

# Chaotic Mandalas

“A Viewfinder into the psyche at any given moment” Carl G. Jung

When a thing is truly seen it usually transforms” (Sheryl Paul).

# The Mandala: A Magic Circle

- The word *mandala* itself is a **Sanskrit** word which means **center**. “In psychology and religious rituals, the mandala form can be danced, sculpted, drawn, and painted” all in the service of **centering wholeness for the human psyche**.
- This symbolic traditional mandala operates as a **universal archetype** that maintains its deep collective historical roots within the human psyche as an **image of wholeness**.

# Archetype of Wholeness

- Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), the founder of **analytical psychology**, referred to a **symmetrical and balanced mandala** as a symbol of the **self** or the “**archetype of wholeness**”
- In **Tibetan Buddhism**, a mandala refers to a circle as a centering meditation image, which reflects “**the basic nature of existence**”

# Squaring the Circle



- From these cultural and historical sources, Jung placed great emphasis on the importance of the **quaternary**, or **multiple of four**, such as the cross, **star, square, or octagon**, when it appears in a circle. This **four-part division** of the circle, called “**squaring of the circle**,” helps to secure the dynamic energy of the circle itself, producing a **centering effect**.

# Tension of the Split Between Opposites

- **A soul is in discord with itself** splits the basic nature of existence, wholeness—splits.
- **It is basic to our human nature to try to bring together the splits in our psyches and restore wholeness. The psyche wants balance.**
- **The tension of the opposites** is a source of **psychic energy** and **transformative power**.
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- When there is a **tension** between an opposing inner and outer world—creating **discord in the psyche**, a **spark** results.
- This **spark between opposing forces** uses the chaotic mandala, as a tool to help hold, recognize, and work with this spark.

# Historical Use of Mandala Psychology

- Jung's historically used the mandala as a **psychological viewfinder into a disturbed soul, a psychological instrument to see the split between inner and outer worlds of the psyche.**
- He described the symbolic images occurring in his **circular drawings** as the “**mythical portal into the reality of the psyche**”

# Jung's Personal Dark Night of the Soul!

- Jung followed his own psychological chaos with his circle drawings beginning in **1912**, during the collective insanity of **WW1**, a **midlife crisis** with his affair with Tony Wolf, (a brilliant former patient), and his **break with Freud in 1913**.
- The disturbance was so severe it almost brought him to the **edge of madness**.
- Jung's personal psychological **deconstruction opened the door** for the psyche to do the chaotic mandala work, that **changed his professional direction** and resulted in the "**Red Book**".

# Mandala Psychology

- In a series of lectures in **1932**, in which Jung coined the term mandala psychology, he discusses a **patient** who described the following **lucid vision** of a mandala image:
- “It (the child) was surrounded by amniotic fluid. I wanted to get to the child who held its arm toward me but I could not seem to step over the outer rim”. Jung comments, “**Here the mandala psychology begins**”.

# Mandala Psychology

- Jung's enchantment with **Eastern philosophy** and the part it plays in mandala psychology culminated in his **1929** commentary on the ancient Chinese text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.
- This text **validated** Jung's **personal and clinical** practices with mandala psychology
- Jung calls the mandala a “*drawn fantasy image that emerges spontaneously from the unconscious*” suggesting the **link** of mandala images to unconscious states.

# Synchronicity & Mandala Psychology

- *Synchronicity* is an event that creates **psychological movement**, allowing for a psychological, **meaning-making**, relationship between **inner and outer events**.
- Jung stresses an **acausal** connection between the subject's psychological realizations of **inner** psychological events and **outer** events in the physical world.
- The **intersection** falls somewhere between **synchronicity as a moment in time** and a **psychological movement toward a new lived experience**.

# Breaking up Symmetry: Edge Between Chaos & Order

- This Psychological **movement**, change, or shifts **occur between symmetry** and a **chaotic breaking of symmetry**. This is an **important** consideration regarding the **clinical process** of mandala psychology.
- The correspondence between **Jung** and the **physicist Wolfgang Pauli** for over a decade, between **1931 and 1958** supports this view. This correspondence **focused** on the concept of the **greater Self emerging on the edge in the paradox between chaos and order**.
- Jung wrote to Pauli in **1957**: his view of the importance of **asymmetry** as an **image of this edge between chaos and order**: “every occurrence can only be asymmetrical” supports this view of Jung’s : ***to the precarious symmetry-breaking, emergent possibilities of the Self***”

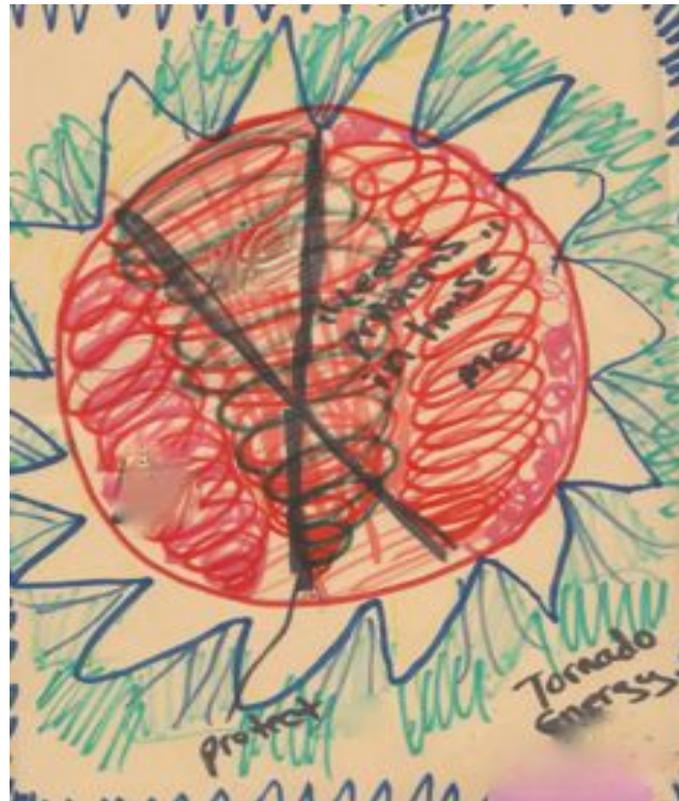
# My Personal Motivation Leading to Mary's Mandala Story

- Following Jung's example, I began an exploration of personal mandala images during a period of personal **psychological** and **emotional disarray**.
- Like Carl Jung, I began to draw into the mandala circle.
- I used the mandala circle as a place to **engage and create an image of my unconsciousness inner feelings of distress**. I could see inside myself. I could see my painful inner world.

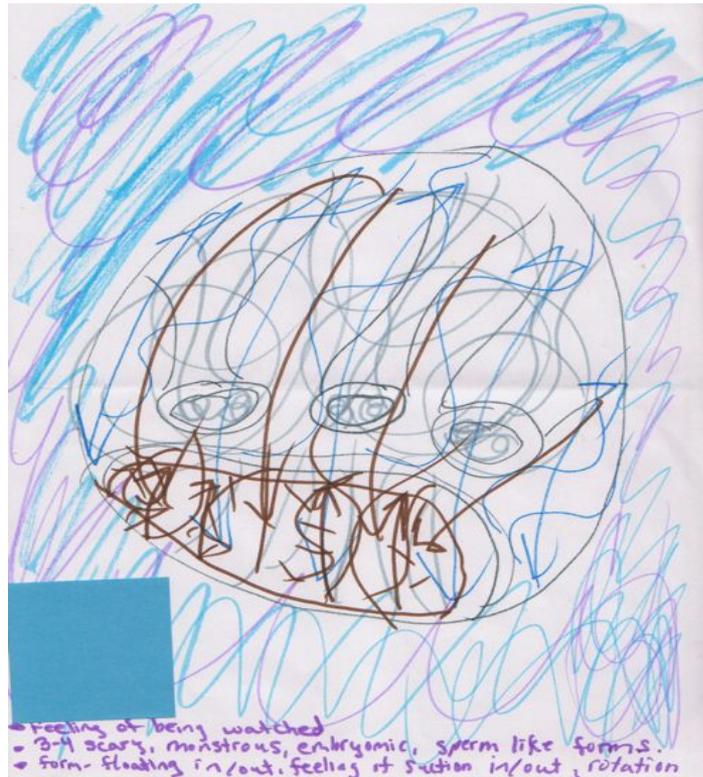
# Mary's Chaotic Mandala Story

- **Mary** is a fictionalized name for a **case study** in which I explore the **shift** in one depth psychotherapy patient's psyche when she realizes the relationship between the drawing of a **chaotic mandala image** and her own **unconscious psychological chaos**. .
- I call this an **asymmetrical, chaotic mandala** or in Jungian terms, a **disturbed mandala**.

# Figure 1: Test Mandala



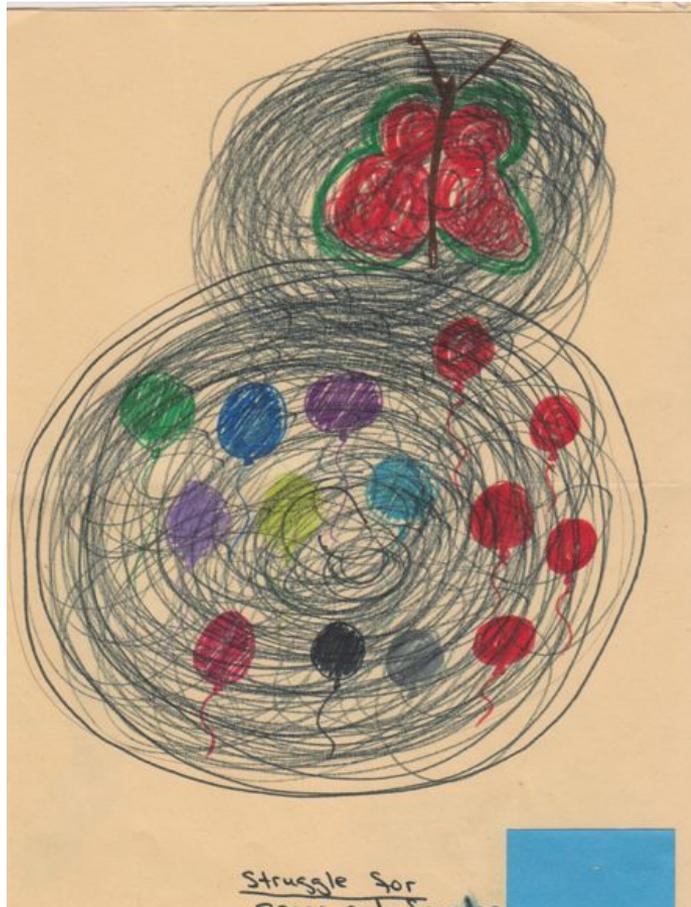
# Figure 2: Chaotic Mandala #1: Fear of Being Watched



# Chaotic Mandala #2: No Voice (Hell House)



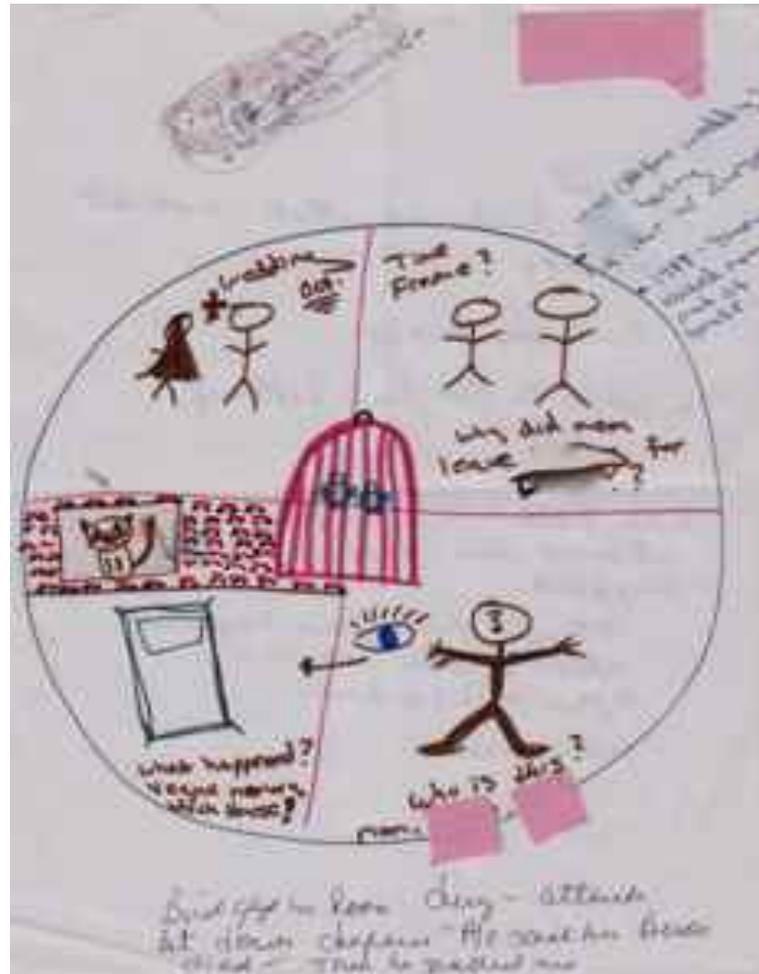
# Figure 4: Chaotic Mandala #3 Struggle for Peace and Freedom (Escape)



# Figure 5: Chaotic Mandala #4: Haunted Scary Dream (True Voice)



# Figure 6: Anchor Mandala #5: Birdcage Mandala



# Figure 8: Tip of the Iceberg



# Mary's Words

- **“Drawing mandalas during therapy was beneficial for me. I’m not sure how/why it works but it opens up a door to the unconscious. For me it is a spontaneous process.**
- **The few times I have drawn them, the pictures started out as one thing, one idea, one thought – usually in the depths of despair/depression and mandala ended up totally different more complex than originally started out.”**

# The Greater Self as the Emerging Third

- The *mandala images flowed* out of Mary's disturbed unconscious into the magic circle.
- This becomes the “*transcausal factor*” described as occurring between Mary's **psyche** and her **physical reality**.
- She then had the potential to discern a **meaningful connection** between her **inner and outer worlds** by way of the **moving images** in each chaotic mandala.
- **This meaningful connection illuminates the image of the third, the image of the greater Self, emerging through the experience of mandala psychology.**

# Epilogue

- In Mary's mandala work, I used the **symmetrical quality** of the **circle** itself as a **container** and **attractor** for **chaotic** psychological images.
- I wanted to reach into Mary's **inner world** of an adult individual woman walking around with all the chaos and **destruction of her childhood exploding in her psychological system.**
- I hoped that the **static security of the mandala** as a **complete form** could help **channel** her **inner chaos** into its circle and **hold** these disturbing images captive until Mary could **tolerate the movement and** psychological shifting necessary to **move forward and engage her life**

