

'Mandala a day': An artist's anchor in the void

By Michelle Morgan

Abstract

In this creative contribution, artist and arts therapist Michelle Morgan uses evocative autoethnography to describe a personal journey in possibility and commitment through a year-long creative project, 'Mandala a day'. This piece privileges the voice of the author, and invites the reader into their own intersubjective experience of the narrative and images.

Beginnings

*Possibilities
Overwhelmed and anchorless
I make a circle*

In early 2018, I noticed a quiet impulse to begin a daily spiritual practice, considering insight meditation or Gendlin's focusing. My word of the year was 'possibility'. I'd just completed a Masters in Therapeutic Arts Practice at The MIECAT Institute, and was excited to get my business moving and to *be* an arts therapist. Yet I found myself feeling lost, anchorless and unable to direct my energy productively.

I spontaneously made a mandala one afternoon and the next day a friend posted on Facebook that she was going to make a mandala every day in May. I decided to join 'Mandalas in May'.



Figure 1. *Mandala a day*, 1.5.18

Mandala is a Sanskrit term made up of *manda* – essence, and *la* – container or vessel, so roughly translates to 'container for essence'. The practice was simple. Each day I chose my journal and materials (watercolours, pastels, markers, pencils, or ink pens), drew a circle, and followed my impulse as I filled the circle with marks. I then posted a photo to Instagram and wrote some words of reflection.

I began the month making freehand, vaguely circular shapes, progressing to using plates, bowls and wok lids, and then to compass and ruler. The mandalas were wonderfully diverse. Each was born with its own unique style.

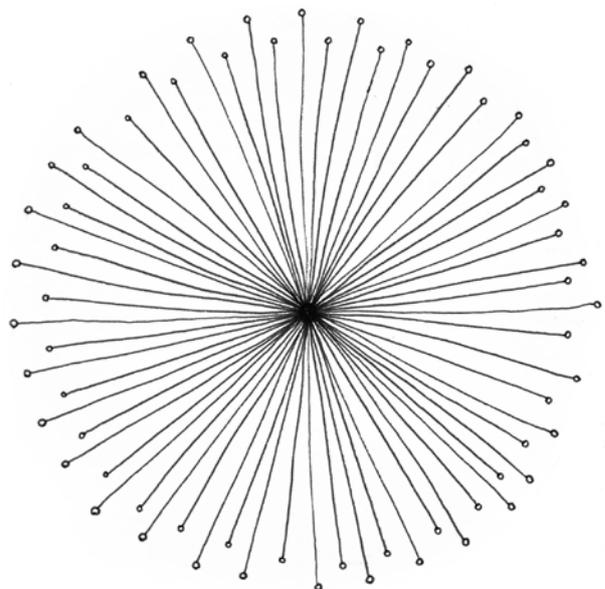


Figure 2. *Mandala a day*, 13.6.18.

A blank page in a new journal. I looked at all of my colours and none of them called so I turned to my pen. Thick pen? No. Thin pen. Yes. How do I start? I don't know. A dot in the centre. Then a line

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