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## **Circles: A Merging of Art and Intuition**

**By Carol Connor**

### **Abstract:**

Who we are, what we are here to do and what we most need to heal, can be addressed through art and intuition. As an intuitive and artist, I translate the energies, gifts and traits of others into a visual context. Using a circular form, or mandala, I draw and interpret shapes, colors and symbols to represent people's essence and assist them in seeing themselves, their paths and choices more clearly.

Key words: art, intuition, mandala

Our energetic bodies, which are physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, carry a wealth of information and insights about who we are, who we were and who we are able to become. These have color, shape and symbolic meaning, containing rich resources for growth, creativity and healing.

Intuition can bring about the recognition and identification of people's color signatures and symbols that they hold in their energetic fields. Knowledge of what these may signify can result in seeing the self and life patterns in new contexts, introducing newfound clarity and wisdom.

Engagement with color and its energetic properties through creating art can shed new light upon capabilities that are established and those yet to be unveiled. New insights can be obtained for transcending life's challenges and difficulties.

In coaching sessions, I interpret and draw these energies in mandala form – a classical pattern based on a circular design. In groups, I facilitate this for participants, opening doors to visual intelligence and discovering significance in visual information. In my studio, I paint energy forms of thoughts, emotions, transitional states and subtle energies, seen and felt with inner senses. In addition, I like to paint the essences, impacts and influences of the natural world upon us, its human inhabitants.

'Mandala' is a Sanskrit word that has been interpreted as 'circle,' 'wheel,' 'container' and 'essence.' Mandalas have a long history in worldwide spiritual traditions, including Hindu, Buddhist and Navajo healing rituals, meditation practices and transformational art. Carl Jung was instrumental in introducing the mandala into our modern Western awareness, along with other aspects of the collective unconscious.

Notable aspects of the mandala hold constant throughout its evolution, including its transition into Western awareness. These include the highlighting of relationships between the micro- and the macro-universes; and the seeking of knowledge, understanding and unity of the self in relation to the universal. An individual mandala can be seen as a microcosm for the macrocosm of the All. In Native cultures, this aligns humans with natural and planetary cycles that have circular occurrences in nature, such the cycles of seasons, and the shapes of the moon and sun.

Sacred to Buddhist and Navajo traditions are the creation of mandalas with coloredsand or finely ground stone. These enjoy only a transient existence, as they are swept away at the end of ceremonies and festive occasions, acknowledging the impermanence of life and of all earthly forms.

## **Beginnings**

Since early childhood, three trajectories have directed the course of my life - the love of making art, development of my intuition and deepening my relationship with nature.

Creating art has been a pathway for developing my intuition, as intuition has directed my art. Colors, and then seemingly abstract shapes and patterns began to reveal themselves as energy forms when I drew and painted. I then realized that I was tapping into a kind of visual language, a method for representing not only states of consciousness common to most people, but a symbology to represent individuals' characteristics and current energies, as they play out and unfold in their lives.

Being in nature and being in communication with nature has been extremely instrumental in shaping my life. I moved to a somewhat remote town in the Colorado Rockies and currently live on a ranch. Being outdoors often has indelibly etched the rhythms, the ebbs and flows of nature within me.

More than twenty years ago, two spiritual teachers who visited our area frequently encouraged me to draw what I was intuiting for others. This was an almost effortless unfolding, much to my surprise. Part of my soul purpose and endeavors since have become a merging of passions, creating art and helping others see themselves, their potentials and gifts more clearly; to mirror, energize and hold space, through art and intuition.

In 1999, I was invited to become a faculty member for the Kaiser Institute's Program in Intuition, a nine-month exploration for leaders and innovators, with focus on furthering innate intuitive abilities. Led by Kevin Kaiser, Leland Kaiser and Leanne Kaiser Carlson, all futurists in health care, I am grateful to have spent the last ten years as part of this program, learning much as I offer my coaching and teaching. In addition, I serve as a faculty member for another Kaiser family creation, the Two Worlds Wisdom School, a place of exchange and study of perennial world wisdom and its application to all areas of life.

## **Who are we?**

People have a fascination about what they look like, which really translates into where people are in relationship to themselves, to others, to the physical world and to the Source. This is the dance between constancy and change. Because change is a constant in all relationships, we continue to

seek harmony with what is occurring. We desire the comfort in what is constant yet need skills to embrace transitions, such as:

- How do we facilitate change?
- How do we define who we are, as we change?
- How are we defined by external factors?

This relates to the very human ongoing push and pull between fear of change and desire for growth and healing. We long to belong, but to what? Is the voice of longing coming from the ego, heart or soul? The ego often advocates to keep the status quo. The heart urges us to make choices based upon compassion and love. The soul prompts elicitation from the Source, to remind us to strive towards knowingness, that we are more than our physical selves. So, how do we determine which is which? How can we be certain we are hearing our inner guidance clearly?

We seek to express our unique abilities and contributions and simultaneously deepen our sense of connection to that which is greater than ourselves. Putting such ponderings into a visual context leads us to understandings that are sensed with our inner knowing, not just to logical reasons and explanations that make sense in mental ways.

It's very common for folks not to be able to see things in themselves that would be helpful for them to know about. It's the "I can't see the forest for the trees" syndrome that all of us experience in one degree or another. My intuitive gifts can identify and help trigger awareness of these issues in those who work with me to externalize their inner wisdom. These "aha" moments can help people change the way they think about themselves and the universe; facilitate healing; create important shifts in relationships; or simply confirm and expand on personal insights.

I feel that empowering others is an important way of contributing to the world and generates healing. To do no harm, to leave people better than you found them is essential. A conversation, a smile, enthusiasm and support for someone's project, idea or glimpse into self can be instrumental in her momentum for creativity and change. The fostering of compassion is to feel the power of being fully present for another person and her energy. There is nothing like the contagion of intuitive discovery. Vitality increases and eyes light up. What a gift it is, to witness and participate in this!

### **Energy portraits/intention mandalas - drawing out and drawing energy signatures**

During sessions for individuals, I intuit and draw people's current energy patterns and intentions. I begin with silently asking permission to scan their spiritual, mental, emotional and physical bodies, with the request to use the information that I receive for their highest good, so that I may assist in revealing what is foremost coming into consciousness.

Using high quality colored pencils on archival paper, I depict a person's energy in mandala form, representing his or her wholeness, totality, or ring of awareness. These are small-scale drawings that have intimacy and can be easily tucked into journals, stored or framed.

The center portion, often a circle, represents the characteristics and attributes that people carry throughout their lifetimes. The middle areas are assessments of current patterns, cycles, challenges and intentions. The outermost rings have to do with the personality and surrounding all of this may be shapes and colors indicating guidance that the clients are receiving.

The colors that I choose, or that I am impelled to choose, include those that resonate with the elements - air, earth, water and fire, as the elements are integral to the energetic makeup of an

individual. These are apparent in the make-up and personality of people and are expressed through their being and actions as fire (= energy, passion and strong vitality) air (= intellect, quick thinking], earth (= practicality, pragmatism) and water (=emotionality, sensitivity towards others). Solar or lunar predispositions are also referenced, and colors of prominent chakras that I sense are added, all becoming a visual composite of characteristics, strengths and gifts, which can then become part of people's blueprint for intention.

Topics and questions are tailored towards what individuals wish to address and what I sense is coming to the fore, where clarity is most sought, where confirmation and affirmation are most needed, as I render lines, shapes and color to represent their energetic structures. To be willing to trust and be open in discussions of heart, desires and soul purpose takes courage, especially in people's first engagement with art as an exploratory experience. It is important to create an atmosphere of relaxation, fun and humor. Since anxiety and stress hinder reflection, intuition retreats with over-thinking or trying too hard. As I share my intuition, intuition is activated in others.

Drawing for others is a sort of celebration of who they are and highlights some of their unique aspects. For many, it is difficult to see the value in themselves - what may be unique may seem ordinary to them but extraordinary to others. There is immediate response to seeing how their qualities appear. As I draw and their qualities take visual form, deeper resonance and recognition of their gifts occurs. An honoring of self unfolds and instigates a connectivity through symbols, deepening the meaning of words. Then, we get into more of what they can become.

What is occurring in their lives or what is brewing internally, wanting to become manifest?

Where are they seeking balance and more flow, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually?

What can be increased and released to create a more balanced life? We identify desires, heart purpose and soul purpose. What urges arise that are propelling a client forward?

What is the next step?

Sometimes a whole vista emerges; at other times just the next portion of a path.

We can easily forget who we are, numbing down through routine. How can passion be rekindled, excitement and wonder be invoked? Images and symbols become bridges into possibility. Patterns emerge and shifts are noticed. We get out of our heads and come from the heart, finding magic and relationship to mystery, moving from I can't to why not?

### **Account from a participant in the Kaiser Institute's Program in Intuition**

Shawna (assumed name). was a participant in the Kaiser Institute's Program in Intuition. I had the pleasure of having her in several small group sessions that I led, in which her heart-felt questioning and penetrating insights added much. Her dedication towards self- healing and serving others were very apparent.

While explaining my process in our first mandala drawing session, she inquired as to what many ask me:- "Do I see the energies that I interpret with my physical eyes?" I replied that I do not, but visualize with my third eye, in the way that any of us can envision someone that we love or in the way a dream, a familiar object or place are recalled.

After Shawna's energy portrait was drawn, we continued, in later conversations, to discuss at greater length and depth the current transitions that were taking place in her life. We noted her strengths and areas of unawareness that were coming to light and thoughts and emotions that were most appropriate to revise or release, at the time. In particular, Shawna. was addressing some issues that had come to the fore: the unavailability and inconsistency on the part of her

father during her childhood, which continued to recur in her adult friendships and primary personal relationships. Because of her early life experiences, she had experienced a common thread of violation of her trust and ensuing disappointment throughout her life. Her conscious intent was to find relationships that had a basis in honesty and commitment. She began to wonder what part she was playing in lack of reciprocity. As we explored, it became increasingly aware to Shawna. that she took on a people -pleasing role in attempts not to be abandoned by those whom she loved.

I observed to Shawna that she had an innate gift of being an empath (intuitively sensing what others thought and felt). She applied this gift unknowingly as a coping response from early childhood. This is a defense mechanism typical of sensitives. As children, they often have no adult recognition of their gifts and no guidance in their use. Shawna agreed, commenting that in unconsciously attempting to make those around her happy, she hoped that she would then be loved and not be abandoned.

Next, we conversed about valuing her intrinsic worth and setting boundaries and intentions for her interactions, deciding what she would accept or not accepting the behavior of others towards her. We discussed how trust generates trust; that being in a defensive stance attracts those who tend to take energy from another, thereby stimulating other to set up a defense against this.

We agreed that a better approach might to have an open Heart. Paradoxically, this can be one's best defense against being hurt. When there exists nothing to resist, push or pull against, there can be no conflict.

In addition, I suggested tools that Shawna could utilize, such as:

- Using a self-scan: By observing changes in her energy levels, such as mounting anxiety or increasing well-being, she could notice whether or not she was feeling expansion or contraction while engaging with others.
- Pausing and deciding upon a best course of action: Shawna could stop, breathe and remember to halt her reactivity in response to what she perceived as negativity.
- Calling upon her more helpful intentions: Shawna could generate responses and initiative that promote heart-based relationship.

As she has learned to create new modes for relationship, Shawna has chosen to fulfill some of her soul purpose: healing this pattern not only for herself but for others as well; bringing about mutual joy, deeper love and authentic give and take among her family members and friends. Without her layer of defense, I sensed that her intuitive abilities will unfold so that she may effectively use her intuition in support of her desire for healing. In turn, her further soul purposes will be revealed.

Shawna reports:

I began to work with Carol during a period in life in which many things were not working. I was unable to find my way to my next best step.

Carol swiftly saw the bigger pattern and through laughter-filled meaningful conversation, I found the perspective and context needed to see the call to action for my circumstance. And, to find peace for my mind and spirit.

### **Mandala session with Keisha.**

Keisha and I got together to do an energy portrait during a spiritual retreat. Because we have corresponded on an online forum, I knew that she has a remarkably high level of intelligence,

pronounced writing skills and wit. When we met at the retreat, I was struck by the wisdom that she embodies and by her kindness.

In doing her energy portrait, my first sense was that it would be difficult to portray her on a small page, due to her multitude of abilities and her widely ranging scope! I felt that it would be most beneficial to depict her assets to help her see with more clarity an overview of herself in context to the career directions and life choices that she is considering after completing her PHD.

At the center of Keisha's drawing is a sphere of many colors, to describe her diversity. The two strongly defined red circles indicate that she takes action easily and is very devoted to and passionate about whatever she is working on. I repeated these colors throughout, in the diverse elements in the mandala. These forms express her array of potentials. The gold circles are like eggs or possibilities – what projects and endeavors does she wish to nurture and hatch?



Overall, it felt to me that her energetic signature had a kind of creative tension, due to her role in bringing together the often opposing groups that she is involved in, such as her social, spiritual and professional organizations. It seemed that her energetic design was on the verge of a major shift, to reflect her upcoming change of circumstances. In the near future, she will relocate and start a new career, after finishing her doctorate degree. White areas, in contrast with a bursting out of the other components, illustrate her ease in deftly juggling her variety of pursuits. White also signifies her openness and marked lack of negative judgments. She readily sees the good in others, despite their flaws, while embracing differences in points of view. The four arrow-like lines and green V shapes are indicative of foundation and structure for her strong humanitarianism.

Keisha reports:

Before we started talking, Carol walked me through her seeing and drawing process. This orientation was meaningful because I had never had my energy drawn before so I didn't know what to expect. Two things that struck me during the session were how she was able to translate my traits and patterns into a coherent color system, and how she could draw, talk, listen, and still ask piercingly on-target questions. Our conversation helped me to integrate some thoughts I've had about my purpose, background, skills, and how they all mesh together. It's been nice to go back to the drawing and see that snap-shot of my life.

When I decided to work with Carol, I was thinking about ways to use my skills to help my social, spiritual, and professional groups. While Carol drew, we talked a little about what she was seeing, and I found it helpful to add her second opinion to mine on some of my strongest traits. For instance, I was wondering how to be useful in my church community, but had become frustrated because I wasn't sure where to start.

In her drawing, Carol focused my attention on deep grounding (red circle), compassion and heart (aqua, dark green), broad scope (directional arrows), intellect (bright yellow edging), bridging functions (arcs), and emerging structures (bright pink). These features all reminded me of how I can bring different groups and ideas together, in new ways, and without threatening people's comfort levels. Since we talked, I've been putting my energy into writing for some

church magazines and participating in open discussions about the direction that our church might go. I think these are some of the things I'm fitted for and I feel much more comfortable about the whole scenario. I also feel like I can apply these traits in the other life areas I'm planning for.

## Fran Gallaher's mandala drawing session

Fran's account:

I have been working for myself, developing my own business, for some time and I have noticed a recurring problem: I sort of lose my way and forget what I am about in all the daily tasks of running a business. I can lose sight of my gifts and the vision I have for expressing those gifts in the world, the steps I need to take to realize that vision and to create and grow a viable business. Last year, Carol did a mandala for me. As she drew, she seemed to name my gifts and name the different ways that I had identified to express them. She gave me a vision and a story line for my own process and for my work and I felt myself getting clearer about what my process was and is and what I needed to do to bring that all into effective action. I felt heartened and inspired as a design grew on the page, a design based on exactly who I am and what I feel I came here to do. The mandala she drew for me is very personal, an embodiment of a personal vision, and I believe it helps ground and center me in my own purpose.



Fran is an intuitive life coach and leads guided meditations and teaches meditation techniques. We decided to do a mandala for affirmation of her vision for her coaching practice and as a reminder of her attributes in guidance and healing. Here are some of the interpretations that I made as I drew.

I began in the center, with a star, to represent her ever-expanding vision for the illumination and empowerment of others as well as for herself. This also reflects her leadership qualities and the ability to lead and focus for groups that she works with. The deep purple surrounding this signifies that spiritual work, in herself and in others, is a key portion of her make-up. Merging with this is a lavender color, which I chose to portray her highly developed intuition. Next, I drew lines that spiral outward, to indicate accelerating her vision into the world. With these, the four arrow-like shapes, which can be seen as corners of a square or a foundation to build upon, represent her unwavering direction in action to take. The green circle,

with four quadrants, was drawn for the intention of an abundant amount of resources for her business and to keep her grounded in the physical world. The eight light blue sections were symbolic of first, the number eight, which can be visualized as the touching of two circles, the spheres of above and below, without and within, the physical and spiritual realms.

The light blue also represents her quick thinking and accessing of ideas, insights and information and good articulation of these. Likewise, I selected this particular blue to represent her seeing the big picture and scope of her practice, when loss of focus may set in.

The light green lines were put in to encourage and embrace new growth and expansion. Last were the gold, neon pink, dark blue and purple dots and dashes, for the continuation of the acknowledgment of and in gratitude for the guidance that she consciously receives.



## K. A.'s Intention Mandala

K. A. is a friend who is healing from breast cancer. This drawing was done to represent her intentions for healing in all areas - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. After conversations about her process, I did this as a gift, as a symbolic affirmation for her journey. She



is utilizing complementary medicine techniques, in addition to allopathic therapies, introducing her practitioners to the modalities of the others, which she feels is an important bridging. This is represented by the variety of shapes and color, yet overall feeling of balance.

I intended for this to have a very introspective and lunar feeling, using deep blues, greens and purples. K.A. is very empathic and receptive to others [pinks and lavenders], but she struggles with the just being and resting needed for healing, rather than continually giving and doing much. The waxing crescent moon represents acceptance and receiving. The spirals are for release of cancer cells. The four pink and reddish spheres are for growth of new, healthy cells. The gold and yellow around the outer circle refer to her deep

faith and determination to heal and learn from this, despite the difficulty of her situation. I wanted to portray her strength and inner beauty.

## Energy Portrait for T.

T is a highly altruistic person. Truly devoted to healing on a global scale, He is a master at orchestrating people and resources. The formation of this mandala, the balance within it, suggests this, as well as his efficiency and capacity to achieve, to hold vision and motivate others.

Our session quickly focused around his choosing to create some new chapters in his life, the desire for restructuring, after much inner work and release of past habits.



The yellow, turquoise and green lines in the central area indicate conceptualization, one of his primary traits. The green [earth element] lines represent bringing about innovation.

I left a lot of white [open space] in this piece for emerging new endeavors that he wishes to pursue personally and professionally. The spirals are for welcoming change. The overall appearance of lightness and pastel colors reflect his air element qualities or strong intellect. Light blues and greens show that he savors new ideas and growth, generously sharing these to inspire others.

The eight purple accordion-like segments at edge of the circle were added for the incorporation of newly emerging circumstances for soul growth, an



honoring of not knowing how these may take form, but with trust and certainty of their significance in his life.

## **Groups and workshops**

Leading groups in connecting creativity and intuition is so much fun. Despite the fear of drawing that exists in many adults, there is memory of the joy of expressing themselves through art, before censorship kicked in, as in drawing in the mud with sticks, on paper or perhaps responding to the enticement of a blank wall, while holding a crayon or marker.

I love to watch people reconnect with their art part, a process that is often not utilized or neglected. Participants tend to honor each other's artwork, finding significance and beauty for each other. In turn, this gives validity to what is being created. Joy of discovery with mutual respect ensues. Without censorship or criticism, participants honor themselves through symbols, in ways that are not accessible through words alone.

I was amazed that some quick drawings from casual friends showed me a true picture of my inner self, much more than anyone had ever done with words alone. What I enjoyed most was the deep connection from our group by sharing thoughts around our art in a stimulating and empowering exchange of ideas. I was deeply touched to see that total strangers had given me pictures that reflected my inner values. The group energy changed from uncertainty and fear to courageous explorations as we simply allowed ourselves to draw.

What an amazing experience to have other people reflect back your inner feelings and values with a simple art drawing. I cherish those drawings and have them posted on my dream board.  
- Gwen Pettit, MS, MA, ACC

One of the workshops that I conduct is the Book of Energy Signatures, where attendees draw and interpret each others' energy signatures, shapes, colors, symbols and patterns that are evident in each and every one of us. They discover that it is easy to read and draw the symbols and colors that we carry energetically, that define and describe us. Series of drawings done for each are gathered and then are fashioned into books. There is often amazement at the similarities and likeness of the images.

As one participant stated, "Wow. Everyone drew spirals to represent me." Red showed up prominently in every drawing done for me." Another noticed that "water, living or vacationing near water or swimming are essential for my fulfillment."

## **Art As Stimulus**

A vital function for mandalas is to be employed as tools for further reference. This brings back the feeling/ sensing state of the insights or intentions for which they were drawn and ushers in new awareness. Cathy Keith relates that "gazing upon my mandala has allowed me to reflect on blocked energy, while deepening my meditation practice."

My paintings and found object sculptures can serve as catalysts for change and inner searching, bridging inner and outer realms.

Chris Baxter writes:

Carol's art reminds me of the complexity and beauty of our inner selves and of the connections

between our physical and spiritual worlds. While viewing her work, I tap into other dimensions, where the viewer is invited to step beyond the physical world that we are all accustomed to and enter intriguing worlds of possibility. Her art inspires my personal growth and transformation.

In the myriad of methods, channels and inroads to awareness, I am grateful to have a visual language that works through me in assisting others in furthering their joy, discoveries and healing. With intention, openness and dedication, we can all find our niches in promoting greater good in ourselves and in each other.

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