

Mandalas by Allen Schill – a brief statement

– The mandala has been one of the central motifs of my work, especially from the early 70's until the mid-80's. Even now, in my newer work, it resurfaces in one form or another. I came to the mandala as a result of my overlapping interests in the natural sciences, the creative arts, and in religion and the life of the spirit.

Art's most fundamental purpose in our lives has always been a spiritual one. This has been so from art's beginnings in primitive societies and early civilizations, up to and including the present era (rampant consumerism and materialism notwithstanding). Much of my ambition as an artist has been to reaffirm this idea and to create in accordance with it.

– While there have been many better-known styles and trends in the evolution of modern art, there has always been at least an undercurrent of activity with a strongly spiritual orientation. This undercurrent, it seems to me, has been particularly strong among many of my generation. (The influence of the 60's is perhaps self-evident.) Many of us believe (even now, in our middle years) that only by means of a renewal of spirituality can the world hope to save itself, much less improve significantly. I feel that a rediscovery of art's proper function in life must be a part of any larger renewal that we, as a civilization, might seek.

– For western artist to borrow a motif from an eastern tradition, and to present it in a western context, might seem odd, like the proverbial white man who sings the blues. A traditional mandala (which is Sanskrit for "perfectly endowed" or "cluster of blessings") is associated with particular rituals and meditations. My mandalas are traditional in that they are intended to embody the ultimate reality and to draw us toward enlightenment, but modern in that they are not connected with any specific practices. I use the general form, but not the iconography, of traditional mandalas, in order to address a global culture.

– All this aside, the important thing to remember is still that, as with any spiritually-oriented art, a mandala's value is limited in that it is one thing to experience a realization, and another thing, a much greater challenge, to take that realization and make it the center of our lives.

Allen Schill

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