



AND THE CIRCLES, THEY GO ROUND AND ROUND...

A couple of weeks ago, I was invited by my friend, Melinda, to attend the final session of her class in archetypal symbols. She is studying Art Therapy.

The final class project, which would be presented that day, was this: Students were asked to describe themselves using two Mandalas which they could create in any way, and in any media they wished.

The first would be a Destiny Mandala, which would represent the "plan" with which they came into this life, and the second, the Character Mandala, to represent who they are now that they have been here awhile.

Melinda did two lovely paintings on canvas which I really liked, and which you can see in our Gallery. They were full of birds, sparkle, and wonderful colors that described her well.

And it was so interesting to see how differently the other students interpreted the assignment. There were quilts and masks, wheels, circle dances, music, and apples hanging in trees (don't ask).

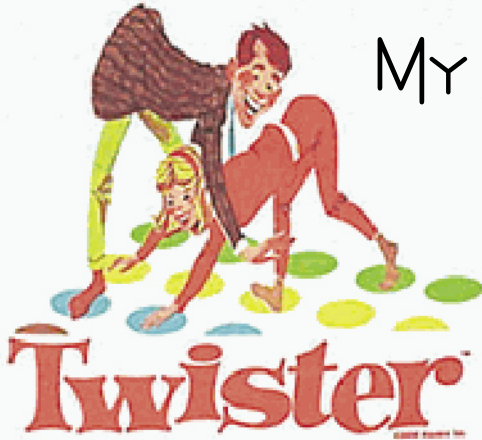
Of course, I was moved to ponder how I would describe myself in terms of circles - beyond running around in them, that is.

And, if you begin to look for circles, you will find them everywhere around you. In fact, it is a challenge to choose just two.

MY DESTINY MANDALA

Perhaps it is just wishful thinking, but because I would so like to believe that, at least at first, I had some sense of order, I chose a Japanese Zen Garden as my Destiny Mandala - with all its neatly raked rows, and a solid, dependable rock at its center. When I painted it, however, I saw that even then, there seemed to be paths going off in divergent directions. Where would they take me?

To see some wonderful photos of Japanese Zen Gardens, click this link:
<http://phototravels.net/japan/photo-gallery/japanese-rock-gardens.html>

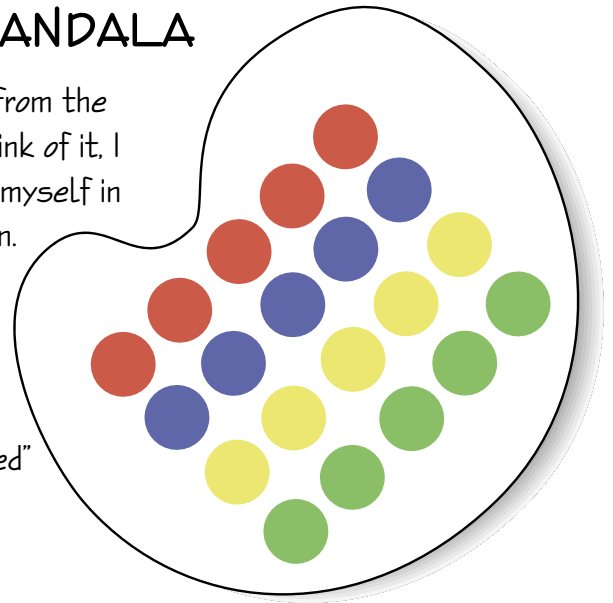


STILL AVAILABLE AT TOY STORES
IN CASE YOU HAVE RUN OUT OF
IDEAS FOR YOUR NEXT PARTY.

MY CHARACTER MANDALA

You remember this charmer from the 60's, don't you? Come to think of it, I was lousy at trying to twist myself in too many directions even then.

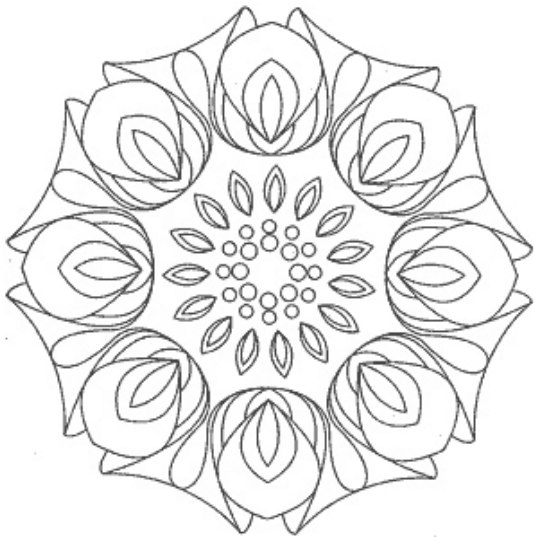
I do think my Twister Mat Mandala should be in the shape of palette, however, because I mostly get "Twisted" when chasing my Muses.



For way too much information on the game of Twister:

(<http://www.mathematik.uni-bielefeld.de/~sillke/Twister/>)

WHAT IS A MANDALA?



First Sample on the Google Images page when you search "Mandala"

A Mandala is a ritualistic, geometric design used as an aid for meditation practices in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Mandalam, in Sanskrit, means Circle, so, although a Mandala may be any geometric shape, we most commonly think of them in terms of circles.

In Tibet, the Mandala is thought to be an imaginary palace full of symbolic objects that the meditator contemplates one at a time. The objects and what they symbolize are dictated by tradition.

And, "mandala" has come to be understood as a symbol of convergence of energies - of centering oneself in the seat of one's personal power. So it does make a great tool for the practice of meditation - in which you are trying to have an intimate little get together with your inner self.

Carl Jung, who was a big fan of symbols, as we all know, had this to say about the Mandala:

"I saw that everything, all paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point - namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. . . .

... I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate." - (C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections)

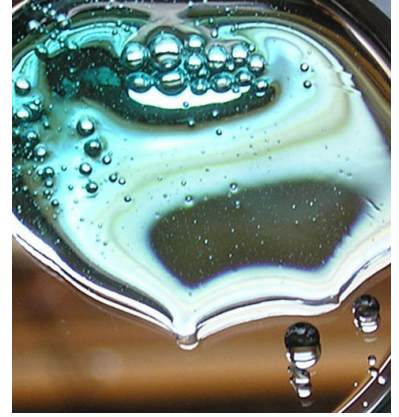
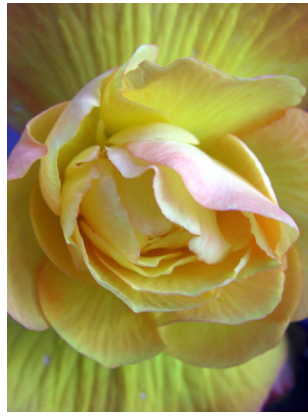
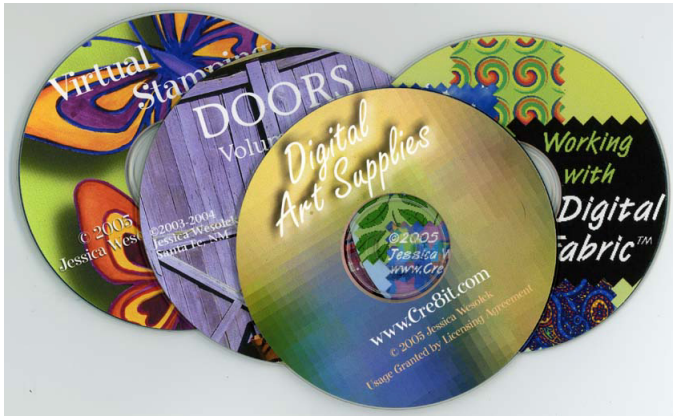
If you would like to explore some of the amazing plethora of interpretations of the Mandala, click this link to go to a Google Image Page where you can contemplate to your heart's content and beyond:

(<http://tinyurl.com/dzbek>). There are 118,000 images, so set aside some time!



SEEING THE CIRCLES AROUND YOU:

They are everywhere - you just have to notice. Here are some results of five minutes I spent looking around me for pertinent circles (the ones that have particular significance to me):



Of course, CDs are a huge part of my life of late. I didn't have to look very far for those. And this perfect begonia sits proudly on my "desk" in the garden. The lens on my digital camera is round. I used it in Super Macro mode to take the photo on the right. Cleaning some Circular Beveled Mirrors to ship to a customer, I dropped a blob of Dawn detergent onto one of them and the sun caught it just right. There were a whole lot of circles involved in that moment..

BOOK AND JOURNAL POSSIBILITIES:

This is a "stop-and-smell-the-roses" type exercise. Training your eye to really notice what's around you is an important part of the art life. If you were to look away from this page right now, and just peruse your immediate surroundings, how many circles could you find?

This is a wonderful theme for a handmade book or an artist journal. Photograph or scan (or draw) the circles you find around you. Feature one per page and add interesting quotes about circles and cycles - or write a paragraph about the significance of that circular object in your life.

You can even do a "circles-within-a-circle" theme: Create an imaginary circle of a certain diameter around wherever you decide to sit. Then limit yourself to working with the circles you find within that boundary.

Use a CD as a template to trace circular pages for your handmade circle book. Here are four pages from my circle book in progress. The pages are five inches in diameter. The book is called "surROUNDings"





NATURE'S MANDALAS:



Circles are the heart of nature - and the art of nature. Before biting into some of these masterpieces, it is good to stop and consider the colors and shapes and the pure glory of it all. And the fact that we will ingest all that glory in our next BLT is a heartwarming idea as well.

Makes you want to run to the produce department of your local market, doesn't it? What a wonderful circle book this would be! How about appropriate recipes on the back of each page? A book of natural mandalas would make a mouth-watering gift for anyone.

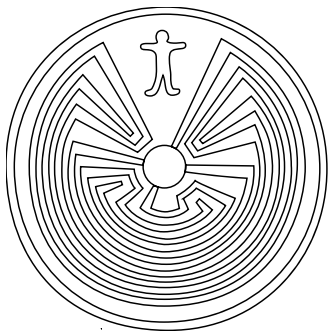
A Few Tips:

My friend, Sue, who must scan many strange things in her job as an art director, says that, as careful as you may be, you can still get juice inside your scanner, so she advises using a piece of acetate large enough to cover even the edges of the glass. Don't close your scanner cover, and have Windex and paper towels close at hand.

Personally, I didn't care for the look of squished juice and trapped air bubbles against the acetate or scanner glass, so I shot my "incredible edibles" with my digital camera, in open shade outdoors.

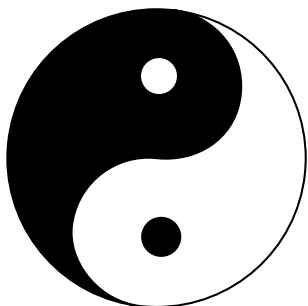
SYMBOLIC CIRCLES:

Many circles are just dripping with symbolism. Here are some circular symbols we have in our Virtual Stamp collection. If you don't know what Virtual Stamps are: (<http://cre8it.com/digitalsupplies.html>). The following are available as editable 300ppi TIFF images in the Symbols category of Virtual Stamps.



LIFE PATH

This symbol comes from the Tohono O'odham people in Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico. Originally it symbolized the secret path the Creator took to his hidden home beneath the mountain peak, but it is more commonly described as the Life Path. The design is well suited to this interpretation because it has no shortcuts, no dead ends, and the entire path must be followed to complete the journey.

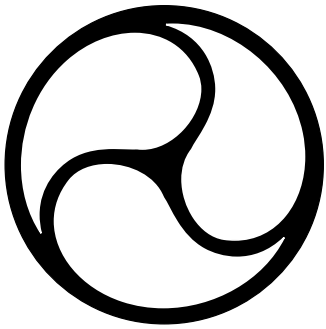


YIN YANG

A central idea in Chinese philosophy is that the interaction of the opposite forces of Yin and Yang create the changes that keep the world turning, and that the universe requires a balance between them. The symbol represents balance between opposites with the understanding that there is a little of each in the other: darkness and light, male and female, etc.

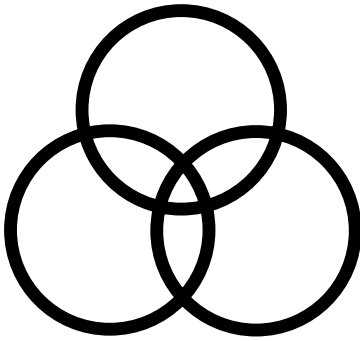


SYMBOLIC CIRCLES:



WORLD TRIAD

This symbol comes originally from the Orient and is made up of ever-cycling shapes that resemble the Yin and Yang. In Eastern and Western cultures, it has come to represent some wonderful concepts: Eternal Time, the Soul of the World, and Cosmic Creativity.



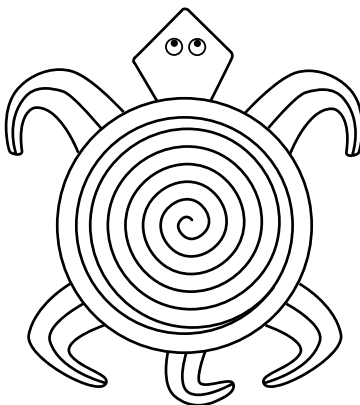
TRIPLE RINGS

Hang on to your hats, oh ye of female persuasion - this one is very interesting. In ancient times, rings were considered female forms, and this combination of three rings was supposed to represent the Three Fates who happened to be Goddesses, and the concepts of Love, Power, and Wisdom. Where the three rings intersect, they form a Triquetra - an interlocking triplet of the Vesica Piscis which was a universal symbol for the feminine creative force (because of its shape (perhaps?). The Triquetra symbol is considered protective and the center of this symbol, the creative energy of life itself. The irony comes along when the Christian Mystics decide the symbol should represent the male Trinity - and it is used in that fashion to this day. The Vesica Piscis (vessel of the fish) has been usurped as the symbol of most Christian religions.



SPIRAL

My friend, Vesta, and I were discussing the Spiral symbol a couple of weeks ago on one of our "art dates". We were in downtown Santa Fe at the time, where this symbol really proliferates. As we stood on a street corner, we counted fourteen of them in some variation or other just within our range of vision, and we were wondering at its popularity. One reason could be that it symbolizes many different concepts: Wind (change), Water (purification), A Journey, Centering - as in a journey inside yourself, and these are just the most well known. It is a wonderfully versatile symbol which has been with us since we created our first pictorial symbols.



TURTLE

Turtle symbolizes Mother Earth in many Native America Legends. At the time when all began, the water and creatures were created before there was land, and the creatures were all swimming about in a vast sea. Turtle allowed the others to climb on her back and the "Turtle Island" legend of creation was born. The Turtle also symbolizes protection because of her shell. This Turtle combines with the Spiral to make a Mandala with many things to contemplate.



MY SYMBOL MANDALA:

I chose the World Triad Symbol for my format because I love the cosmic creativity concept - and, of course, the never-ending time idea.

This mandala provides three "palaces" to fill with significant symbols, so I chose my three circles from page 3 to illustrate three areas of creative endeavor that are very "alive" in my daily life right now - (lots of 3's here - a good thing).

Clockwise from upper left, the pixels represent my involvement with digital art processes - which seems to be lively at so many levels lately. The Begonia is from my beautiful garden. When I co-create there, I feel truly a part of "it all". And the macro bubbles symbolize photography which continually causes me to look closely and appreciate the miracles which are so much a part of every moment.

To create this combination, I used the "Paste Into" technique in PhotoShop which is described in Issue 5 of the Whatever Newsletter (<http://www.dotcalmvillage.net/whatever5/whatever5pinwheel.html>) and in greater detail on the Virtual Stamping 101 PhotoShop CD (<http://www.dotcalmvillage.net/digitalpages/psschool1.html>).



CREATIVE CHALLENGE:

Can you describe yourself using circles? A.Museings *Creative Challenges* are intended as prompts to awaken your muse and get you into the studio - into your art journal - or to your writing desk.

If you send us a picture of what you do as a response to our *Creative Challenges*, we will show it in the A.Museings Gallery for thousands of readers to see. There is no deadline, but there are parameters for submissions: The picture must be a sharp focus 72ppi JPG file attached to an email with a brief description and your name as you wish it to appear in the gallery. Your submission will be posted shortly after we receive it. This will make A.Museings even more interactive.

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