

# *Spirituality in the Public Domain*

Interactive, multi-faith, multi-sensory event/exhibition by Radha Sahar

## Showings

*Pataka*, Porirua, Feb – Mar, 2005

*The Suter*, Nelson, July – Aug 2007

*Taupo Museum & Art Gallery*, Aug –Sept, 2007

## Concept

'*Unity in Diversity - Interactive.*' The show fosters peace & inter-cultural understanding in new ways. It is an official project in the NZ Diversity Action programme.

*Spirituality in the Public Domain* draws a wide spectrum of people in special interest groups, who actively participate. Viewers also discover what others are thinking & feeling. Inclusive language features in various texts embedded in the core works.

Religious viewers express that their beliefs are respected; the artist consulted religious leaders, and each major work was blessed or endorsed. Many works represent spirituality in a secular society.

Viewers participate, touching works, smelling embedded fragrances and listening to music the artist composed for specific works. They walk on the labyrinth canvas, spin the *Peace Prayer Wheel* and write their thoughts, inserting them into the *Prayer Wall* or into pockets or boxes in the paintings.

At *Pataka*, the show generated a strong feeling of humanity as tangata whenua took part alongside women in saris & burkas, Israeli tourists, local Christians, feminists ... Groups - yoga classes, the blind, young people with special needs – took an active part. 40 people attended the floor talk.



## Core Works

The exhibition centres on 9 large works, each representing a major tradition or spiritual outlook...

(above right)

- ☸ *Raranga Wairua* – 2 x 1.5 meters – Woven by viewers during the actual show. People sit on the floor, write their thoughts then weave the strands together. With soundtrack.



(above)

- ☸ *Prayer Wall* – *Judaism* - 5.5meters x 1.8 meters, plus DVD film footage. 28 separate free-form canvases. Sacred relics from the Western Wall in Jerusalem are embedded in this work. Viewers insert written prayers in cracks between the canvases.
- ☸ *Scripture Scrolls* – *Islam* - 2.5 meters x 1.8 m. 4 reversible canvases with text.

- ☸ *Ganges Blessing* – Hinduism - 2.4 meters tall x 1.2m Painting with soundtrack. Untreated water from the Ganges may be seen in a glass cylinder, in an alcove altar.



(above)

- ☸ *The Rose Labyrinth* – Christianity 4 x 4 meters. A circular canvas on the floor – a pathway to be walked on. With sound track.
- ☸ *Spirituality in the Public Domain* – 2.4 meters wide x 1.2 Blackboard – viewers write their views on spirituality. When full, it is photographed and cleaned ready for new input. The photos are displayed as an accumulating record.
- ☸ *Great Primal Beginning* – Taoism, 1.2 x 1.2 meters – Double-sided painting that hangs vertically in space. People may touch one side.



(above)

- ☸ *To Water My Roots* – Secular 2 meters x 500mm plus 4 large flower pots. Installation with sound track and charity donation box. People gradually deconstruct the daisies, petal by petal. Each person may take a written card chosen in the process.

(right)

- ☸ *Peace Prayer Wheel* – Buddhism 900mm x 900mm x 900mm Sits on plinth. Installation with soundtrack. People insert written Prayers, spin.... different coloured layers created at each gallery.



## Multi-faith Opening Ceremony

The exhibition offers an excellent opportunity to hold a multi-cultural, multi-faith blessing ceremony as the opening event. These have proved to be extremely moving experiences for all concerned. The artist can assist with guidance as the gallery approaches various religious groups in the community. Always, Tangata Whenua are invited to inaugurate; it has been very successful thus far working who goes after tangata whenua, and in what order etc on the day.

