

Mandalas



“Mandala “ is a Sanskrit compound word of *manda*, whcih means "essence," and a suffix *la*, meaning "container" or "possessor." Thus, "A Container of Essence" or "Sphere of the Essence." From this etymology, the mandala shares a common characteristic of having a center or axis and directional headings.

- The mandala is often illustrated as a palace with four gates, facing the four corners of the Earth.
 - The Mandala is a symbol of man or woman in the world, a support for the meditating person.
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In Tibetan Buddhism, a mandala is an imaginary palace that is contemplated during meditation. Each object in the palace has significance, representing some aspect of wisdom or reminding the meditator of some guiding principle. Tradition dictates the shapes, sizes and colors of these objects. There are many different mandalas, each with different lessons to teach. Most mandalas contain a host of deities as well as inanimate objects.

Sand Paintings

Mandalas are usually displayed in two dimensions, and are commonly made from paper, textiles, and colored sand. In a sand painting the sand is dyed and then carefully placed on a large, flat table. The construction process takes several days, and the mandala is destroyed shortly after its completion.



Other definitions of the Mandala

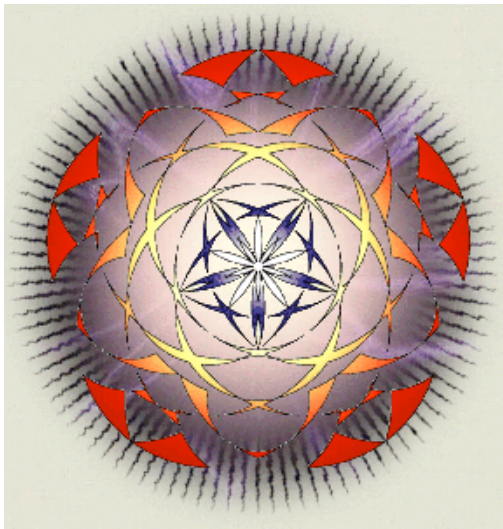
Carl Jung (1875–1961), famous Swiss psychologist who studied dreams and their role in our subconscious, was also very fascinated with drawing his own mandalas. He explains the mandala as follows: “A place where inner world, called the Self, and the outer world, called the Universe, come together in your body. The mandala is your body which represents the entire universe. The union or harmony of self and the universe, inner world and outer world.”

A Perfect Sacred Sphere:

“A magical, sacred, and perfected environment of the Buddha, which denotes the order and harmony of an enlightened mind, and built on their perfect wisdom. The purified circle of an enlightened being, an environment wherein the endless compassion of the enlightened one is expressed.”

(C.G. Jung: '*Mandala Symbolism*', Princeton University Press, 1973 and '*Man and his Symbols*', also by Carl G. Jung)

The innovative Dr. Jung became aware of the transcendental possibilities of the Mandala and used the concepts to help some of his patients into a deeper understanding of their psychological dilemmas.



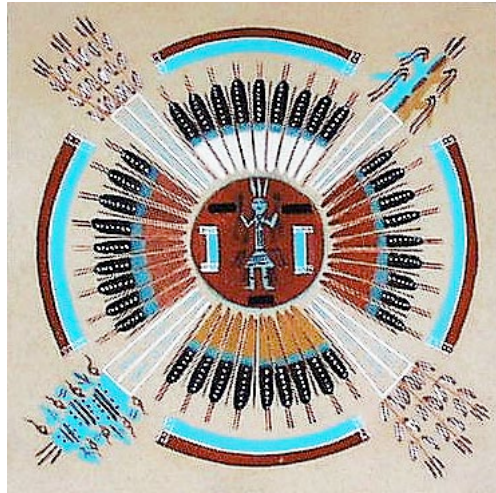
Seeing the Mandala as Sacred Geometry

The construction and meditation of spiritual Mandalas is an important aspect of Buddhism and Hinduism. Mandalas are to be found all over the orient, used as a tool to facilitate contemplation and meditation. This process of experiencing Mandala, has the potential of moving the witness into his or her spiritual center. The contemplation of Sacred Geometry

through the processes of studying or creating Mandalas (open-eyed meditation) can literally lead the student to enlightenment.

Even though Mandalas are generally thought to be an Eastern invention, it is hard to find a culture (past or present) that has not recognized the symbolic qualities and transcendental potentials of the circle and its various geometries.

Centuries ago, Native American Shaman had already discovered the healing power within the circle. Much of the symbolic geometry of Native American art and ritual is rooted in the balance of the circle and its natural division.... the four directions; North, South, East, and West.



Navaho Sand Painting

The construction of Mandalas can be divided into two basic approaches: *classical* and *free form*—

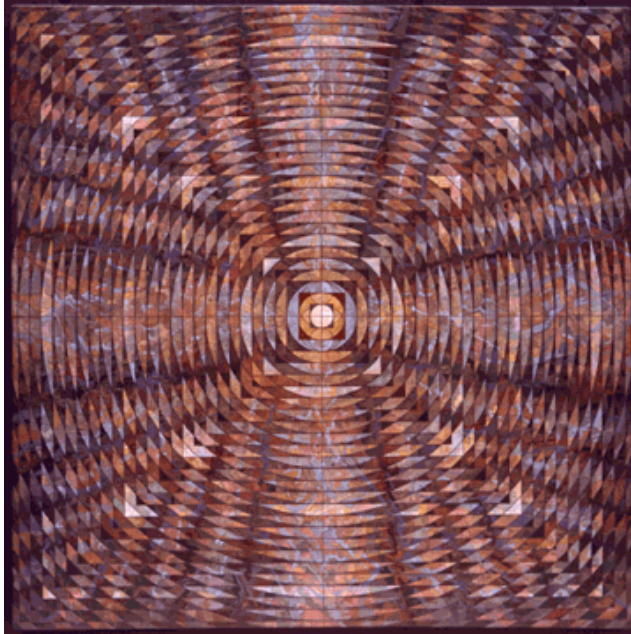
Classical: in this approach, the artist creates a Mandala based on a given form. This constructive process is equivalent to a musician playing a classical composition, recreating the music as it was written by a master. This is very much the Eastern tradition. Tibetan and Hindu sand paintings are obvious examples as are Native American sand paintings. Each Mandala has a given form and is reconstructed to very precise designs. One of the most famous Mandalas of the east is called the "Shri Yantra." The construction of this Mandala requires extreme discipline and knowledge. A small error in the initial layout will make the desired results impossible.



Shri Yantra

Free form: In the west, a new form of Mandala is developing, much more in the tradition of jazz music. In jazz, the basic architecture of the music remains but the artist is freed to create personal, spontaneous variations related to the original foundation.

The squared circle is the basic foundation of Mandala. Two examples of this western (modern art) approach to the squared circle are seen below.



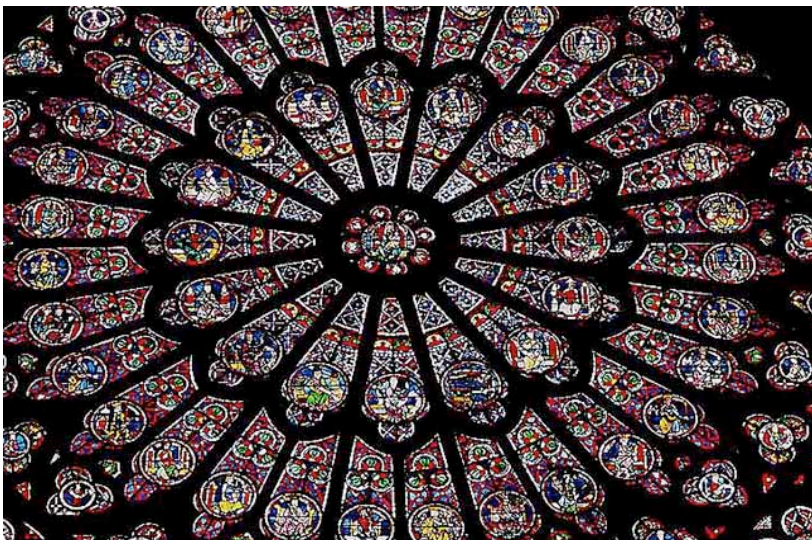
Squared Concentric Circles
an acrylic Mandala by Charles Gilchrist



Stoneware Mandala
ceramic, and wood by Ron Teachworth

Mandala Internet Resource Site:

<http://www.northnet.org/mwcsart/mandala.htm>



This is a gothic rose window from the Notre Dame Cathedral — Another example of the circle as sacred geometry

How To draw a Gothic rose window: <http://www.newyorkcarver.com/geometry/rose.htm>