

Interview by R. Caligaris • Photos by S. Saxon

# The Art of Sand

with CSU student Rebecca Davis

**Tell us about "Mandala Sand painting".**

Mandala Sand painting is traditionally a sacred religious ritual used in healing and also as a prayer aid. There are many cultures that use some form of Mandala Sand painting, Tibetan Buddhists and the Navajo Nation are two of the most widely recognized.

**Is there anything else you can use besides colored sand to create a Mandala?**

Just about anything can be used to create a Mandala. The Mandala itself is defined as an assortment of geometric symbols arranged to form a sacred diagram. Buddhist monks use sand as a metaphor for the impermanence of life, but Mandalas can be made with fractal computer programs, paint, fabric, and stained glass and a variety of other mediums.

**Why did you choose this art form to express your talent?**

I chose this art form because it pays homage to my love for Asian art and Buddhist philosophy. The repetitive act of creating

these sand paintings isn't at all like work to me. It feels more like a form of meditation. It also appeals to me because I believe that art should be more than just a commodity. I think art should be experienced as life is. What makes life special is the temporal nature of each moment we live, I believe the same principles apply to art.

**How long does it take to complete a project?**

Usually it takes me about three weeks to complete a sand painting that is 5-7 feet in diameter. Two weeks to dye and prepare the sand and one week to pour the sand. I pour individual piles of sand 3-4 hours a day for 7 days.

**Periodically the Dalai Lama and groups of Tibetan monks travel around the U.S., conducting healing ceremonies and creating Sand Mandalas. Have you ever attended one of these ceremonies?**

No, I haven't had the good fortune to attend a traditional Buddhist ceremony, however, I heard that a group of monks from a monastery in Atlanta will be performing a ceremony in Auburn very soon. I plan to attend. I'm really excited about it.

**For how long can you keep a sand mandala before it is destroyed?**

The longest I've ever kept one intact is 3 weeks. I'm sure that it might last much longer if left untouched. **svm**

