Secondly, via the *subjective*: the inside world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomena. Lastly, via the *spiritual*: the quantum world, shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension unlinked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms. All my relations; or, in Native Science, the “Implicate Order”.²

With considerable courage and élan, the Biennale curators have set out to build on such an experiential knowledge base, creating a venue that binds the artwork and artists together. Under its chosen title, the Biennale facilitates a resurgence of the sacred or spiritual to champion the intellect and theory, extending to the audience a sharing of consciousness and purpose that intersects with the artists' own. These manifestations, that seemingly travel across time and space, allow a synching between artist and audience that transcends traditional roles – relationships are re-established across the three ancient categories of Body, Mind, and Spirit, which in turn provide a space for us all to hear the distinctive, unique, yet cohesive harmonics which this ancient trinity has the potential to create.

This sacred and holistic framework inverts a modern view of separation that focuses on parts separate from each other and the environment. Native Americans, along with the other wisdom traditions, believe we are all synergistically part of a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts, and healing must be considered within this context.

The role of spirit and connection within a framework of healing allows for an exploration of the relationship between healing and the life force. It is not only the individual's spirit that is important but also the spirit of the healer, and the individual's family, community, environment. The medicine itself and, more importantly, healing must take into account the dynamics at work between these spiritual forces as part of a universal spirit. It is this aspect of healing and energetics that I believe links *Knock On The Sky Listen To The Sound*³ to the curatorial considerations behind this year's Biennale.

