

## *My Life Journey*

### **Sam Kelly**

For centuries mandalas have represented various meanings throughout dissimilar cultures such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Recently in contemporary society they have become widely popular and used for imagery such as relaxation style colouring books, wall hanging tapestries and electronic cases. It could be suggested that this trend has led to mandalas losing their true meaning, as they were created to represent a story and be unique.

Initially, I enjoyed experimenting with the historical mandalas of Buddhism and Hinduism which worked with coloured sand. Each pattern created has a meaning and the final artwork tells a story that only that religious group can understand. I was inspired by their designs.

In my mandala artwork, there are eighteen main circles radiating from the centre and spiralling outwards, which represent my eighteen years of life. The circles are filled with repetitive pattern and symbols to depict my personal story. My circles represent the most memorable aspects of my life which include my family, ice skating, my exchange to the U.S.A, schooling, Brazil and the future. Each circle has a range of different patterns to represent either people or objects that have impacted on my life. The future circle overlaps the main circle. It was created like this to show what I'm doing now is shaping my future and intertwining old and new parts of my life together. The circles in the future shape connect, demonstrating the lives of others who will come into my life.

Although I experimented with a variety of media, I found working with white gel pen on a black illustration board most satisfying. I enjoyed discovering the appropriate drawings and developing repetitive patterns for each part of the mandala. I appreciated the effect I could achieve with the detail and high contrast drawing of white on black.

The floral pattern designs I chose were inspired by Kathy Klein. Klein uses different parts of nature, particularly flower petals, to create her mandalas. The shapes and colours she achieves inspired me to look at the flowers and the symbolism of the plants and flowers that best relate to my life. My main floral drawings originated from succulents we have at home that I have stylised. The flower motifs correspond to my family - how we grow and change. In addition, some of the patterns I have used are based on traditional Celtic patterns, which represent my Irish background.

Local Adelaide artist, Cathy Gray creates contemporary mandalas using black ink. Her highly detailed large scale works impressed me and encouraged me to also work large scale. Some of her work features parts of the main mandala flowing out and she organises circles, seemingly randomly scattered on top of a base.

My artwork is successful as it represents my life through the use of symbols and pattern; corresponding with the authentic historical meaning of mandala artwork. It also has the unique contemporary style which appealed to me, making it like no other.