

# THE NATURAL MANDALA

“the sacred circle rendered with organic material”

## THE NATURAL MANDALA: AN ART FOR HEALING AND TRANSCENDENCE

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The inspired mission of The Natural Mandala is inherent to its many layers of meaning, intension and purpose. My aspirations for The Natural Mandala began more than a decade ago with massive amounts of reading, research, writing, sketches and just pure contemplation and meditation upon the mandala form. Now, having come full circle from inspiration to presentation as a touring exhibit, the work before me is to disseminate information about the mandala form and The Natural Mandala, to promote and advertise not just The Natural Mandala proper, but the entire concept and all of its component parts. I have a clear vision of its future and I keep it always mindfully present.

The Natural Mandala is a six-foot square work of art with a depth of ten inches. It is exhibited as a vertical sculpture that is rendered completely with organic material. It employs a multi-faceted range of texture, color, depth and architectural features that are each inspired by nature's designs. As a traveling fine art exhibition, The Natural Mandala has touched the hearts of many who have sat before it, each with their own story to tell about their relationship with the natural world. Many have spoken about how some of the organic forms displayed within the work elicit memories from childhood while others find intriguing patterns, matrixes and iconic symbols within its natural realm. The Natural Mandala was conceived and created for the specific purpose and function to facilitate in a healing process as well as serving as an instrument for teaching and as a beacon for nature preservation. The prime intention for this potent image is to actuate a shift in the conscious mind, leading the viewer through shifting modalities toward a calm and balanced center in preparation for meditation.



### SYMBOLIC ORIGINATIONS

The mandala is actually an ancient form of art. Peoples indigenous to many different cultures and religions around the globe have used the mandala to illustrate their beliefs, while for others it is the central focus within their religious initiation practices. The mandala form is widely used today in the East as well as here in the West with great variety. Since ancient times, it has become traditionally accepted that the circle is a diverse and powerful symbol. As a symbol of unity, wholeness and connectedness, this circle symbol evolved and has emerged as the mandala form, a highly potent, structured image for psycho-spiritual focus and healing.

The mandala form originates from the East; used in religious initiation practices, as such in Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism yet has remarkable similarities to Western cultures, such as the Navajo of the American Southwest, and many other religions and cultures around the globe. It was psychoanalyst Carl Jung who introduced the mandala form to the West in 1928, having seen the mandala used in the East, developed a method to use this circular symbolic image with his patients to unlock the archetypal “collective unconscious,” leading them toward a greater understanding of and a deep unifying sense of “self” and wholeness. Jung continued to integrate and teach the mandala form through his work; such as arming practitioners with methods for unfolding dream symbolism, use in meditation, for self awareness and with the overall *individuation* experience. For the contemporary Western mind, the mandala has become synonymous with meditation practices that use it as a vehicle for focusing the conscious mind and centering one's spiritual connection within the body/mind forum.



### OPEN TO MEDITATION

This psycho-spiritual dualism is brought into conscious awareness as one who practices this form of “open eye” meditation develops their sensory acuity, inducing the meditating mind toward introspection. The practice of using this potent image of the mandala form for this psycho-spiritual healing has emerged even in the West, to the extent of being used in various forms of therapy and psychiatry. It is employed in many fields of mental health and even used more intensively with patients whose illness afflicts not only the mind but also the body – realizing that truly healing the body begins with the mind. The discipline of art therapy has aided many patients suffering from tension and depression to

those struggling with stress and anger management, to those battling more extreme physical illness such as; cancer, leukemia, HIV and AIDS and finally to those that are terminally ill. Certainly, the mandala form can aid in healing emotional traumas as well as many day to day ailments that include fatigue, tension, worry, anger, stress, despair and depression. For these, many people are recognizing the potential of meditation and the use of the mandala in this vein. For instance, people are using the mandala in their home, setting aside specific areas for meditation and contemplation thereby creating a sacred space within their home for their daily devotions. These allocated meditation spaces make it conducive to experience its calming influence and healing properties. Businesses, offices and large corporations are discovering the vital benefits of creating similar “therapeutic spaces” for their employees' temporary retreat, finding that productivity increases when workers are healthy and happy within their mind, body *and* spirit.



### THE LANGUAGE OF NATURE

I have discovered that following even loose parameters of the mandala form presents design obstacles as well as an intriguing venue to work within. Articulating a mathematically perfect circle becomes a source for inspiration and then rendering it with organic material is such a moving experience and then becomes a sheer visual odyssey. As I continue to lean my traditional artist's mind toward nature's "media" I sense a divergence of my own inner creative language. As I translate what I can just as easily draw or paint, I find that I think and feel with a deeper sense of the source media that I am using, in effect, I am attuning myself within the "language of nature." A pseudo-dialogue ensues where these vessels

of once living forms speak to me and I imagine this "theatre of nature" which lies beneath that which we might typically disregard or simply pay no attention. The roles of these materials play out their respective rapport with one another in such a way that it seems as if they stage themselves with intricate blocking that is authentic and natural.

It might be obvious to point out that the subject of the mandala is simply "nature," and that's true enough, yet within the parameters of using nature as an artist's media, there is still a full range of subject matter to ensure that every piece I create will be lush in concept and content. I currently have a list of concepts or "subject matter" spanning a wide range that speaks of many different subjects in which nature can provide unique commentary – just with its presence. That is to say, I can easily draw or paint most anything I care to, but to express myself within any subject using the language of nature both heightens and deepens the intent of any subject I would choose to fully render. Nature's palette of media is nearly limitless when you consider the color, shape, contour, 3-D "topography" and line of a leaf, for example, and then consider the subtle articulation of nuances comparing that leaf to others on the tree it came from sends the creative mind reeling. However, we're not finished yet. There are other trees, other species of trees and variations of those species of trees and some trees that are in Ohio and Indiana, are not in California or Maine, and those there are not here and some in the United States are not in China or Africa or the Amazon, nor are those there, here. Joyfully, Nature is replete with variation, as it obviously abhors stagnation.

The process for creating The Natural Mandala is inherent to the work itself as all that it is speaks of nature, comes from nature, is about nature and is nature. An excursion to venture out into the wilderness, or even my local park to collect materials can be deeply gratifying. Although some that I use are purchased as pre-preserved material, approximately 85% of the materials I use have been hand collected, hand processed; cleaned, manipulated, organized, admired, revered, meditated upon then stored and/or prepared for immediate use. I believe that the manner in which I approach working with the organic forms is paramount to the success of this work. Collecting the materials and devoting time to the cleaning process is just entering the threshold of what nature has awaiting my humble hands. As I begin to work with these forms and to disassemble their form with sometimes-surgical precision, I cannot help but be deeply affected by the shapes, colors, textures and architectural wonders that have been otherwise hidden. From searching for materials to gathering them to exploring their structure I became intrinsically inspired by these qualities. From the fragile, interior structure of a poppy pod to the fleshy colors of a fallen leaf, these designs become a schematic for the overall architectural design of the Natural Mandala. As an artist, it's constantly back to basics as I discover and explore what nature has to teach me about design, structure, color and form. Nature has provided the best possible studio in which anyone could be instructed, not only in the fine arts but in any form of expression, way of life and in our pursuit to understand the "Mind of God."



### THE HALLMARK OF ORGANIC MEDIA

The way that I use organic material to render, or illustrate, my design structure is such to allow the organic material to have its own voice, to be present and represent itself as itself, rather than to use it to model some other form. For example, if I were to fashion a piece of wood from a tree and sculpt it into a figure, certainly that figure is seen as a figure made from wood, with all of the beauty of the fine grain enhanced by carved modeling and toning with a finishing patina. This doesn't mean that the wood stops being "the wood" but that the viewer sees or looks more to the figure and not the wood for being "wood" and the tree that it once was. It stops being "the tree." My presentation of a leaf does not change

the leaf to become something other than the leaf. I allow the leaf to speak for and represent itself. Could I draw or paint the leaf as well as it exists? For argument sake, I shall say that I could but my drawing, no matter how assertive and extensively rendered, will never be and could never be the leaf. I believe that this concept of the media being "the art" as well as concurrently rendering other design aspects or qualities is a unique approach that gives the work such a vital presence. Creating a six-foot square, ten-inch deep vertical sculpture that is rendered exclusively in all organic material, has the presence to convey visual information even down to an infinitesimal level that is completely authentic. When you combine that with so many varieties, species and types of organic materials, within the scope that it has been given, these elements converge into a powerful image that becomes an interactive vehicle for meditation, contemplation and personal restoration rather than as a presentational work of art.



### PRESERVING OUR CONNECTIONS

The Natural Mandala raises awareness of the natural world for the viewer, rekindling a deeper sense of the sacred within landscape, organic forms and life. What would it mean to our contemporary society to once again recognize that our living world is a magnificent, abundant collection of life forms, ranging from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic of “creative existence.” For our society to begin to re-embrace nature and rekindle the relationship I believe we once knew, would be to reverse our *modus operandi* that we’ve strayed so far from nature that we think we are above it. Within nature’s embrace we can see and understand our place within the nature-God-man-mind forum. Today, as we continue to

face critical issues concerning nature reclamation, restoration, cultivation and conservation it is still easy to lose sight of our deepest intent to maintain purity of nature within our world. Many are fighting our battles daily to this end, while others carelessly litter and desecrate our precious natural resources. To raise awareness in the face of this mindlessness is to be reminded of the beauty and fecundity of nature in all of its exquisite grandeur and infinitesimal detail. To stop and consider the delicate color gradations within a fallen leaf or the mathematical precision of a seedpod structure is to once again become attuned to the voice, the mind and spirit of nature. When we once again listen carefully to nature we hear the faint echoes of nature’s teaching about our place within nature and the cosmos. Finally, our fervent call brings us home within, and it is within where we find our quiet center, our personal respite from the cares of the world and our deepest connection to the natural world and Master Creator.



### SHARING THE MANDALA FORM

The Natural Mandala is the first of many similar works to come. It was designed with a specification to become a traveling exhibition to illustrate The Natural Mandala concept as an “open-eye” meditation tool. It serves to illustrate all that The Natural Mandala has to teach, to inspire, to elicit remembrance, to cultivate wisdom and to encourage acknowledgement of the beauty, fecundity and the inherent sacredness of our natural world. It provides an example for what this genre of art can become for those who consider a commission for their facility or its alternative image captured in a fine art print for the home, the office, small business and large corporation. Moreover, its placement within a variety

of forums facilitates my goal, doing my part to re-educate and encourage a re-connection to nature by illustrating the resplendent variety of nature’s line, texture, form, color and the exquisite architecture that nature provides in this, her veritable exploratorium.



### COMMISSIONS AND PRINT WORK

The Natural Mandala illustrates the potential that this form of art can become and specifically for those interested in working with the mandala form rendered with organic material. It is the example by which future commissioned works can be gauged. Commissions for these works come from a variety of sources; from corporations that wish to provide “therapeutic spaces” for their employee’s respite and retreat, to wellness, healing and holistic centers, conservancy agencies, art therapists practices, museums, camps, lodges and spas to conservatories and wildlife preserve centers, retreat centers and lodges, educational campuses and schools, churches, spiritual learning centers, spas and private

holistic healing practices. I am in search of hospitals and clinics, and other similar venues wanting to provide this unique focal point for use in a sacred space. The Natural Mandala form is quite diverse in that it can be created to speak to any religious faith whereby employing nature’s symbolism it can intimately recall and explore religious iconography. Conversely, content within a Natural Mandala can have an ethereal, spiritual, non-denominational focus that allows a more broad appreciation for those seeking consolation, soul searching, healing and relief from grieving. Being seen as just a work of art, the Natural Mandala still has a unique and powerful presence that is conducive for hotels and businesses large and small, as well as many other public facilities, conservancy agencies, wildlife and nature preserves and any other forum wanting to promote the rich symbolism and the goodness of values within nature’s bounty. For those smaller spaces that cannot accommodate an actual commissioned work, I offer archival gallery quality fine art giclee prints to be placed in these smaller spaces to meet the need for those that wish to create a sacred, meditation space within any facility that wants to offer brief periods of rest and rejuvenation, such as; small offices and businesses, hospices, health spas, Yoga and Martial Arts centers, spiritualists learning centers, churches, schools, and in the homes of those who want to create meditation spaces to experience its calming influence and healing properties.



### MISSION PATH

The Natural Mandala is a metaphor for man’s connection with nature, his own re-connection with his inner being, his place within nature and his constant pursuit to understand his world and All That Is. Its aim is to become the beginning dialogue, to answer the call of man’s struggle to grasp the ineffable qualities of nature and to piece together the super-consciousness of the innate divine that is paramount to his existence. For many, it has become an icon for nature’s preservation and conservation by returning an awareness and focus back to the natural world; its fecundity and multiplicity, its beauty and intelligence, its complexity and order, its language and architecture, its meaning and mystery,

and its full breadth of grandeur from the aged redwood tree down to the microscopic detail of its seed. For many, The Natural Mandala answers the call from our innate spirit that connects with the natural unity of One. When we calibrate our energies to be in harmony with nature, we discover our intrinsic connection with All That Is. It is this inherent bond that beckons to our divine spirit. As we sit before The Natural Mandala, a metaphor for our relationship with our self and God as nature, we place our consciousness within its realms and experience an odyssey for our minds that opens us up in preparation for transcendence, this becoming a revival for the soul.