

THE NATURAL MANDALA TOUR

MAY 2008 – Batesville Memorial Public Library

This is the SECOND public exhibition of The Natural Mandala and had its origins via a series of events that I have and will always consider to be true acts of *synchronicity* that *are* significantly related – although whose reasons and full extent of purpose may never be fully known. This story is rather intricate, as you could expect that any kind of Universal networking to be, but I believe that when the world consciousness comes to bare upon a given situation, there isn't anything that cannot be accomplished – and the Universe is impervious to details, complications, obstacles and even our individual limited thinking. It was a little complicated to gather the facts and to record them here accurately, and it may be cumbersome for you to read, but the following is just the lighter version of the synchronicity of events that were in play to make this exhibition happen. I love when things like this happen, as they do with regularity.

Among the many people I had invited to attend the inaugural exhibit at Harrison, one was someone that I had met a very long time ago and still didn't know very well, but on a professional level, I had always wanted to. Because I had been so out of touch I had to research to find her phone number. Finally, I called her and told her that I wanted to send her an invitation to my art exhibit. I explained what it was and she marveled at the synchronicity of my calling her right at the time that she was sitting down to plan another mandala project with her students. She is fellow artist Rebecca Davies, who graciously attended the "Meet the Artist" event on April 19th at Harrison. Because she has always used the mandala form with her students, she talked of her wish to have her Batesville students see this mandala. Unfortunately, it was too late in the school year to plan a field trip to Harrison for her students to see it.

Later that week, I spoke with Ms. Davies on the phone and suggested the idea of somehow exhibiting the mandala in Batesville, Indiana. Being assertive as she is, Ms. Davies called the library and spoke with Ms. Vierling, Head of Reference at the library, and told her about the work that I was doing and the piece that was being exhibited in Harrison. Ms. Vierling spoke with the library director, Mr. Mike Kruse, who, and as it turned out, told her that he had already been told about the exhibit through someone else that I had invited and, unbeknownst to me, had already gone to Harrison to see it. Ms. Vierling then emailed me, told me about being contacted by Ms. Davies and that Mr. Kruse, had seen it, was impressed with what he had seen, and would love to host its exhibition at Batesville. In one of our conversations, Mr. Kruse told me that having already been impressed with the work, didn't think there would be any way that he could secure this kind of an exhibit for the library – which I thought was quite a compliment.

Through all to calls and emails filtering through so many people, its amazing that anything got accomplished, but it did. Since no venues for May had yet been confirmed, it was easily agreed upon within a matter of a day to exhibit The Natural Mandala at the Memorial Public Library during the month of May 2008 in Batesville, Indiana. The story is actually more intricate than this but serves to illustrate the orchestrating perfection that Universal energies have on those actively working within its realms. It's so beautiful when it happens like this and to watch it all play out as it does, it's the true work of art from Master Designer and Creator.



One of several important firsts for The Natural Mandala tour was the exhibit being used as an instrument for teaching. Certainly, one of the main purposes for which I created this work was to disseminate information about the mandala form. Another is to inspire a rediscovery of nature's fecundity and instill a renewed appreciation for its form and architecture. Taking The Natural Mandala to various venues where diverse groups of people can see and experience it first hand is truly one of its most unique qualities, a true hallmark of its purpose and function. Rebecca Davies exemplified this function by bringing all of her fourth and fifth grade classes to see it over the course of several days. For me, it was an experience of wonderment to listen to the thoughts of these focused and well-trained young artists whose young minds have been masterfully challenged by Ms. Davies' exceptional teaching skills and enduring enthusiasm. She is the quintessential unsung heroin, so supportive of others; she's truly a gift to the art world.

One of the reoccurring commentaries I received from library patrons was of their first experience seeing the mandala. Many spoke of the regal presence that The Natural Mandala possessed seen in the distance from the library entrance. As they approached the mandala they spoke about seeing many different things. Some had the impression that what they saw was made from copper while others thought it was a quilted pattern but most agreed that it took them by surprise to see that it was indeed rendered completely with organic material and that the image was not flat but very sculptural and deeply three dimensional.





One of the greatest affirmations for my work with The Natural Mandala came from such an unexpected source. In between team-teaching Batesville students, I had a little time to speak with several librarians throughout the day. They each had many stories to tell of library patrons' experiences and comments about the exhibit. For me, the richest of these was to learn that The Natural Mandala was most revered by the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana. I was told that they came in groups to sit with the mandala for long periods of time, sometimes in quiet discussion amongst themselves, other times just to sit in a communal meditation. My "Meet the Artist" gathering at the library comprised primarily of about forty sisters who came to meet me and ask questions about me, about my work and The Natural Mandala Project. The Sisters were already there when I arrived – and I was really early. As soon as I engaged them as a group, I felt such a deep, spiritual rapport being in their company. Through their questions, penetrating dialogue and supportive appraisal, they gave me such an immeasurable gift of acknowledgment, affirmation and a moving sense of satisfaction for my work, more than I believe I may ever receive. Their veneration is a testament to the potency of The Natural Mandala purpose and to the inspiration and divine directive that has brought it into existence.



Another first for me was to see The Natural Mandala in its frame, on its pedestal and illuminated solely by its own internal lighting system. It is a really different look than what you see when there are other extraneous lights working upon it as well. A feature that I wanted to incorporate into the frame is the four panels of lights with five lights within each panel. Each of these is on separate dimmer switch so that each side, top and bottom can be adjusted for any lighting condition. When the mandala is being used specifically for meditation, it helps to have the room lights dimmed for ambiance, and thus, having the internal lights becomes a more appropriate and important quality. Photographically, this image doesn't work all that well, but in person, under this lighting condition, the Natural Mandala glows like copper.

The afternoon that we began our walks to the library to experience The Natural Mandala, the students were in awe. They were very quiet at first, looking at me with amazed looks on their faces. They found it hard to imagine that one person could do this. From a small picture I had shown them, many had a preconceived idea of size, depth, materials, all different from the experience of sitting in front of it. The lessons are so layered, like the materials of the mandala, for all who give themselves the time to really observe. I feel very grateful, first that Rex followed through with his vision and that I had this opportunity to share my love of this piece with my students. Many kids told me that they would get back to the library as often as possible to sit with it. A number of them thanked me for getting them there to see it. Their comments were quiet and thoughtful. How this will affect their art, their lives, their way of looking at the world; well we'll just have to wait and see. Thank you Rex for your commitment to your dream. May it keep on spiraling onward.

-- Rebecca Davies; Batesville Intermediate School

