



**construction of a sand mandala  
by the Tibetan Monks of the Gyuto Monastery**

**I'AURA GALERIE**

**133 avenue Ducpétiaux 1060 Brussels**

**14-18 november 2012, daily from 10am to 5pm**

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One of the richest visual objects in Tibetan Buddhism is the mandala. A mandala is a symbolic picture of the universe, it represents an imaginary palace that is contemplated during meditation. Each object in the palace has significance, representing an aspect of wisdom or reminding the meditator of a guiding principle. The mandala's purpose is to help transform ordinary minds into enlightened ones and to assist with healing. According to Buddhist scripture, mandalas constructed from sand transmit positive energies to the environment and to the people who view them. They are believed to effect purification and healing.



The Sand Mandala is a Tibetan Buddhist tradition involving the creation and destruction of mandalas made from colored sand. A sand mandala is ritualistically destroyed once it has been completed and its accompanying ceremonies and viewing are finished to symbolize the Buddhist doctrinal belief in the transitory nature of material life.

From all the artistic traditions of Tantric Buddhism, it ranks as one of the most unique and exquisite. In Tibetan this art is called *dul-tson-kyil-khor*, which literally means "mandala of colored powders." Millions of grains of sand are painstakingly laid into place on a flat platform over a period of days or weeks.

The Sand Mandala is regarded within Tibetan Buddhism as sacred and, until 40 years ago, was rarely seen outside the monasteries. Architectural in structure, their complex and richly coloured designs have remained unchanged for over 500 years, the skills and secret meanings passed faithfully down through the generations from teacher to student. The monks make these exquisite mandalas from memory, approaching the task within the framework of ancient ceremonial Tantric ritual, and bringing to the process extraordinary patience and concentration.

The sacred mandala contains deities, with the principal deity in the centre of the pattern. The deities who reside in the palace embody philosophical views and serve as role models. It is, in essence, a visualization tool, a symbol of a perfect world in which we are all perfect beings practicing the pure loving kindness and compassion that is innate in all living beings. 'Mandala'. all who see it will be blessed'.

### **Constructing a sand mandala**

Mandala sand painting was introduced by the Buddha himself and there are many different designs of mandala, each with different lessons to teach. The process begins with an opening ceremony, during which the lamas consecrate the site and call forth the forces of goodness. The monks chant and dance in resplendent dress, and begin the work by drawing an outline of the mandala on the wooden platform, which requires the remainder of the day. The following days see the laying of the colored sands, which is effected by pouring the sand from traditional metal funnels called *chak-pur*. Each monk holds a *chak-pur* in one hand, while running a metal rod on its grated surface; the vibration causes the sands to flow like liquid.

Once the mandala is complete the monks ask for the deities' healing blessings during a ceremony. As the monks chant, it is dismantled, first by the removal of each of the deities represented in the mandala and then with a 'dorje', the head lama cuts through the main lines, thus cutting the energy of the mandala. The destruction of the mandala serves as a reminder of the impermanence of life. The coloured sand is swept up into an urn and dispersed into flowing water - a way of extending the healing powers to the whole world, and a lesson about the impermanence of life.

### **The mandala construction process in Brussels, 14-18 november**

#### **1) Opening Ceremony : 14 november, from 10.00am**

The monks begin by consecrating the site of the mandala sand painting with chants, music, and mantra recitation. This event is visually and acoustically striking, and draws large audiences and enormous media attention.

#### **2) Drawing of the Lines : 14 november, from 10.00.am**

Immediately after the Opening Ceremony the monks start drawing the line design for the mandala. This is very exacting work that takes about three hours to complete.

#### **3) Mandala Construction : 15-16-17 october, 10.00am-5.00pm**

Throughout its creation, the monks pour millions of grains of sand from traditional metal funnels called chakpur. The finished mandala is approximately five feet by five feet in size

#### **4) Mandala Completion : 18 october, from 10.00am**

The monks conclude their creation of the mandala with a consecration ceremony. It is very colorful and of great interest to the public and media.

#### **5) Dismantling the Mandala : 18 october, from 10.00am**

During the closing ceremony, the monks dismantle the mandala, sweeping up the colored sands to symbolize the impermanence of all that exists. When requested, half of the sand is distributed to the audience as blessings for personal health and healing.

#### **6) Dispersal of the Sand : 18 october, from 10.00am**

The remaining sand is carried in a procession by the monks, accompanied by guests, to a flower garden, where it is ceremonially poured to disperse the healing energies of the mandala .

sources : [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) [www.wikipedia.com/](http://www.wikipedia.com/)  
[www.mysticalartsoftibet.org/](http://www.mysticalartsoftibet.org/)[www.gyuto.va.com /](http://www.gyuto.va.com/)

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