

THE COSMIC INTEGRITY OF SHARREL BOIKE

WATCHING THE BEAT // BY K.D. SELF



Artist, authentic dancer, and trauma worker Sharrel Boike has long gifted healing light and love to Bloomington clients, friends, and family. A former co-owner (with late husband Joseph) of Touchstone Wellness, Sharrel is now experiencing the challenge of ALS. In a June 2018 interview, she graciously shared the following reflections on her life as a healer and on her signature 1987 "Regaining Cosmic Integrity" art installation. —K.D. Self

Sharrel: I was initiated into human suffering in a very intensive way, being born into a traumatized family in the years just after the war. Following my "dark night of the soul," at age 27, I became aware my work was in the healing arts. I applied myself to the development of therapeutic skills with a focus on hands-on work.

I consider love to be a form of intelligence, and I am a student of that intelligence. In healing sessions, I hold space for people to discover they are valuable and that all structures constituting their identity are valid and must be embraced in order for change to happen. The patterns of trauma on personal, family, community, state, national, and global levels are identical. The healing of a community happens by the same principles as the healing of an individual.

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I understand more now, as I die, about my life. I can see that I am a born artist. That is my nature. I've written all my life. My visual pieces and choreography received some resonant mirroring. But, my life was always too chaotic, too fragmented to really dig into artistic work, except for the "Regaining Cosmic Integrity" piece. I thought God told me to do that, so I did it.

In 1973, I had a beautiful vision. This was shocking. At the time, I was trying to find balance in an echo chamber of frightening metaphors. Then, this beautiful vision came during a meditation on unanswerable questions. My question was, "Where am I?" The vision's words were: "'I' is not the question. 'I' becomes 'We,' must become 'We' to continue." I loved that teaching. But I didn't understand it. Probably this

would have fallen by the wayside, but within a day or two after I saw these words (and a beautiful image of light forming around the Earth), a book fell open in front of me-- to a Native American injunction that said: "You must bring your vision before the people."

So, I thought, "OK, I *must* bring my vision before the people." And, I started trying to figure out how to create a visual representation of what I had seen. It didn't have a title, I wasn't trained in the arts, and I didn't have any idea how to complete it. Seven years into this quest, I was on a greyhound bus looking at a book called *Synergetics* by Buckminster Fuller. In the back of his book, I saw the same structure I had seen in my vision. Beneath the image it said: '*four frequency icosahedron symbolizes cosmic integrity.*' Here I am on a greyhound bus, and I just wanted to start whooping it up. I think I did whoop it up. That was year seven. Now, the art project had a title: "Regaining Cosmic Integrity." After seven more years of trying things that didn't work, in year fourteen I completed the piece. In 1987, I brought my vision before the people: "Regaining Cosmic Integrity" was installed in a gallery and shared at the Pan Am Games in Indianapolis.

Structurally, this work is a triptych of three large light boxes with three large images of Earth (from an Apollo space photograph). Superimposed over the planetary pictures are polyhedron lines. The first Earth image has fragmented lines; in the second Earth image, the fragments are more connected; in the final stage, the whole planet is circumscribed by intersecting polyhedron lines of light.

The creation of "Regaining Cosmic Integrity" required me to regain my own personal integrity. In order to meet the challenge of bringing my vision forward, I had to function at ever new levels, and so it healed me. The literature handed out at the gallery was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and the vernacular. The title of the piece in the vernacular is: "The Seed of Hope." I asked people who came to the exhibition to return home with that seed for their garden.

My vision for global healing is one in which the light of unconditional love restores the continuum for us all.

Messages for K.D. Self (and for Sharrel or her family) can be forwarded to: ChoosingActiveCompassion@gmail.com.