

Michele Faia Classes & Workshops
WHAT IS A MANDALA?

A mandala is all about the symbol of the center. Mandala, Sanskrit for circle or center, is an ancient symbol used to denote a sacred space around an honored deity in which sacred work could be practiced. Traditional Tibetan mandalas are called generosity, because from them, it is believed, one may receive many blessings. Psychologist Carl Jung brought mandalas into the 20th Century. He showed us how we could paint our own mandalas as part of our personal sacred work, what he saw as the realization of our wholeness. He taught us that the self is always seeking balance, and therefore, that is why some of us are very drawn to the balance in mandalas. Generally, a mandala is a symmetrical design which is circular and contains a center. For an individual, the mandala process is one of journeying inward to one's center, or source, and becoming one with it. A mandala design is a symbol of that extraordinary and powerful journey.



A flower can often be found in the center of a mandala, symbolizing the flowering or blossoming of the spiritual self. This is an early mandala I painted entitled *The Flower of Myself; Multi-colored, Multi-dimensional*. I drew and painted the yellow circle in the middle first. Then I drew the petals around the circle and painted them pink. Each layer I drew and painted in this manner, until it felt finished.

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



Traditional sand mandalas often take the form of a palace with four gates. Each gate, or direction, is symbolic of an area in an individual's life to be purified to reach enlightenment. In this mandala the center is the home of the gods. Mandalas are made from sand which the monks grind and color themselves. Creating the mandala takes about 4 days or so to complete. After completion, in a beautiful ceremony, the mandala is destroyed by gathering the sand and placing it in a sacred container. The sand is then tossed into a river, which symbolizes that everything is impermanent. Monks travel the world over to create mandalas in communities for peace, locally and globally.