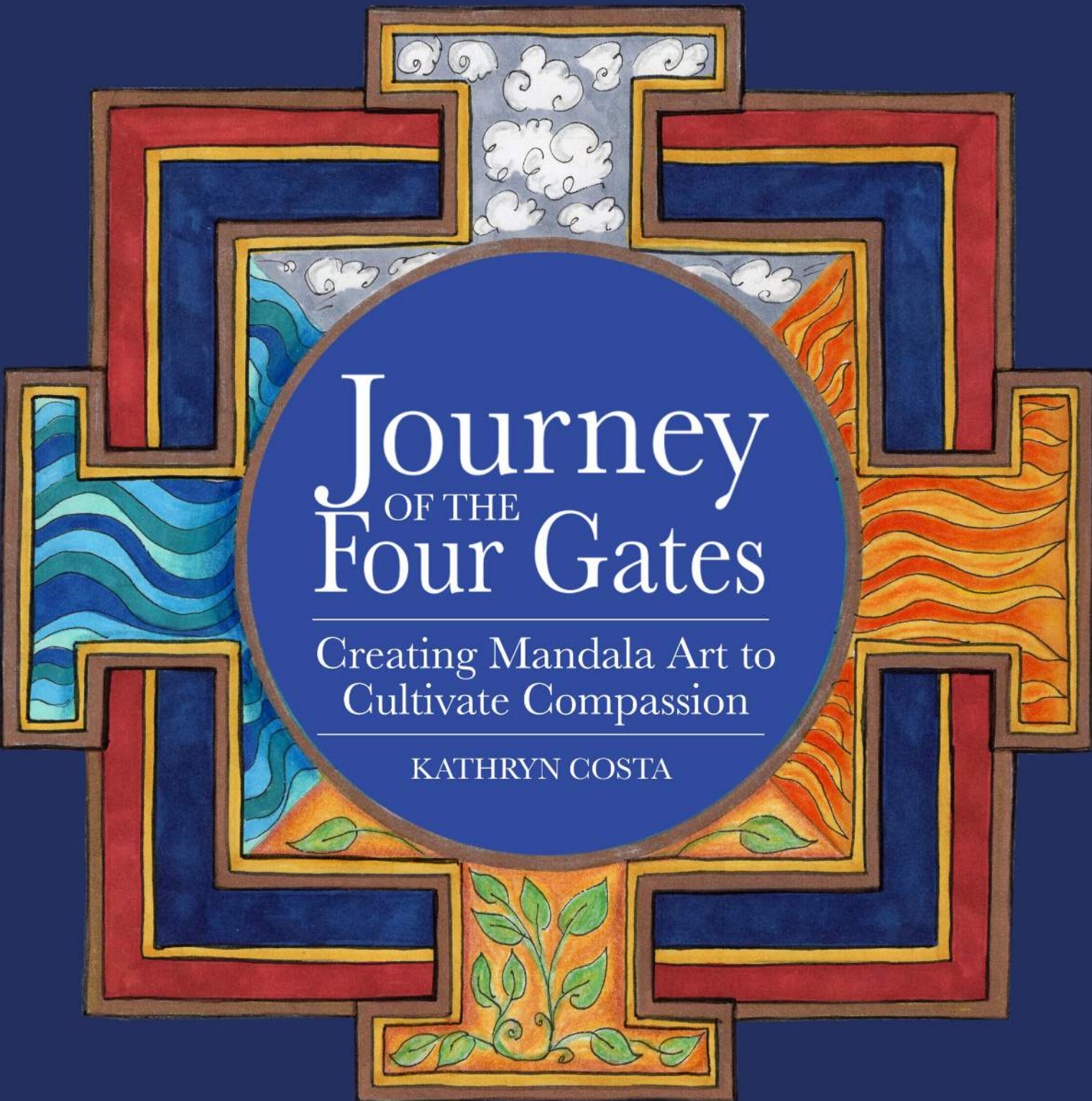




Journey OF THE Four Gates

Creating Mandala Art to
Cultivate Compassion

KATHRYN COSTA

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Welcome to the Journey of the Four Gates

The *Journey of the Four Gates* practice emerged from my deep fascination with Buddhist mandalas and Hindu yantra art. I was especially drawn to their symmetrical, square designs with four open pathways—symbols that seemed to invite both entry and transformation.

As a stencil designer, I envisioned a tool that could help recreate this timeless form with ease. I wanted the focus to shift away from technical drawing and more toward personal expression, spiritual reflection, and sacred creativity.

With that in mind, I designed the **Four Gates Mandala Stencil**. It includes flexible options to add decorative borders and patterns, so each creation becomes uniquely yours. What surprised me was how quickly the creative process became a sacred space—one of contemplation, insight, and healing.

My background in shamanic practices offered deeper layers of meaning. I began to see the four gates as aligned with the four directions and elements, each reflecting aspects of our inner life:

- **Air** through self-critical thoughts or mental distractions
- **Water** through waves of emotion
- **Earth** through physical discomfort or fatigue
- **Fire** through restlessness, frustration, or unmet desires

These weren't interruptions in my practice, they were **messengers**. I began to welcome these moments with curiosity and compassion. Each gate became an invitation to meet myself exactly where I was—with honesty, tenderness, and the courage to transform. As we move through the gates, we arrive at the center, self-compassion blossoms into compassion for others. The mandala becomes more than a piece of art, it becomes a mirror of our interconnectedness and a path toward healing.

I created this handbook to share the inspiration behind the Four Gates stencil and to support your own sacred creative journey. You'll find guidance on using the stencil, illustrations of different designs, spiritual reflections, and a gallery of examples created by myself and other artists.

Together, let's begin your Journey of the Four Gates.

With warmth and gratitude,
Kathryn Costa



The Sacred Meaning of the Number Four

Across time, cultures, and spiritual traditions, the number four has held deep sacred significance. It represents balance, wholeness, and the foundation upon which life and consciousness are built. Found throughout nature—the four directions, four seasons, four elements, and four phases of the moon—the number four serves as a universal symbol of structure, cycles, and interconnectedness.

In spiritual systems, four often marks completion and stability, much like the four legs of a table or the four walls of a home. It provides a framework for understanding both the visible and invisible aspects of existence, helping us navigate the human journey with clarity and purpose.

In the sections that follow, we'll explore how the number four is honored and expressed in several wisdom traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Native American teachings, and the Andean (Incan) cosmology of Peru. While these summaries offer a glimpse into each tradition's understanding, we do so with deep respect and humility, honoring the depth, diversity, and sacredness of these cultural teachings.

The recurrence of the number four across these diverse traditions reveals a profound universal truth: that the path to wholeness is found in balance, of spirit and matter, direction and flow, effort and surrender. The sacred four invites us to walk with awareness, grounded in purpose, and connected to the cycles of life.



Buddhism: The Four Noble Truths

The mandala in Buddhism symbolizes the universe and the journey toward enlightenment, and serves as a point of focus in meditation and rituals. The Four Noble Truths are the foundation of Buddhist teaching, outlining the essence of the Buddha's insight into the nature of suffering and the path to liberation:

1. **Dukkha** – Life contains suffering.
2. **Samudaya** – There is a cause of suffering (attachment/craving).
3. **Nirodha** – There is an end to suffering (cessation).
4. **Magga** – The path to the end of suffering is the Eightfold Path.

These truths provide a spiritual map for understanding human experience and awakening to inner peace.

Manjuvajra mandala Thangka painting with 43 deities, from Tibet. Tempera on cotton. Measures 71 by 85 centimetres (28 in × 33 in). Held at the Museo d'Arte Orientale.



Tibetan Sand Mandalas

Monks from the Drepung Loseling Monastery in India travel the world to share the sacred practice of creating Tibetan sand mandalas. With great care and intention for healing, peace, and compassion, the monks place each grain of colored sand to form intricate geometric patterns and symbols. Using traditional metal funnels called chak-purs, they hold one in hand while gently running a metal rod along its ridged surface. This vibration causes the sand to flow with precision.

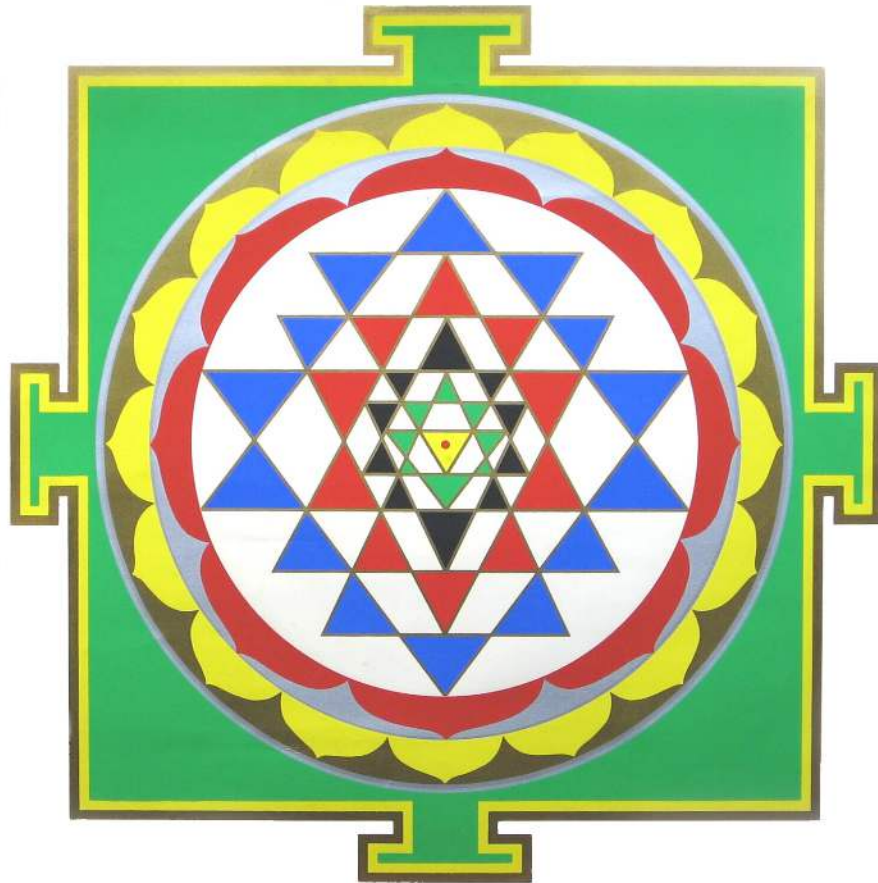
Journey of the Four Gates: Creating Mandala Art to Cultivate Compassion



Once the mandala is complete, a closing ceremony soon follows. In a powerful ritual of impermanence, the mandala is swept away, half of the sand is offered to the audience, while the remaining grains are poured into a nearby body of water. It is believed that the act of creation imbues each grain of sand with spiritual blessings. As the waters receive the sand, the healing energy is carried to the ocean, and from there, it is dispersed throughout the world, spreading prayers for global peace and planetary healing.



Photos taken by Kathryn Costa at the mandala sand painting demonstration in Peterborough, New Hampshire. To learn more about the Mystical Arts of Tibetan visit <https://www.mysticalartsoftibet.org/mandala-sand-painting>



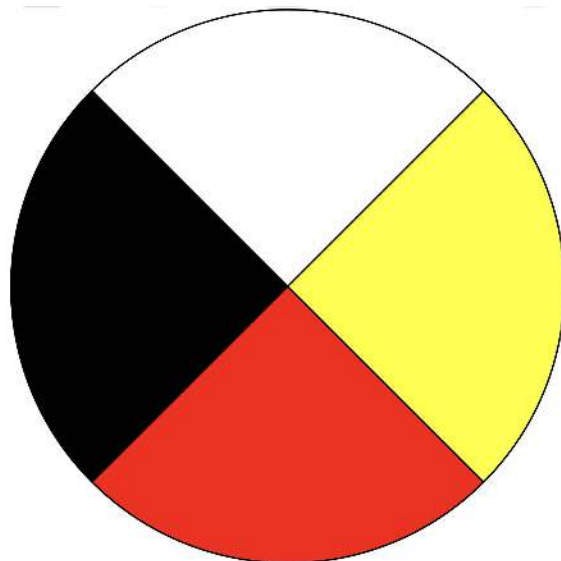
Hinduism: The Four Purusharthas

In Hindu tantric tradition, yantras are geometric designs used in ritual worship, meditation, and spiritual practices. These yantras can vary from simple to complex. They serve to concentrate the mind and aid in spiritual transformation. The **Purusharthas** are the four aims of human life in Hindu philosophy. They offer a guide for living a balanced and meaningful existence:

1. **Dharma** – Living ethically and in harmony with universal laws.
2. **Artha** – Pursuing prosperity and material well-being.
3. **Kama** – Experiencing pleasure, love, and aesthetic enjoyment.
4. **Moksha** – Seeking liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsara).

Together, these four aims represent the full spectrum of life - body, mind, heart, and spirit.

Sri Yantra by Harish Johari using traditional colors. Photo by Daniel Conrad



Native American Traditions: The Four Directions & the Medicine Wheel

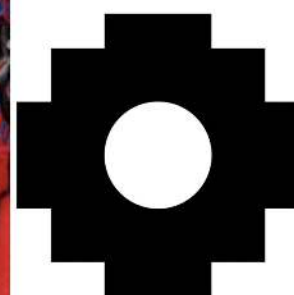
In many Native American traditions, the number four is honored through the **Medicine Wheel**, a sacred symbol representing wholeness, balance, and the interconnectedness of life. While the concept of the **Four Directions**—East, South, West, and North—is widely recognized, it's important to note that each tribe has its own unique interpretations, teachings, and cultural expressions related to the Medicine Wheel.

The meanings associated with the directions often include seasonal cycles, elements, life stages, and spiritual qualities, but these can vary significantly across different communities. The following is one commonly shared interpretation, offered with respect and recognition of its diversity:

- **East:** Beginnings, illumination, spring, the element of fire
- **South:** Growth, emotion, summer, the element of water
- **West:** Reflection, endings, autumn, the element of earth
- **North:** Wisdom, rest, winter, the element of air

The Medicine Wheel serves as a powerful tool for healing, guidance, and aligning with the natural world. It reminds us to walk in balance and to honor the sacred cycles of life. Anyone engaging with this symbol is encouraged to approach it with reverence and a willingness to learn from the specific traditions and voices of Indigenous peoples.

Modern medicine wheel symbol.



Andean Cosmology: The Chakana (Andean Cross)

The **Chakana**, or Andean Cross, is a sacred geometric symbol used by the Inca and indigenous Andean peoples. Its stepped cross shape incorporates the number four in multiple dimensions:

- **Four directions** of the physical world.
- **Four elements**: earth, water, air, and fire.
- **Four levels of existence**: the upper world (Hanan Pacha), middle world (Kay Pacha), underworld (Uku Pacha), and the human connection or bridge between realms.

Four stages of life and transformation.

The Chakana embodies a spiritual cosmology that unites the material and mystical, rooting the human journey in the sacred rhythms of the universe.

A contemporary Andean textile featuring the Chakana (Andean cross) surrounded by serpent motifs—symbols of knowledge, balance, and spiritual power. (Source: <https://armsofandes.com/blogs/news/sacred-andean-textiles-symbols-stories-cultural-meaning>)

Art as a Spiritual Practice

Creating art as a spiritual practice means engaging in the creative process not just for the sake of aesthetics, skill, or expression, but as a sacred act of connection, inner reflection, and transformation. It's about tuning into something deeper: your intuition, your soul, the divine, or the mystery of life itself. This approach transcends technical perfection and places presence, intention, and meaning at the heart of making.



Here are some key elements of what it means to create art as a spiritual practice:

1. Art as a Path to Presence

When creating art mindfully, whether painting, drawing, collaging, or building, a sense of timelessness can arise. This state, often called *flow*, mirrors meditation. The act becomes a way to quiet the mind and inhabit the present moment fully, anchoring the artist in the *now*.

2. Art as a Mirror for the Soul

The creative process reveals inner truths. It brings unconscious thoughts, emotions, or wounds to the surface in symbolic or abstract form. What you create may hold messages, patterns, or insights about your spiritual journey, emotional life, or current phase of transformation.

3. Intuition Over Ego

In spiritual art-making, intuition guides the hand more than analysis or planning. You might choose colors based on feeling rather than rules, or create symbols that arise spontaneously rather than intentionally. It's a surrender of control, an act of listening.

4. Ritual and Sacred Space

Art becomes ritual when you create with intention - perhaps lighting a candle, setting a sacred space, or using prayer or mantra to open and close the session. These elements turn the act of making into a container for healing, invocation, or communion with spirit.

5. Process Over Product

The emphasis is on the *journey*, not the outcome. Unlike art created for critique or commercial use, spiritual art doesn't need to be "good" by any standard. What matters is how it feels, what it evokes, and what inner doors it opens. The process becomes the teacher.

6. Symbolism and Sacred Archetypes

Spiritual artists often draw on symbolic language, mandalas, chakras, sacred geometry, animal totems, astrological glyphs, mythic figures, etc., to encode layers of meaning. These images act as bridges between the seen and unseen.

7. Transformation and Healing

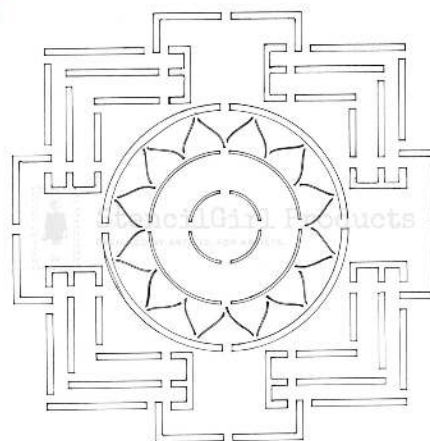
Engaging art as a spiritual practice can be profoundly healing. It can soothe grief, unlock joy, restore a sense of wholeness, and help navigate transitions. Like dreamwork or ritual, it gives form to what is shifting in your inner world.





Working with the Four Gates Mandala Stencil

The Four Gates Mandala stencil was designed to give you options, unlike many tools that have a singular purpose. My hope for you is that you experience many hours of fun exploring the endless creative possibilities. Whether you're new to mandala art or an experienced artist, this stencil provides a helpful structure that allows you to get the 'bones' of the design on the page and enjoy more time adding patterns, colors, and meaningful details.



Getting Started

To begin, pencil is recommended for tracing. Light pencil lines allow for easy corrections and give you flexibility before committing to ink or color. For best results, tape the stencil down securely to your paper using low-tack artist tape or masking tape. This will prevent the stencil from shifting while you work.

As you trace, hold the stencil steady with one hand, placing your finger near the area you are tracing. This added pressure helps keep the lines crisp and clean.

Understanding “Bridges”

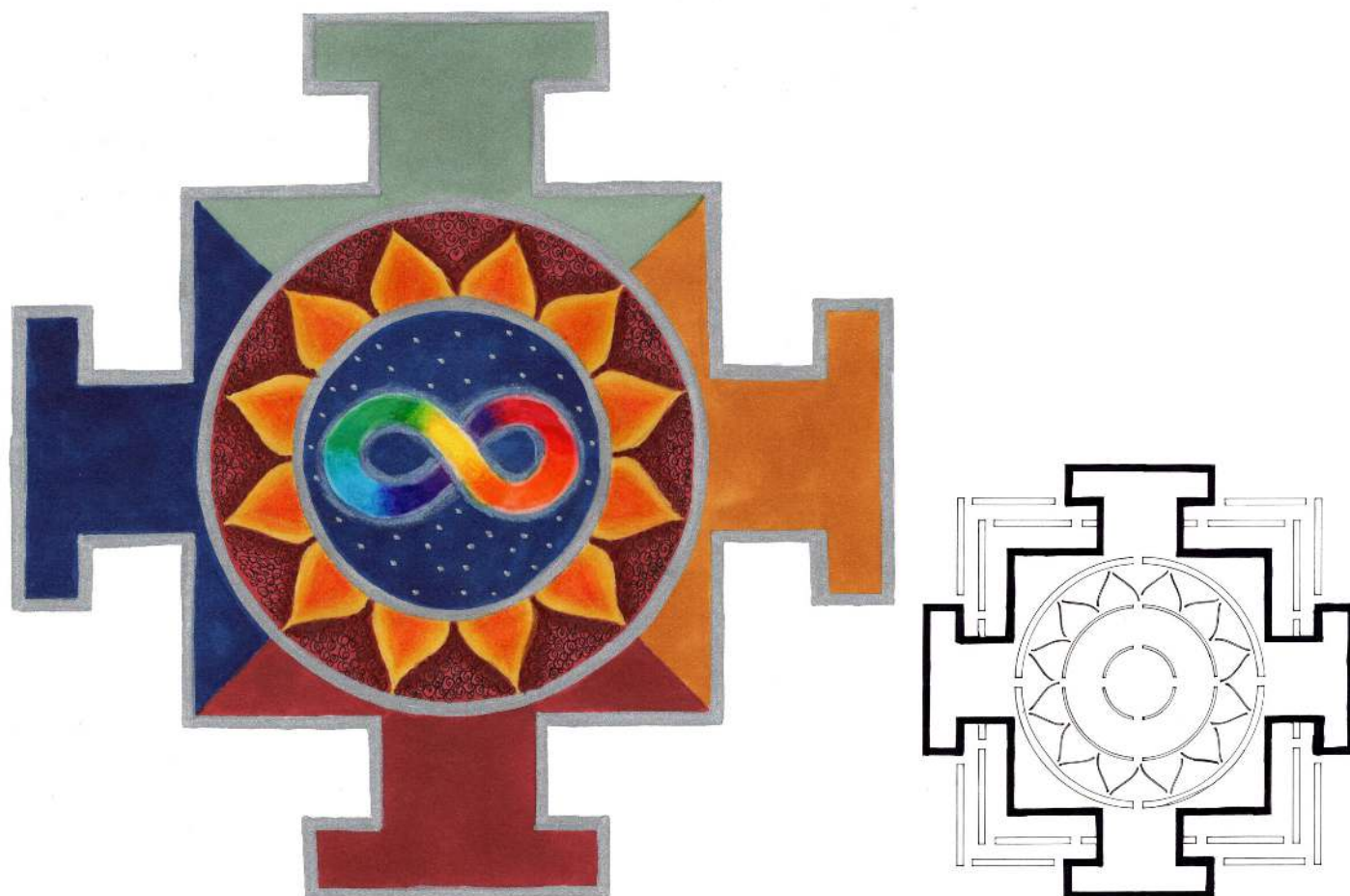
You'll notice small gaps within the stencil design, these are called *bridges*. Bridges are essential in stencil-making; they keep the design intact as a physical tool. Once you've traced the full design, the next step is to *cross the bridges* by connecting the lines where those intentional gaps occur. This final step brings your mandala to life as one cohesive, flowing pattern.

Many Creative Possibilities

There's so much more to this stencil than meets the eye! Within the Four Gates Mandala stencil, you'll find a variety of options to customize your artwork.

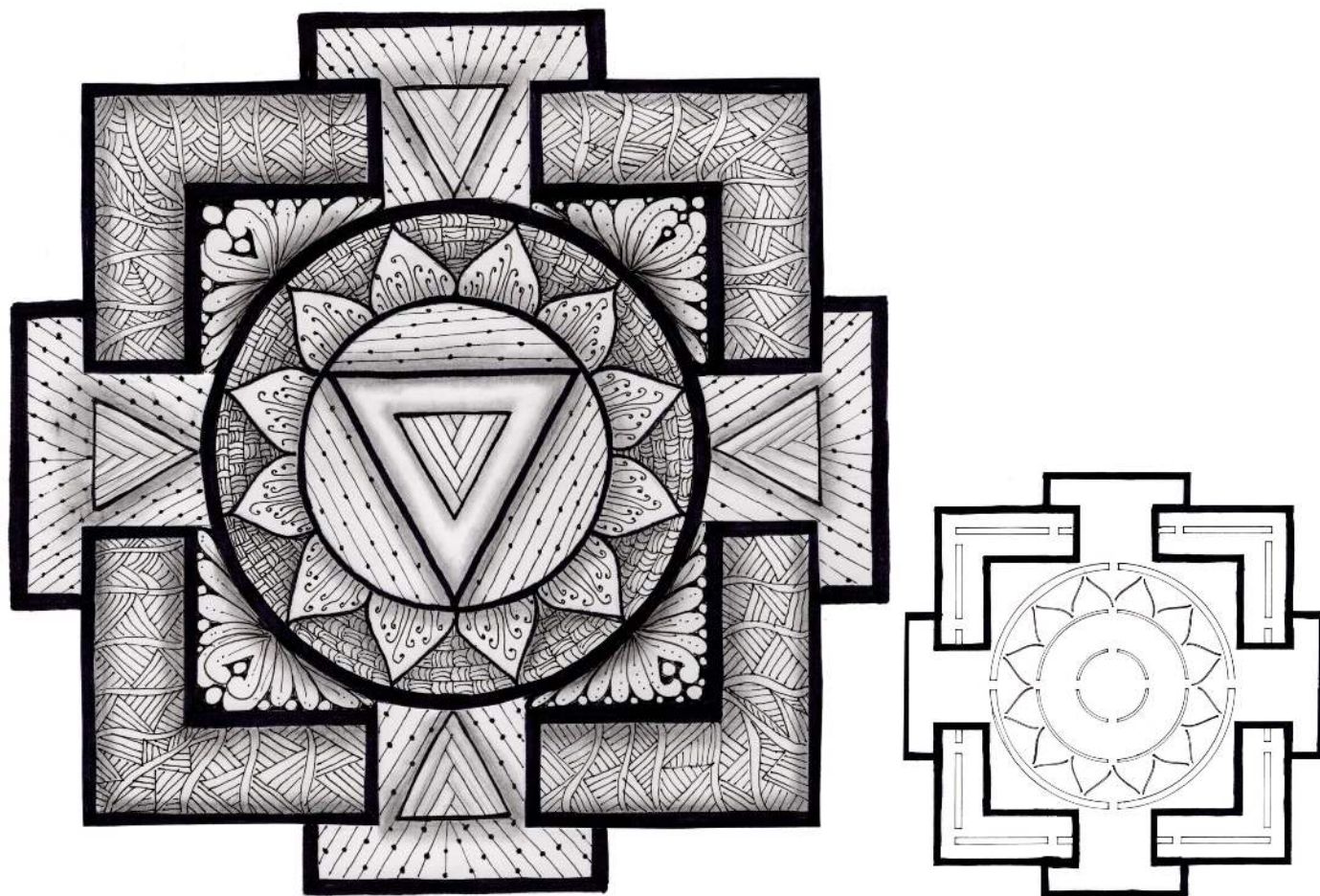
Order Your Stencil

If you haven't picked up your stencil yet, you can order it online:
[StencilGirl Products – Kathryn Costa Stencil Collection](#)



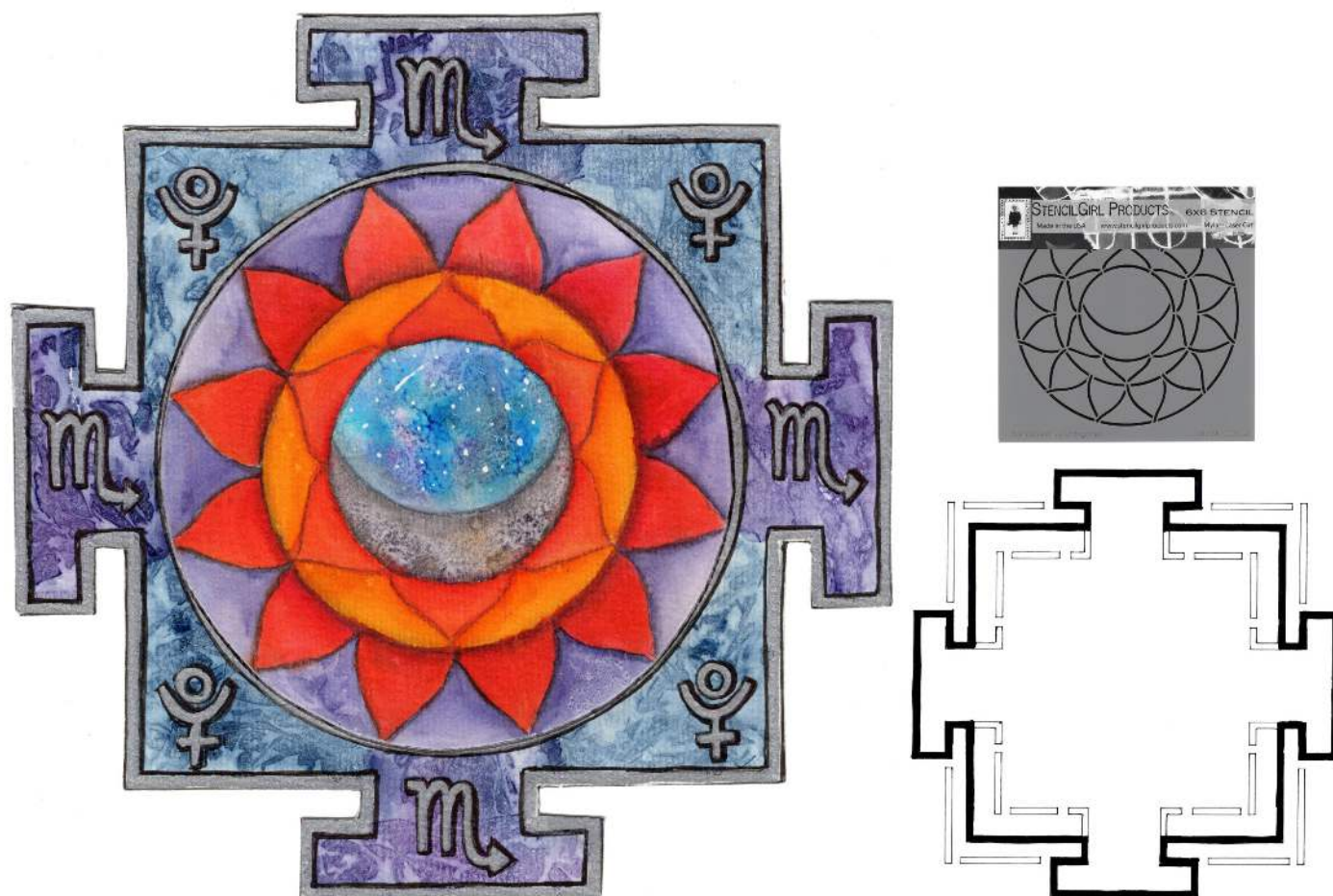
Inner Path

The Four Gates Mandala Stencil features three paths. A great first step in using the stencil is to trace the inner path, which will help you get acquainted with the stencil. Look at the illustration on the right to see how the stencil was traced to form the inner path. Now, compare the diagram on the right with the finished example on the left.



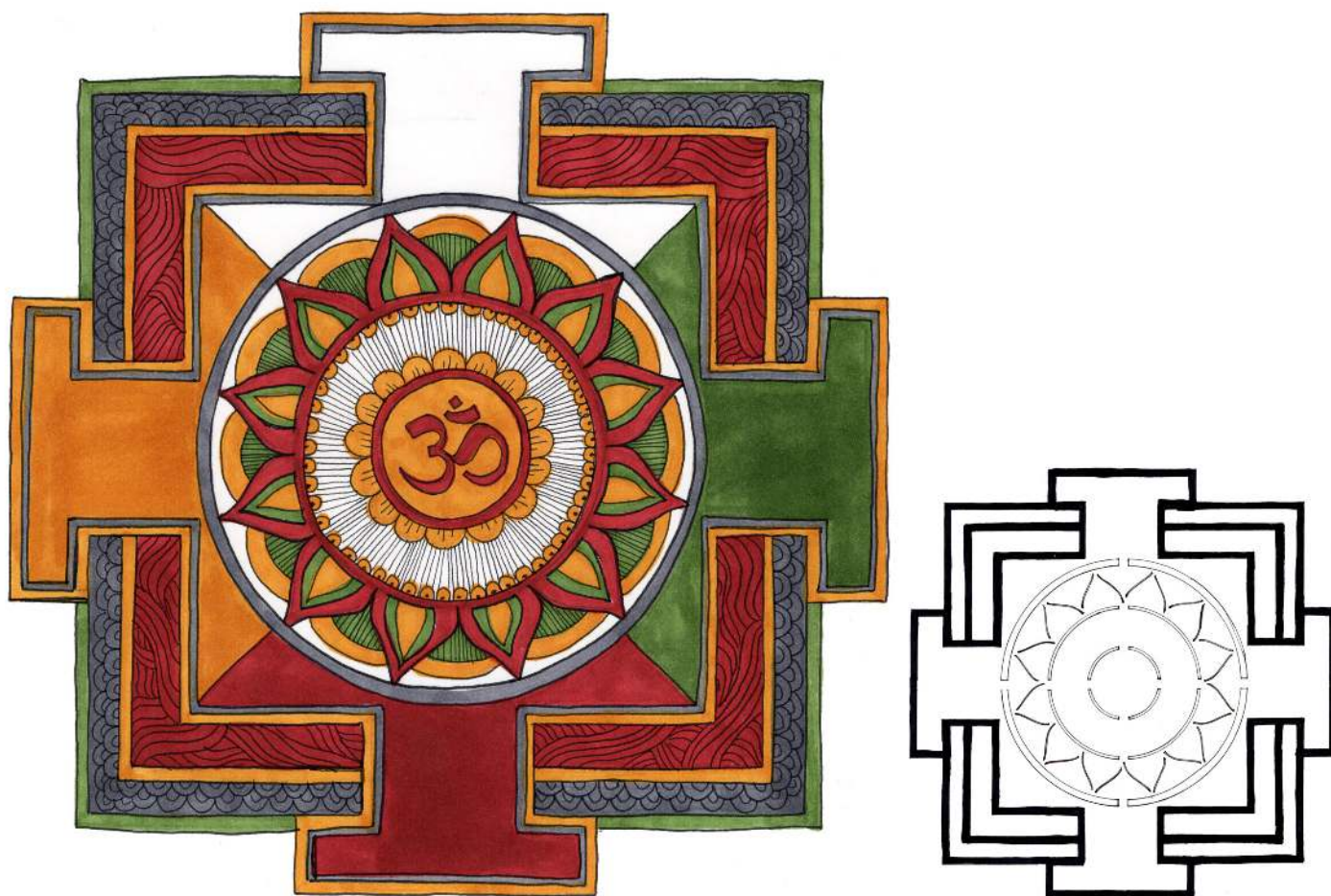
Inner and Outer Paths

In this example, both the inner and outer paths were traced. This results in a broad border, perfect for incorporating patterns or your favorite quotes. The completed example on the left showcases well-known patterns using the Zentangle Method.



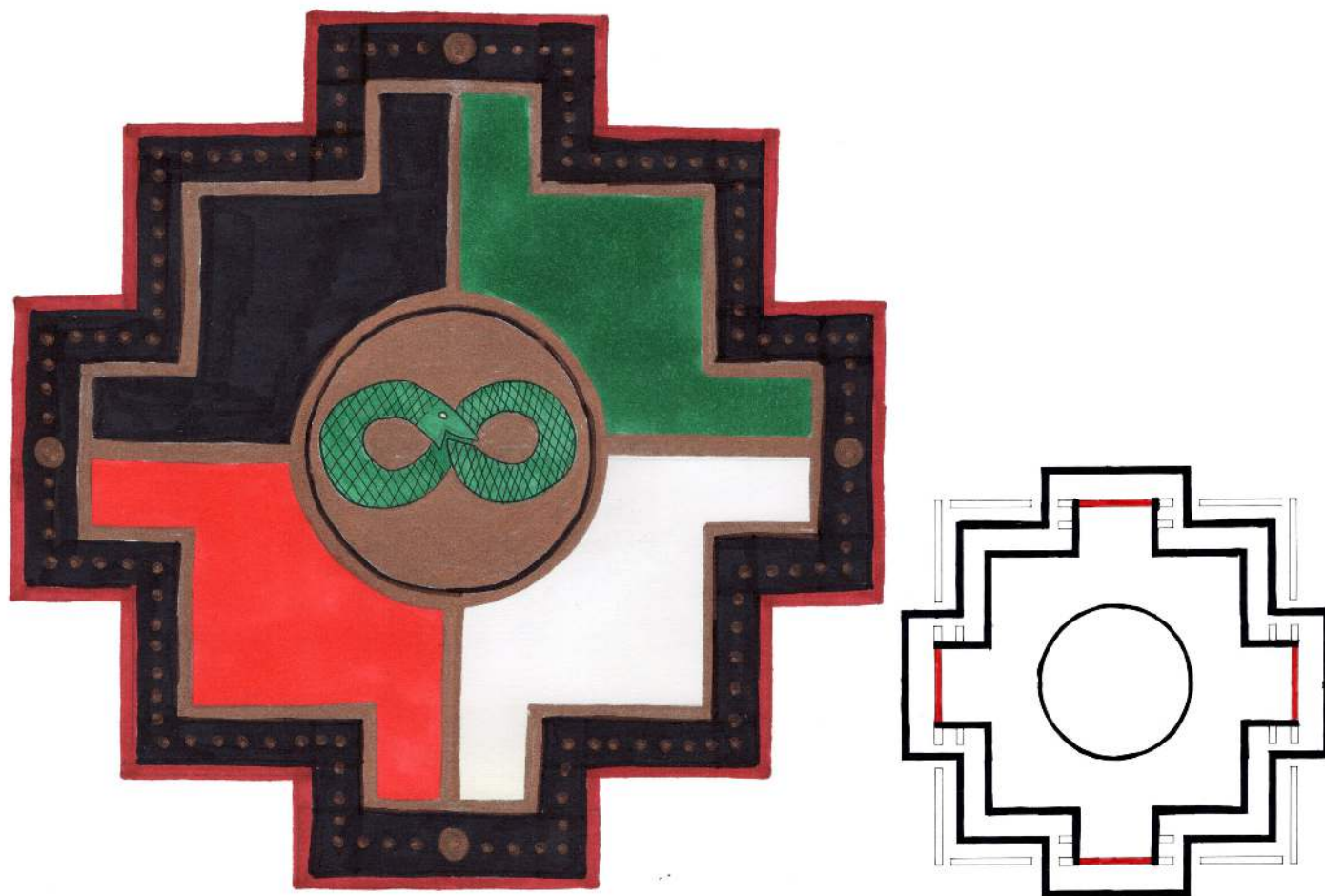
Middle Path

When only tracing the middle path, the interior design is large enough to fit the chakra stencils designed by Kathryn Costa and sold by [StencilGirl Products](http://StencilGirl.com). In this example, the Scorpio full moon mandala features the sacral chakra.



All Three Paths

When all three paths are traced, two borders are formed creating a grounded design.



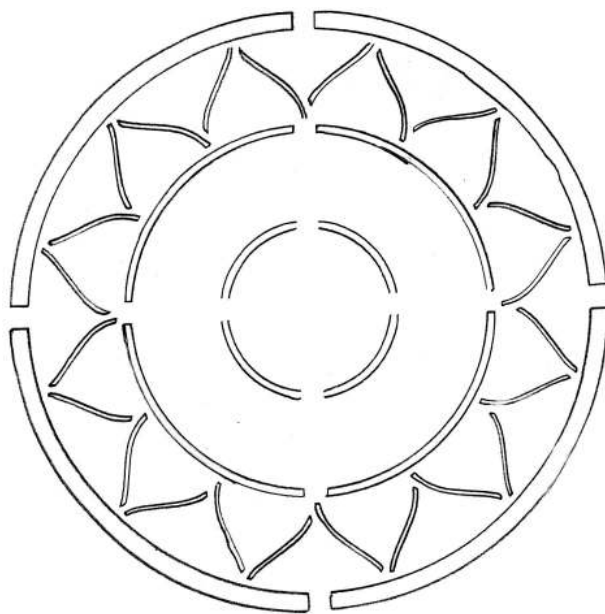
Stepped Path

A combination of all paths are used to create the stepped path of the Chakana/Andean cross. The lines in red illustrate the sections that are not part of the stencil design that you draw to complete the design.

Symbols Explained

At the base of the Four Gates stencil, you'll find a collection of small but powerful symbols. These can be incorporated into your mandala to deepen its meaning, anchor your intention, or reflect where you are on your journey. Use them intuitively — there's no single way to work with them. Let their energy speak to you.

Here is a guide to their meanings:



Lotus

At the center of the stencil is a 12-petal lotus flower. Mandalas and yantras both frequently include lotus petals, which represent purity and transcendence. Eight-petaled lotuses are common, but lotuses in mandalas can include 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 24, 32, 100, 1000 or more petals.



Ouroboros / Infinity Symbol

A snake eating its own tail, the ouroboros represents the eternal cycle of life, death, and rebirth. It speaks to wholeness, regeneration, and the continuity of all things. You can also use a simple infinity symbol (∞) to carry this meaning.

Note: 2025 is the Year of the Snake, making this symbol especially potent for transformation and renewal.



Om

The sacred syllable *Om* is considered the sound of the universe — the vibration that connects all living things. It represents divine consciousness, the beginning and the end, and is often used to invoke peace and unity.



Yin Yang

This symbol reflects the harmony of opposites: light and shadow, feminine and masculine, inner and outer. It reminds us that duality exists within unity — and that balance comes not from erasing contrast, but from embracing it. To complete the design, hand draw the small circles.



Downward-Pointing Triangle

A downward-pointing triangle is associated with feminine energy, receptivity, and the element of water. It represents movement inward, intuition, stillness, and the sacred womb of creation.



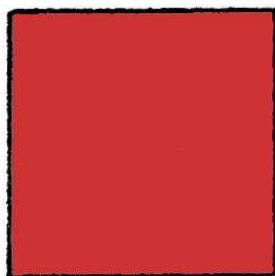
Upward-Pointing Triangle

An upward-pointing triangle symbolizes masculine energy, action, and the element of fire. It conveys movement outward, direction, transformation, and the active spark of creation.



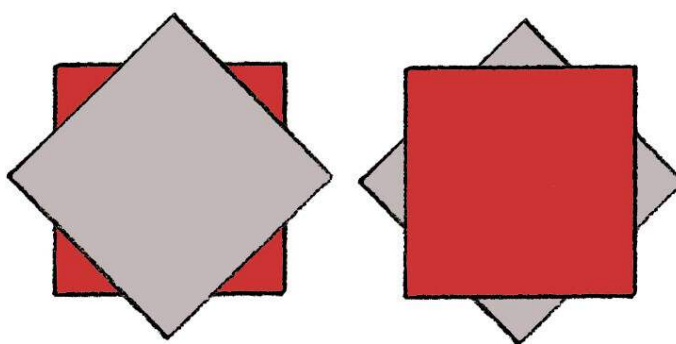
Overlapping Triangles

This union of upward and downward triangles forms a six-pointed star — a symbol of integration and balance. It appears at the center of the heart chakra and represents the harmony of divine feminine and masculine energies.



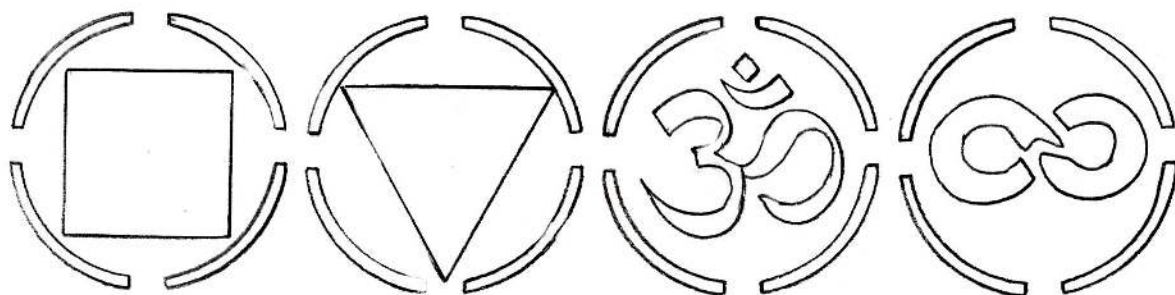
Square

The square represents earth, stability, and structure. It symbolizes grounding, safety, and the foundation upon which all things are built. A single square often reflects containment and the sacred boundaries of a spiritual or creative container.



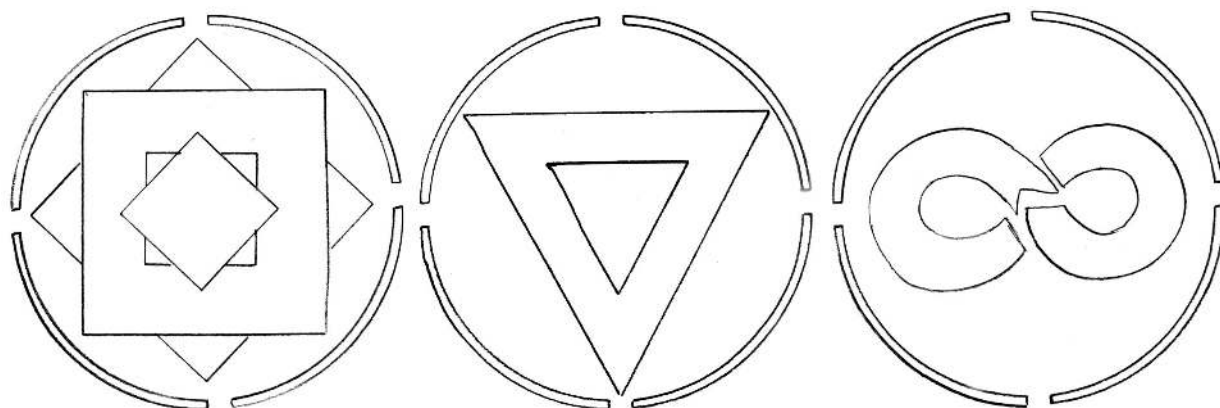
Double Square (One Flat, One Tilted)

This design features a square placed over another that is tilted at an angle. It can be seen as a symbol of dimensional awareness — representing the meeting of material and spiritual planes. It may also reflect dynamic balance, movement within stillness, or shifting perspectives.



Inner Circle

The small stencils fit inside the inner circle.

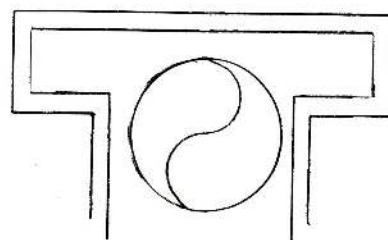
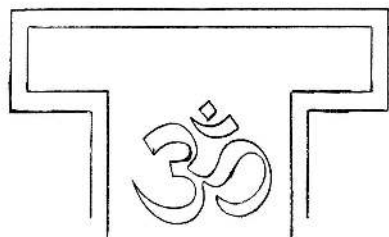
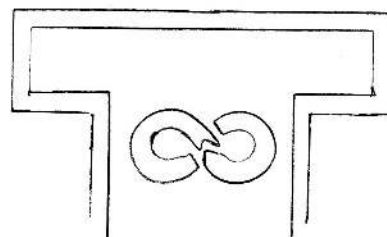
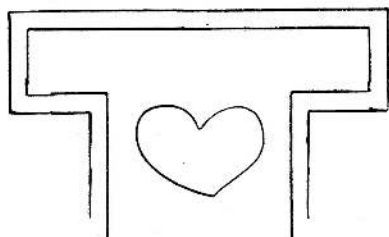
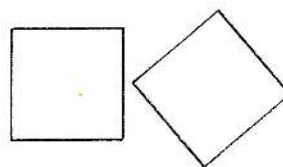
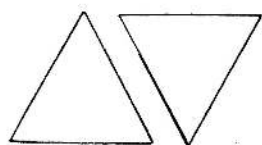
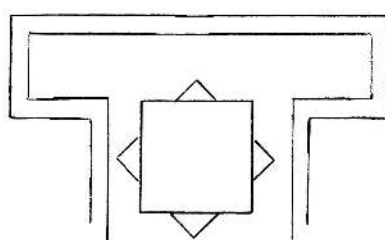
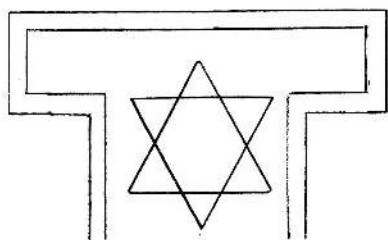
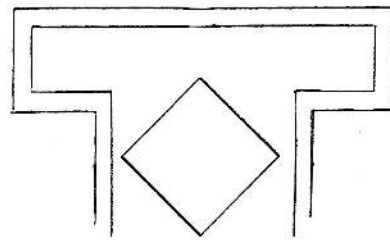
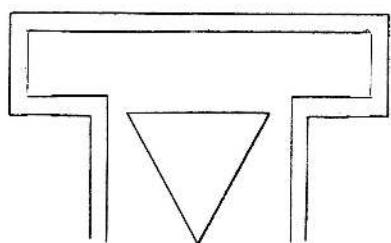


Middle Circle

The large triangle, square, and ouroboros / infinity symbol fit inside this middle circle. Pictured here we see examples of using both the large and small squares and triangles.

Gates

There are four gates, one facing each direction, where the small stencils can be placed.



Journey of the Four Gates: Creating Mandala Art to Cultivate Compassion



The Four Gates Mandala is a symbolic structure inspired by sacred mandalas found in traditions such as Tibetan Buddhism and Hindu yantras. These mandalas often feature gates or thresholds pointing in the four cardinal directions, symbolizing a journey inward toward spiritual truth and wholeness. In this adaptation, the Four Gates become portals for inner exploration, each associated with one of the four elements—Air, Water, Earth, and Fire—and aspects of the self: mind, emotion, body, and desire.

When approached with intention, creating a Four Gates Mandala becomes a meditative and spiritual practice. Each gate offers a framework for observing your inner landscape, inviting compassion, healing, and integration. As you move through each quadrant, you journey toward the center—a space of stillness, unity, and inner wisdom.

Air The Gate of the Mind

This gate invites you to observe your thoughts—the inner dialogue, stories, judgments, and distractions that constantly move through your mental space. Rather than suppressing these thoughts, notice them with curiosity and without judgment. Like clouds drifting across a vast sky, thoughts can come and go without needing to define you.

Creative Prompt: Use lines, symbols, or even handwritten words to represent your current mental state. What thoughts are circling? What beliefs are ready to be released?

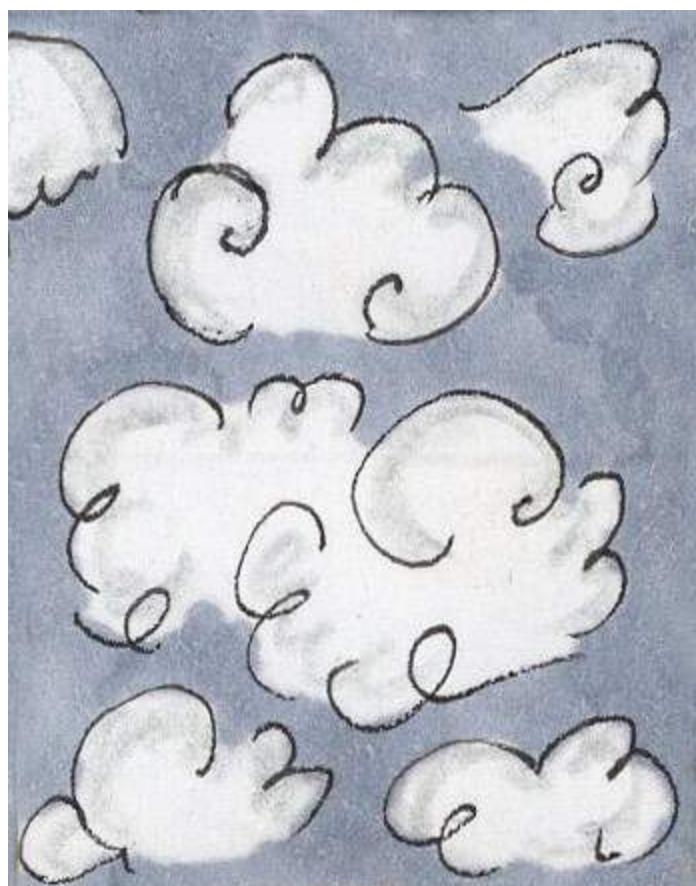
Reflections:

What thoughts arose while working on your mandala?

Did you notice any self-criticism or mental distractions? How did you respond to them?

How can you bring more clarity and mindfulness into your daily life?

Affirmation: *“I am aware. My mind is clear.”*



Note: The creative prompts are offered as gentle guidance, not rules. You don't need to represent the elements literally in your art. As you create, you may notice thoughts, emotions, or sensations arise—even if you're not focused on that particular 'gate.' Simply observe whatever comes up with curiosity and compassion, allowing the process to unfold naturally.

Water The Gate of Emotions

Emotions rise and fall like waves. They may be connected to memories, recent experiences, or the energy of the moment. At this gate, you are invited to meet your feelings with gentleness and compassion. Rather than controlling or analyzing them, allow them to move through you.

Creative Prompt: Use flowing shapes, organic patterns, or cool and fluid colors to express what you're feeling. Watercolor is a perfect medium here—let it run, drip, and merge naturally on the page.

Reflections:

What emotions surfaced as you created?
Did any memories or feelings surprise you?
How can you allow emotions to flow without attachment or resistance?

Affirmation: *"I honor my emotions with compassion."*



Tip: Keep a notebook or journal nearby as you create your mandala. Use it to capture any thoughts, memories, emotions, or insights that arise during your process. Writing can deepen your reflection and help you track the unfolding of your inner journey.

Earth The Gate of the Body

Your body is a sacred vessel, and its sensations are messages from your inner world. This gate calls you to ground your awareness in the physical: your breath, posture, tension, aches, and ease. Listening to your body deepens your sense of rootedness and self-care.

Creative Prompt: Use earthy tones, texture, or repetitive patterns to reflect the rhythms of your body. You might draw shapes that evoke grounding, such as stones, trees, or spirals.

Reflections:

Did you notice any physical sensations (tension, relaxation, energy shifts)?

How did your body feel before, during, and after the practice?

What does your body need to feel more grounded and nurtured?

Affirmation: *"I listen to the wisdom of my body."*



Gentle Reminder: As you create, take a moment to check in with your body. Are your shoulders tense? Is your neck tight? Notice how you're holding yourself. Breathe. Soften. Stretch if you need to. Allow your body to feel supported and at ease as you move through your practice.

Fire The Gate of Desire

Fire represents your passions, longings, creative impulses, and sometimes restlessness. This gate encourages you to witness your desires—not to judge them or grasp at them, but to understand their root. What are you truly yearning for beneath the surface?

Creative Prompt: Use bold colors like red, orange, or gold. Express movement, heat, or intensity through energetic marks. Let this section ignite your creativity.

Reflections:

Did any longings, passions, or restlessness emerge?

What desires feel most present for you right now?

How can you balance ambition with acceptance in your life?

Affirmation: *"I release attachment and embrace presence."*



Gentle Reminder: As you move through your creative process, return to your breath. Notice if you're holding it. Gently pause, close your eyes, and take a deep, cleansing inhale. Exhale slowly. Trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be — present, open, and in the flow of your journey.

The Center The Heart of Unity

As you journey through the Four Gates, you arrive at the center—the still point where all aspects of the self converge. This is the space of wholeness, where the elements harmonize and the noise quiets. Here, you may feel a deeper connection to your soul, to the present moment, and to something greater than yourself.

Creative Prompt: Use a central symbol—such as a lotus, heart, spiral, or glowing orb—to represent your inner light. Gold, white, or your favorite sacred color may bring a sense of peace to this space.



Reflections:

What did you discover about yourself through this creative process?

How do you feel after moving through the Four Gates?

How can you apply this awareness to your daily life and creative practice?

Affirmation: *"I am whole."*

Gentle Reminder: Let go of perfection. This is a practice, not a performance. Allow your mandala to unfold organically, trusting the process rather than focusing on the outcome. Each line, color, and choice is part of your unique expression and inner wisdom.

Now It's Your Turn

To begin your own Four Gates Mandala Journey, use the *Four Gates Mandala Stencil*—a tool I specifically designed to support this sacred art practice. Simply **place and trace** to create a beautifully balanced foundation for your journey.

By eliminating the challenge of measuring or drafting complex shapes, the stencil allows you to focus more fully on the inner work—*the sacred art-making, the reflection, and the deep listening* that this practice invites.

After tracing the mandala, move through each quadrant intentionally:

- Begin with a moment of silence or breath awareness.
- Let each gate guide your creative expression using colors, textures, patterns, or symbols.
- There is no right or wrong—what emerges is a reflection of your inner truth in the moment.

Alternatively, you may work with the Four Gates intuitively observing thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and desires as they arise. **The key is to approach yourself with gentleness — offering loving-kindness and compassion to whatever shows up.** As we cultivate self-compassion and fill our own cups, we naturally bring more compassion, patience, and presence into our interactions with others.

Gentle music, candlelight, or journaling alongside your artwork can enrich the experience. Repeating this practice over time can help you track your emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual shifts—revealing your own cycles of growth and healing.

The Four Gates Mandala becomes not only a visual creation, but a meditative journey and a mirror for your soul.

Order Your Stencil

If you haven't picked up your stencil yet, you can order it online:
[StencilGirl Products - Kathryn Costa Stencil Collection](#)



Gallery of Inspiration

Creative Expressions from the True North Arts Community

Find inspiration in this growing collection of mandalas created with the Four Gates Mandala Stencil. Each piece reflects the unique journey, voice, and heart of its maker—beautiful examples of what's possible when we open to creativity, intention, and inner wisdom.

These mandalas come from friends of the **True North Arts** community who have embraced the *Journey of the Four Gates* as both an artistic and spiritual practice. Let their colors, and patterns spark your own creative adventure.

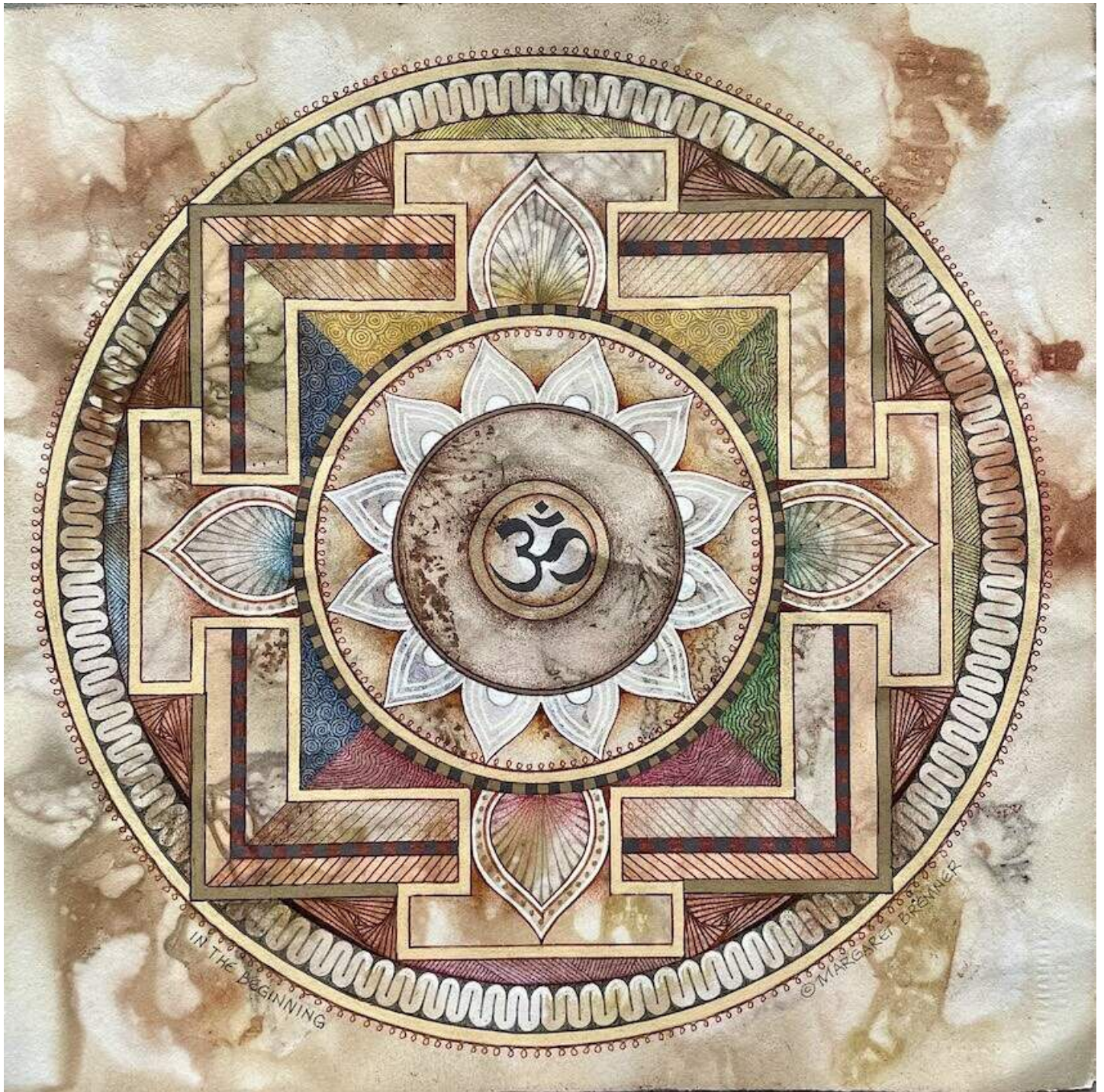
Call for Art

A new *Journey of the Four Gates* gallery edition will be released each season—aligned with the **solstices and equinoxes**—celebrating the cycles of nature and our own creative rhythms.

To submit your artwork, email a high-quality photo or scan to **kathryn@100mandalas.com** along with:

- Your **name** (full name or first name only—your choice)
- Your **location** (city, state, or country)
- The **medium** used (e.g., watercolor, colored pencil, digital, mixed media)
- Any **details or reflections** about your experience using the stencil or participating in the *Journey of the Four Gates*

I'd love to feature your work in a future seasonal gallery edition!



In the Beginning

Margaret Bremner, Nanaimo, Canada

Eco-dyed paper

www.artistsincanada.com/Margaret-Bremner



Four Gates Mandala

Margaret Bremner, Nanaimo, Canada

Woven paper

www.artistsincanada.com/Margaret-Bremner



Four Gates Mandala

Eni Oken, California, USA

Pitt artist brush pens, Inktense pencils, embroidery

<https://enioken.com/>

Journey of the Four Gates: Creating Mandala Art to Cultivate Compassion



Embroidery and drawing details.

Eni Oken, California, USA

Pitt artist brush pens, Inktense pencils, embroidery

<https://enioken.com>

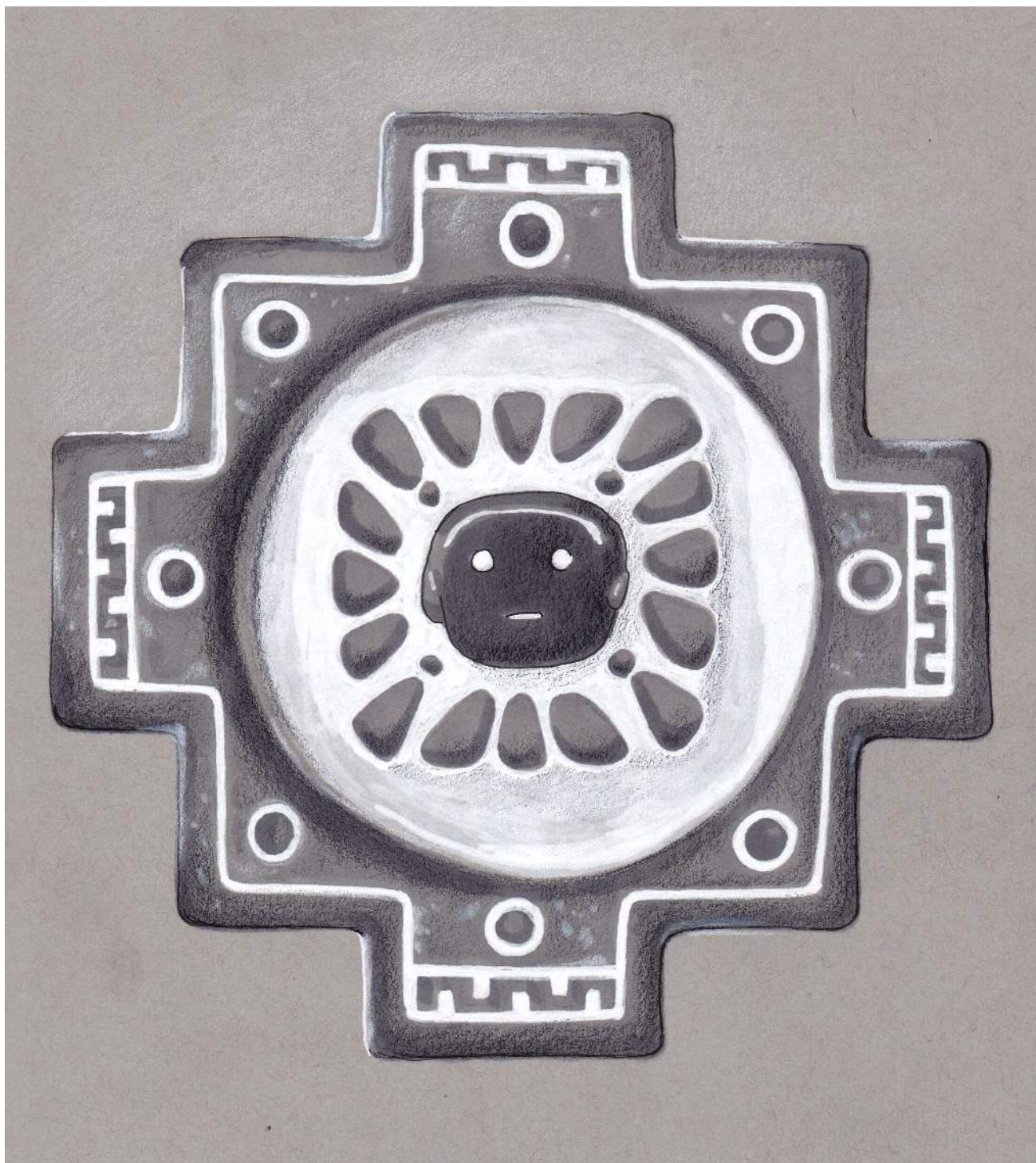


Light in the Darkness

Sandy Steen Bartholomew, New Hampshire, USA

Alcohol marker, white gel pen, and Micron

www.SandySteenBartholomew.com

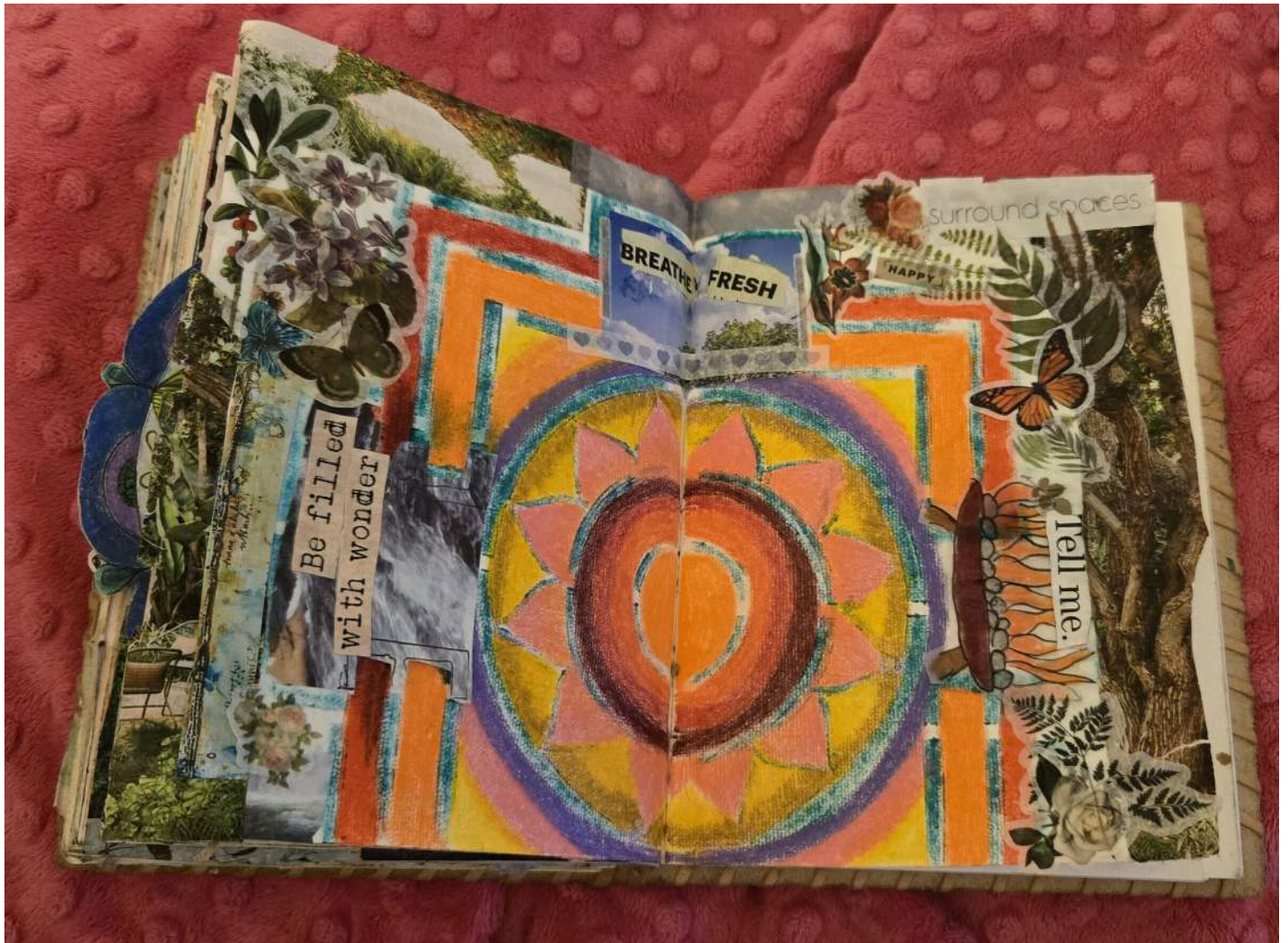


Andes Mandala

Sandy Steen Bartholomew, New Hampshire, USA

Gray alcohol markers, white Posca, and colored pencils, on gray paper

www.SandySteenBartholomew.com



Four Gates Mandala Journal Page
Chel, Texas, USA



Sacred Blue Deer Mandala

Merve, O.C. Mexico



Four Gates Mandala
Emily Suess, Illinois, USA
<https://emilysuess.com/>



Four Gates Mandala

Caterina Martinico, California, USA

Watercolor and collage

<https://caterina-martinico.pixels.com/>



Four Gates Mandala

Caterina Martinico, California, USA

Watercolor and collage

<https://caterina-martinico.pixels.com/>

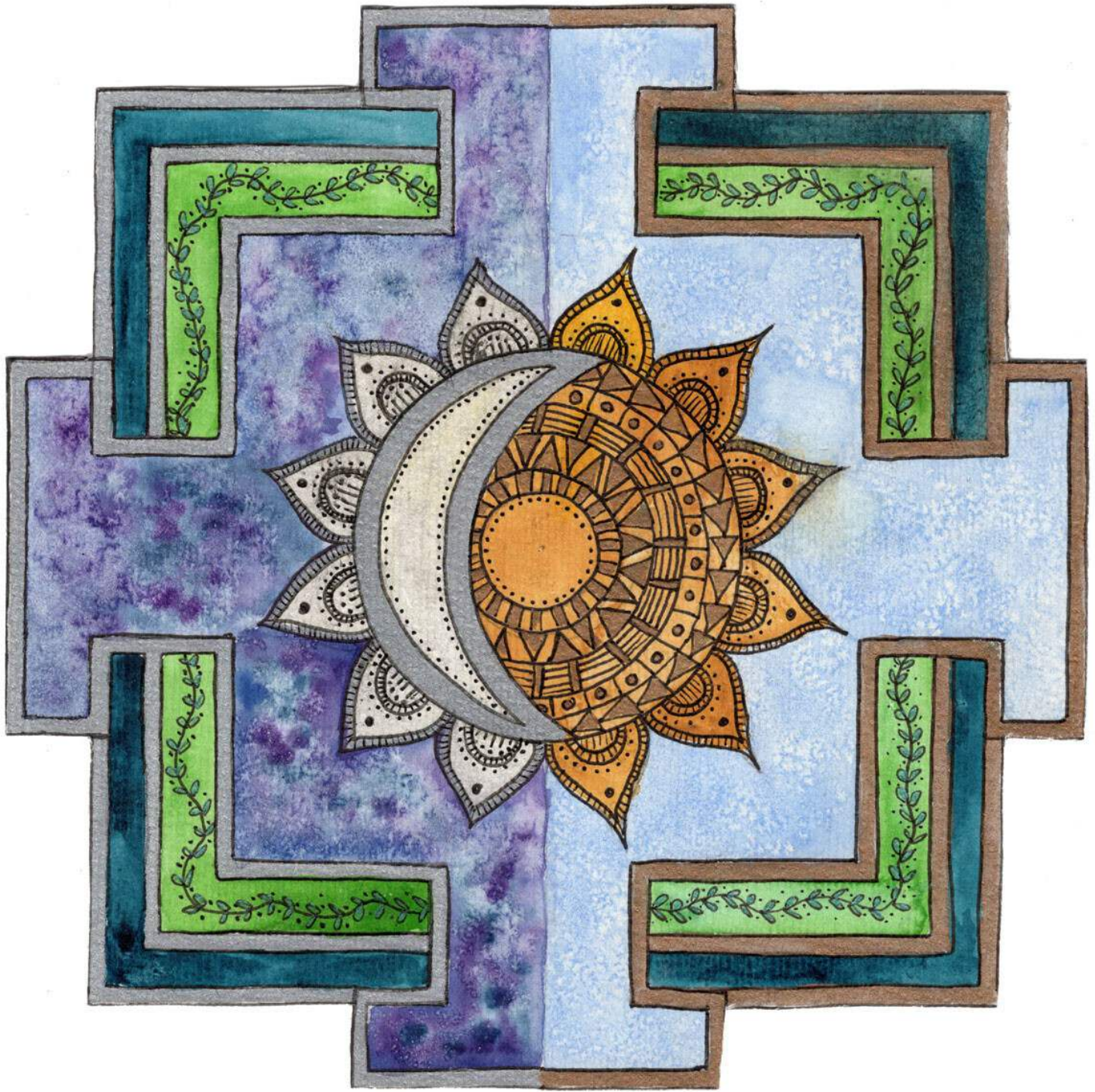


Birthday Four Gates Mandala (Gemini Sun, Leo Moon)

Christi Guymon, California



Gemini New Moon Mandala
Catz, California, USA



Spring Equinox Mandala

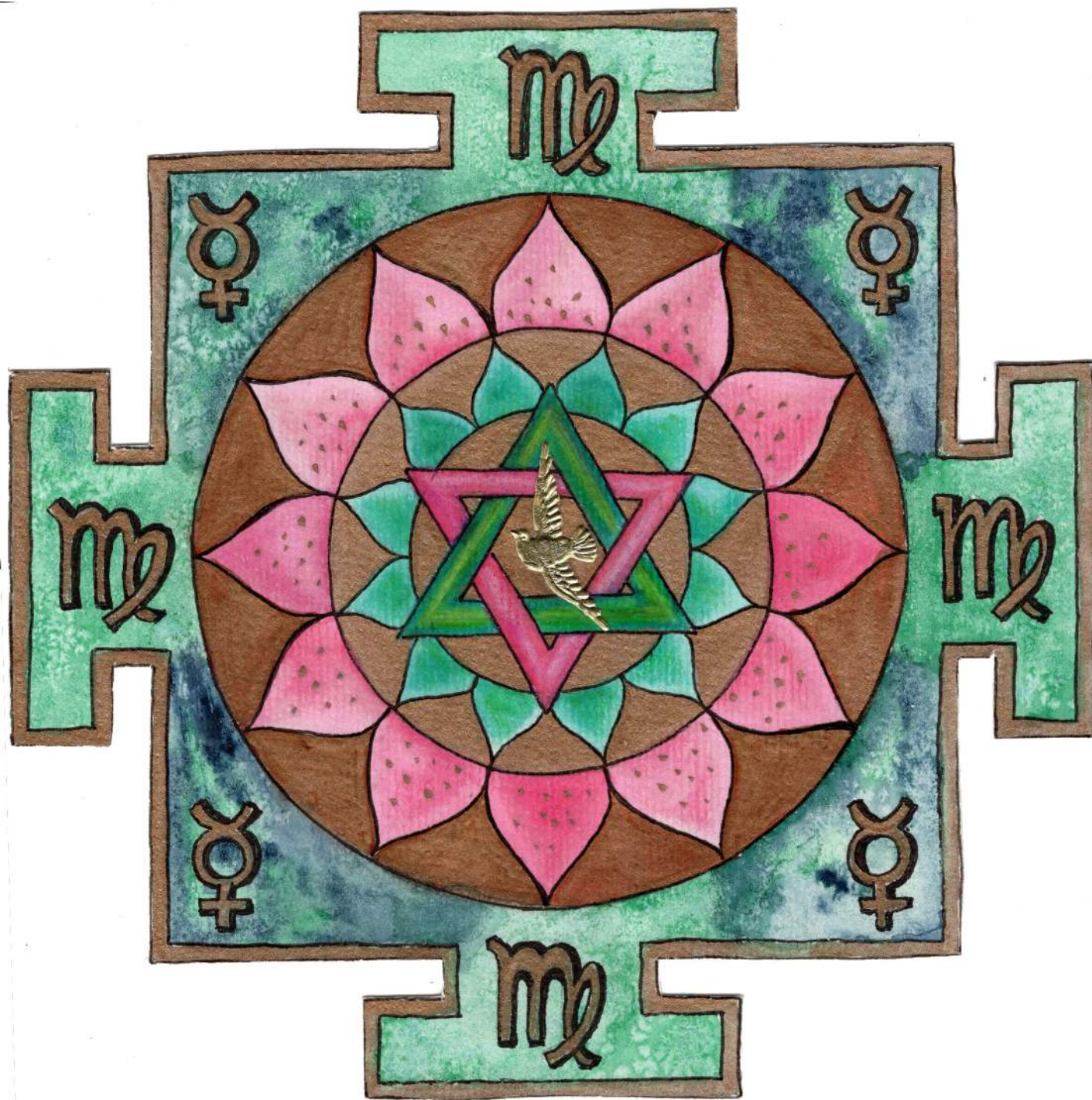
Kathryn Costa, New Hampshire, USA



Spring Equinox Mandala, 2021
Christina Cromwell, Maine, USA



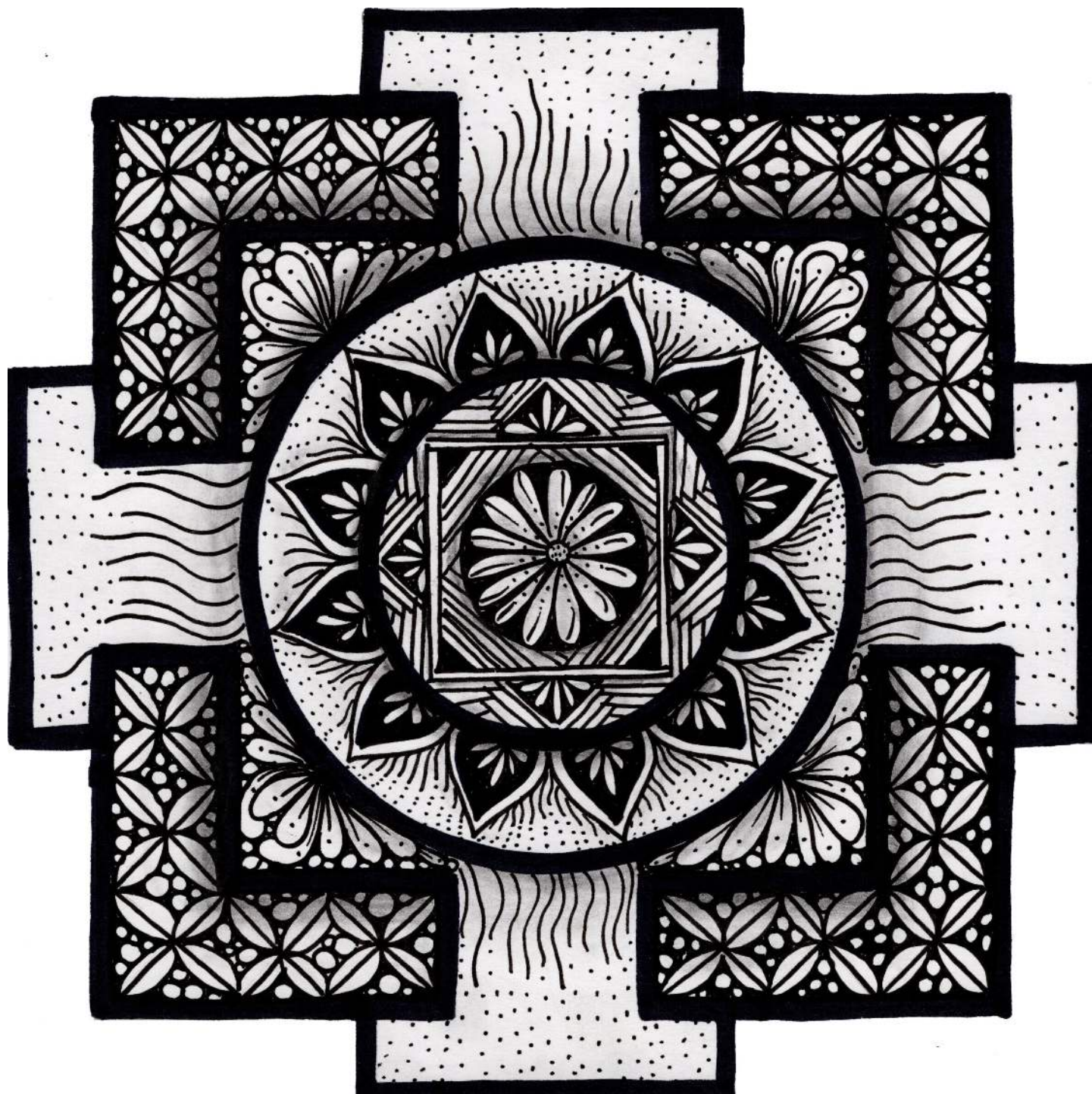
Full Moon Leo Mandala, 2021
Christina Cromwell, Maine, USA



Virgo Full Moon Mandala

Kathryn Costa, New Hampshire, USA

Heart chakra at center, watercolor, German scrap dove at center.



Four Gates Zendala®

Kathryn Costa, New Hampshire, USA



Aries New Moon Mandala

Kathryn Costa, New Hampshire, USA

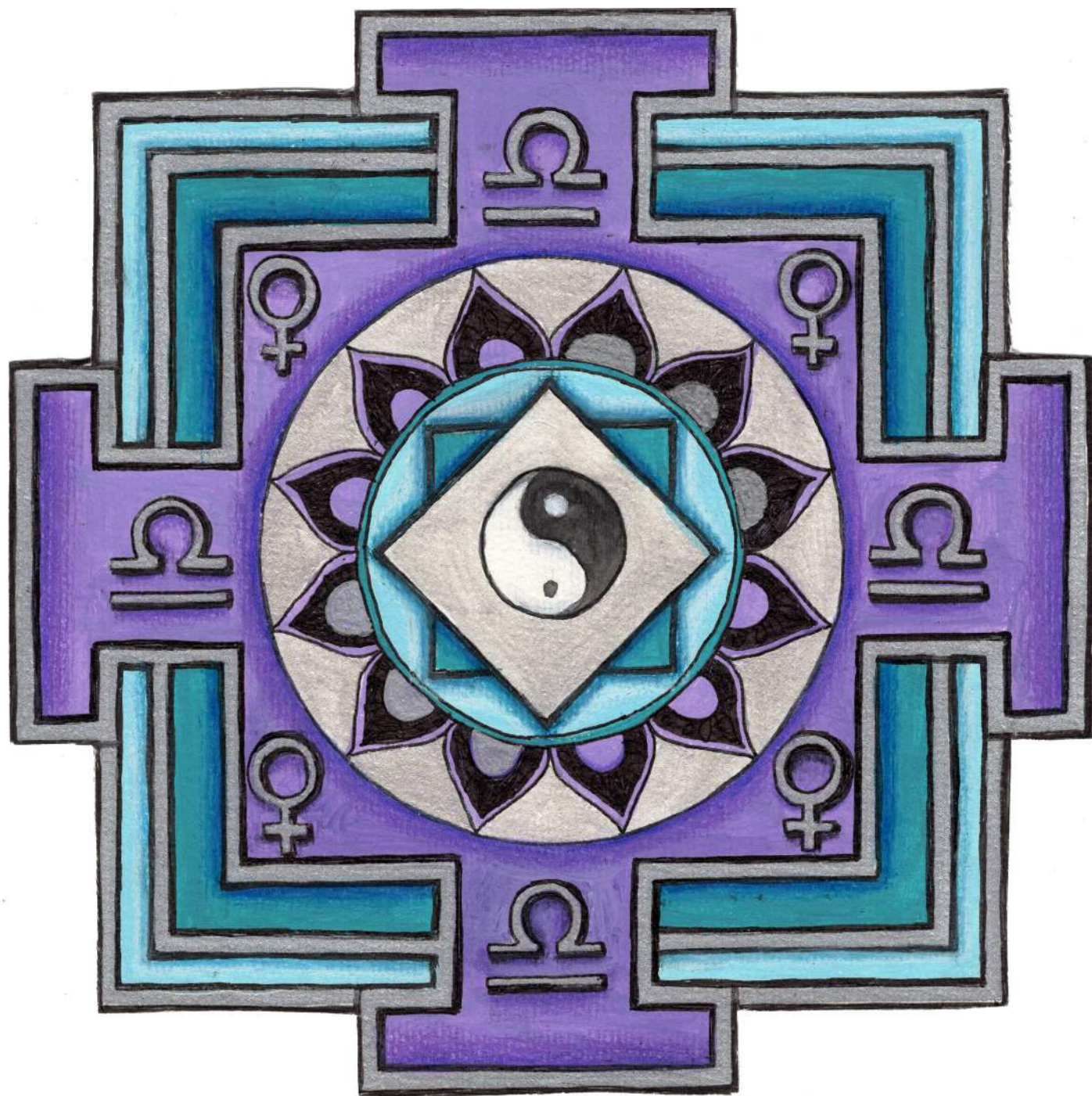
Solar plexus chakra at center, collage.



Taurus New Moon Mandala

Kathryn Costa, New Hampshire, USA

Seed of Life drawn at the center, scrapbook paper background, black and gold markers, green colored pencil.



Libra New Moon Mandala

Kathryn Costa, New Hampshire, USA

Watercolor paints, colored pencils, metallic markers



Journey of the Four Gates Online Retreats

Create in Community • Deepen Your Practice • Awaken Your Inner Wisdom

Join Kathryn Costa for this heartfelt online mandala retreat, offered throughout the year as a sacred space to slow down, tune in, and create in community. Whether it's your first time using the Four Gates Mandala Stencil or you're returning for a fresh experience, each retreat is a unique opportunity to reconnect with your creativity and inner guidance.

About the Retreat

The *Journey of the Four Gates* is a soulful practice that cultivates compassion and loving-kindness while guiding you to create meaningful and beautiful mandala art. This retreat is ideal for those who have the **Four Gates Mandala Stencil** (available from StencilGirl Products) and are looking for support, inspiration, and community.

To get the most out of the experience, we recommend drawing your Four Gates Mandala outline ahead of time using the stencil. This gives you more time during the retreat to dive into adding color, pattern, intention, and messages from the meditation.

What's Included

Part 1: Stencil Design Exploration

Uncover the creative possibilities of the Four Gates Mandala Stencil. Kathryn will walk you through its design, various layout options, and share finished mandalas to spark your imagination.

Part 2: The Journey of the Four Gates

Explore the spiritual significance of the Four Gates—Air, Water, Fire, and Earth—and how they represent different aspects of your inner life.

Part 3: Guided Soul Journey Meditation

Take a gentle, powerful inner journey through the elements. Connect deeply with your inner wisdom through a nourishing meditation led by Kathryn.

Part 4: Creative Mandala Studio Time

Enjoy 60+ minutes of uninterrupted time to work on your mandala. This is your time to create freely in the energy of a supportive women's circle.

Special Bonus:

The first 10 people to register receive a private 5-minute 1:1 session with Kathryn during Studio Time. Share your art, ask a question, or simply check in.

Part 5: Closing Sharing Circle

We'll end with a sacred space to reflect and connect. Share your experience, show your artwork, or just listen and be inspired by others on the journey.

Choose Your Retreat Experience

Whether you stay for the full retreat or just the first few parts, you'll leave feeling refreshed, inspired, and more in tune with your creative spirit. Can't make it live? A **recording of the presentation and meditation** will be sent to all participants.

6 Reasons to Say Yes

1. Every Journey is New

Each time you walk through the Four Gates, you meet yourself in a new moment. Let this experience offer insight and guidance for the season ahead.

2. Dust Off Your Stencil

Has your Four Gates Mandala Stencil been tucked away? Now is the perfect time to bring it out and get inspired again.

3. Use the Stencil with Confidence

Learn exactly how to use the stencil with ease through Kathryn's step-by-step guidance, reference handout, and creative examples.

4. Experience a Signature Soul Journey Meditation

Let yourself be nourished by a meditation that awakens your creativity and deepens your inner connection.

5. Create in a Women's Circle

There's something magical about making art in a circle of kindred spirits. Come as you are and be supported in a creative, compassionate space.

6. Reignite Your Spark

Feeling stuck or uninspired? This retreat is your creative reset—a moment to reconnect with joy and purpose through art.

Accessible Pricing

Just **\$35** (Regularly \$55)

I know how expensive life can be. That's why this retreat is priced for an easy yes—so more people can experience its magic.

Reserve your spot today and step into the Journey of the Four Gates.

Visit: www.truenortharts.com/category/events



Travel by Moonlight: A Sacred Journey Through Art and Astrology

Monthly blog posts for the new and full moon.

What does it mean to travel by moonlight?

It begins with learning to move in rhythm with the moon—to listen deeply to the wisdom of the lunar cycle and respond with awareness, intention, and grace.

As a **certified astrologer**, I guide you through this journey by unpacking the mysteries of each zodiac archetype in bite-sized, easy-to-understand reflections. At each **new moon**, we explore the zodiac sign the moon is in and use its energy to set soul-aligned intentions. At each **full moon**, we reflect on the polarity between the sun and moon signs—how the gifts of one can illuminate and support the challenges of the other.

Journey of the Four Gates: Creating Mandala Art to Cultivate Compassion

This dynamic dance between light and shadow offers profound insight into your inner world. When you begin to track and work with these cycles, you'll discover how to navigate life's ups and downs with greater clarity, creativity, and compassion.

In the *Travel by Moonlight* series, you'll also learn how to:

- Create mandala art as a meditative and spiritual practice
- Explore the connection between astrology and the chakras
- Use color, pattern, and symbolism to process insights and deepen your intuitive wisdom

Every post is a portal into sacred self-discovery—combining lunar astrology, chakra wisdom, and expressive mandala-making to help you walk your path more consciously.

Whether you're just beginning your journey with astrology or looking for a creative, soulful way to deepen your connection to the cosmos, this series is for you.

Let the moonlight be your guide.

Let art be your compass.

Come travel with me.

[Visit the blog to begin your lunar mandala journey.](#)



About Kathryn Costa

Instigator of Soulful and Creative Living

Twenty-seven years ago, I was introduced to the art of mandala making. Over time, mandalas would appear during the most pivotal moments of my life—times of deep grief, personal transformation, and most recently, as I navigate life with bipolar II.

One of the most defining chapters began a year after my father died. Grief had wrapped itself around me like a fog. I was numb, going through the motions—showing up for work, fulfilling responsibilities—but feeling disconnected from joy, from myself, and from my creative spirit.

Then, during a visit with a friend in Colorado, something quietly shifted. I pulled out a handmade journal and some watercolor paints. Those first gentle brushstrokes awakened something long dormant. I began drawing mandalas again. Five months later, my creativity was in full bloom. I launched a personal challenge: to create **100 mandalas in 100 days**. I invited my blog followers to join me—and what followed was extraordinary. That single challenge led to a signed contract for my first book, [*The Mandala Guidebook*](#), and opened the door to a worldwide community of creative souls.

Since then, I've helped thousands of people around the globe use mandala art as a tool for healing, expression, and transformation.

Creating mandalas has become my sanctuary. The circle—endlessly spacious yet safely contained—invites me into a rhythm of lines, shapes, and colors that calm the body, quiet the mind, open the heart, and lift the spirit. It is a practice of deep listening. Within the sacred space of the mandala, memories resurface, emotions move, clarity emerges, and inner wisdom is revealed.

Over the years, this inward path has expanded outward. I began looking to the stars, discovering the rich insights of the zodiac. As a **certified astrologer**, I now weave together mandala art, lunar cycles, chakra wisdom, and astrology to guide others on their own journeys of soulful and creative living.



Journey of the Four Gates: Creating Mandala Art to Cultivate Compassion

When people ask me what I do, I tell them:

I'm an instigator of soulful and creative living.

Through my books, courses, videos, retreats, and one-on-one mentoring, I offer sacred space for self-expression, insight, and connection.

Wherever you are in your journey, may you find in my work a spark of joy, a sense of possibility, and the courage to create from the heart.

((soul hugs)))

Kathryn Costa

Instigator of Soulful and Creative Living

About True North Arts

At True North Arts, we believe that **art is more than a creative act — it is a spiritual practice.** It is a compass guiding us inward toward clarity, confidence, healing, and truth. Here, art becomes a sacred space for reflection and revelation — a way to explore the deeper dimensions of who we are and where we're going.

True North is more than a direction. It's an inner knowing that leads us back to our most authentic, aligned, and empowered self. Through the act of creating, we connect with a quiet voice of wisdom, insight, and purpose. We express our joys, transform our sorrows, and return home to what matters most.

Whether you're picking up a brush for the first time or returning to your creative practice with renewed intention, True North Arts invites you to explore the intersection of art and soul. Here, you'll find inspiration, guidance, and tools to create with meaning and presence — to make art that lights the way.

This is art for the journey.

Art as medicine.

Art that points to your true north.

If you loved this handbook, there's so much more to discover at True North Arts.

Explore biweekly blog posts filled with inspiration, creative prompts, and spiritual insights. When you signed up to receive this eBook, you were also subscribed to the True North Arts newsletter—so keep an eye on your inbox for fresh inspiration!

Visit www.truenortharts.com to dive deeper into your mandala and creative practice.