



exploring mandalas

Steeped in rich spiritual history and encountered within nature, **Kate Collier** shares her personal connection with mandalas and shows how they can help heal, affirm and offer us clarity.

'Mandala' in modern Sanskrit can mean a circle, a wheel, a geometric shape, the special domain of a deity, a community, a constellation, a society, the cosmos itself. Mandala-making has been used in every culture as a way to wholeness and healing through meditation and art. Carl G Jung believed it represented the unconscious self and that each time we make one we see ourselves in a new, more integrated, balanced and whole way. The process of making a mandala is revealing, reflecting and in a simple, profound way a shift in how we see ourselves.

My work with mandalas started consciously about two years ago when I was leading a campaign to protect the flora and fauna of a field in our community from the hands of a developer. For many years I had offered mandalas in the Buddhist tradition prior to that time and felt the energy of the mandala in my therapeutic work, but it took the small print of a district council notice on a lamp post to wake me up. I suddenly saw it clearly in the circular sacredness of that field with a tree at the centre – an oasis of peace and quiet where owls, badgers, foxes and slow worms co-habited in its seasonal beauty – and I worked tirelessly to protect it.

researching its roots

A creative period followed as I went deeper into my own personal journey mandala, making collage circles out of magazines, working with guided imagery, colouring geometric healing mandalas and visualising them to bring healing. My research took me to its roots in every cultural tradition from the Native American medicine wheels to the sacred geometry of Islamic architecture; my intuitive research led me to find its energy in the whirlpools of a river, the ancient rock of our iron age forts,

our stone circles, a labyrinth in a convent in Kent, the zikhr of a Sufi meeting lodge in Istanbul and in the ancient sacredness of Mount Nebo in Jordan. More than this, in the cycles of my own life and those close to me with so many endings and new beginnings, in the cycle of our breathing, our metabolism, our physiology, the flow of our emotions and our soulfulness.

Beyond this, the mandala is in the creative force, the first cell of everything that grows and lives on this earth, in the cycle of each day, week, month and season. It's in the pull of the sun, moon and planets constellating as we cast our naked eyes upwards on a clear night beyond the neon-lit city streets.

workshops

I have facilitated mandala workshops creating collage mandalas, both in the UK and in the USA in small, intimate groups and found the heartfelt response of the participants very moving. I have been told that they find it "simple but profound" and that it brings about a deeper connection with who they are. They feel the collage mandala shows what is needed, affirms and accepts them in a gentle way. At New Year workshops, where mandalas are made for the forthcoming year, the mandala creates what often seems to start happening for real – which only goes to show the part our thoughts and intentions play in the creation of our future.

Personal mandalas can bring clarity and vision to any personal, relationship, work or health issue and offers a way of supporting and healing challenging personal circumstances.

Kate Collier is based in Bristol and offers two-hour mandala sessions for individuals and couples on personal, relationship, work and health issues. She also facilitates monthly evening sessions. www.healingtheheart.co.uk

