

Photographic Mandalas by Allen Schill – Brief Production Notes:

– The mandala has been, for a time, one of the most important motifs in my work. Much of my painting, graphics, and drawing used mandalas or mandala-like imagery. The mandalas, like most traditional mandalas, were always rather schematic – that is, although usually rather intricate, there was no attempt at verisimilitude to the natural world. To develop this further, I wanted to make mandalas with a richness of detail that would rival that of nature itself. Meanwhile, from the beginnings of my work in photography, I had already been preoccupied with texture and pattern. I realized I could incorporate photographic imagery into the mandala. (This work dates from about 1979 to 1984.)

– Working with a pair of mirrors, hinged together to form a sort of hand-held kaleidoscope, I studied selected prints of textural imagery to determine the possibilities. A given mirror angle determined a certain number of sections; e.g. an angle of 30° gave me an image of twelve sections. I then printed a batch of each image, half exposed with the negative in the normal orientation, the other half with the negative inverted. These were cut with precision to yield the sections I wanted, then assembled carefully on mounting board. This prototype was rephotographed with a graphic arts camera to create a series of negatives of different degrees of density and contrast, as well as diapositives made from the negatives.

– I then made prints by various processes, especially palladium printing and other hand processes. In this, a sheet of artist's paper is hand-coated with a solution of palladium chloride, exposed to a UV source in contact with a negative, and then developed. The image is formed of a deposit of palladium, much as a conventional black-and-white image is formed of silver, but with a tonal and tactile lushness that far surpasses a conventional print. To make prints in color, I used a system of pin-registration, exposing sheets of color paper successively to a negative and a diapositive, one to print a range of color in the shadows, and the other to print another color in the highlights.

Allen Schill

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Links to mandalas made by photographic means:

Recent Photographic Mandalas: <http://www.2you.it/levischill/slider.php?p=S5c>

Mandalas in Palladium: <http://www.2you.it/levischill/slider.php?p=S5d>

Mandalas in Color: <http://www.2you.it/levischill/slider.php?p=S5e>