MINDFUL MANDALA

Creating mandalas, a practice rooted in ancient Buddhist beliefs, can be a great way to connect with your inner self during stressful times. Use this activity to reflect on what you are most grateful for in this moment and see how it can open up your mind and heart in a positive way.

This activity is inspired by several works in USC PAM’s permanent collection. You can search for more examples on our [website](#).

**What is a mandala?** Mandala is an ancient Sanskrit word meaning “circle.” Mandalas are symbolic diagrams used in meditation and performance of sacred rituals, particularly in Buddhist and Hindu practices. The intricate designs and patterns come together to represent the universe. Mandalas are used for the purposes of meditation, personal growth, and healing.

**Prompts for Looking at Art:**

Take a close look at the images below. What do you notice? What is the shape you see first? What images do you see? Do you notice the use of symmetry (an image being the same on both sides of the shape)? Compare and contrast the first artwork with the second. Are there any images that you recognize and any that you wonder about?

Symmetry is an important part of creating a mandala. Symbols and designs mirror one another around the circular form.
**Roundel in the Shape of Mandala** (China, Ming dynasty, Wanli period (1572-1620))
Cloisonné enamel on a copper base
Gift of Robert Bentley
1990.52.3

This copper base is decorated with lotus flowers, a Buddhist symbol of purity because it grows out of the mud.

**Yamantaka Mandala** (Tibet, c. 1725)
color; cloth
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Jesse L. Greenstein
1996.8.6

In Tibetan Buddhism, Yamantaka is the slayer of the God of Death. He is the blue figure featured in the middle of the mandala.
Questions to Inspire Your Artwork:

- What do you value most in your life right now?
- What are you grateful for?
- What images symbolize you and your values?

Materials:

- Paper
- Plates, bowls, pots of varying size or any circular templates
- Pencil
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons

Optional Supplies:

- Compass

Instructions:

**Step 1**
Take the smallest bowl, place it in the center of the paper, and trace its outline with a pencil. Do the same with the other bowls, tracing from smallest to largest. Draw at least three circles.
**Step 2**
Think about what image or symbol represents you. Draw this image in the center circle. It can be a shape, animal, flower, or unique design you make up.
Step 3
In the next few circles think about the things that you are most grateful for in the moment. Some examples are family, friends, pets, and objects that provide comfort. Take a few minutes to think about this and decide how you will represent these things in a drawing, or symbol. Each circle will be for a specific concept (i.e. family) and the symbols have to be symmetrically placed around the circle. Do not use words, only pictures!

Step 4
After drawing your images, take the time to add color! Color in your mandala and reflect on why you're choosing these colors. Try not to leave any blank spaces.

Step 5
Share your mandala with the people you love and talk together about what you are grateful for, especially during challenging times.
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