

# Finding My Mandala

BY JAMIE M. JAMISON



We all dream about having a beautiful karaoke voice; the challenge is finding the right song and taking the risk to stand on stage in front of strangers. In this way, music is similar to visual art, taking a leap of faith to sing on stage or to share art publically is a risk worth taking. We often let fear stop us, because we can't find the right song or the right artistic niche. I was lucky to discover my art voice and am so thankful I took that leap.

As a self-taught artist, I took many art classes, studied different techniques, and practiced . . . a lot. Dabbling in photography, watercolor, and decorative painting, I knew I had something to share, but my original work wasn't true to my spirit. I doubted my ability and never called myself an artist or put my art out there until I saw a piece of art on a vacation.

After visiting an art gallery, I walked out with the inspiration that began my art journey. This particular gallery held an assemblage piece made out of square tiles with a strong political message; the artwork was controversial. Art like this can promote dialog and change, but art that connects with someone reaches their soul. I left thinking about art that has a positive message, speaks to a person's spirit, and the ancient art of Mandalas. I was motivated to leap into the art world and find my Mandala.

This term means center and is believed to be a graphic symbol of the universe. Typically a design of complex patterns and layers, this symbol is intended to represent truth and the world around us. Since art often has several depths of meaning, I longed to create art that speaks to the core of a person and to connect people to beautiful objects, meaningful places, family, and friends that inspired their spirit — to translate the mandala imagery into my art.

Just like the mandalas about connection, my photo art provides a visual connection to something special and is the center of my artwork. Our lives are multi-dimensional, and if one looks beneath the surface, everything is connected. The background is like the world around us — organic and constantly changing. Because the tiles are interchangeable, each person participates in the art by selecting the image and the background letting their creative spirit connect to the finished piece.

I went looking for my art niche, but I found my mandala — my art itself. I found my center: a supportive and enlightening art community. Because I took a risk, I have made wonderful friends, met talented artists and art students, and experienced a more colorful and interesting world. I am fortunate to create art, and my art has given me so much more in return. An audience for my karaoke voice might not exist, but I am glad I leapt to the artistic stage and found my Mandala.

## TECHNIQUE

For the "Photo Art Tile," lightly sand the edges of a 5" x 5" tile, and paint the edges with acrylic paint. Select a paper, and trim it to 5" x 5". Run the paper through the Xyron machine, place on the tile, and trim the edges with a craft knife. Print a photograph onto Transparency Film (don't forget to reverse the photo). Trim the transparency, and run it through the Xyron machine. Place the transparency over the paper, trim the edges with a craft knife, and spread a light layer of Gel Medium over the image. Let dry overnight, and spray the tile with varnish. Place the hole on the back of the tile over the screw on the background and slide to the right.

## TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Acrylic paints: (Golden)
- Ampersand: 8" x 8", 5" x 5" (The Artist Panel)
- Chalk Paint: (Annie Sloan)
- Computer/Photoshop or Elements
- Craft knife
- Drill
- Foam brush
- Gel medium: soft, matte (Golden)
- Ink-jet printer
- Photograph
- Sandpaper
- Screw & nut
- Sequin remnant: stencil
- Soft cloth
- Stencils
- Textures: (Kim Klassen)
- Transparency film
- Trowel
- Varnish: matte finish (Krylon)
- Venetian Plaster: (Modern Masters)
- Wax: (Annie Sloan)
- Xyron machine





## TIP

- I have a serious paint crush on Annie Sloan Chalk paints. Although intended for furniture, they work perfectly in mixed media. Dry, it sands off like chalk and is extremely easy to achieve that worn finish. Crackle it, dilute it, or let it sit out to, giving it a thicker, plaster-like texture. The wax has an encaustic feel.

Jamie Jamison is a mixed-media artist and part-time college instructor living in Canfield, Ohio. She spends her summers in Chautauqua, New York, helping to support the Visual Arts of Chautauqua Institution (VACI). Her Photo Art Tiles reflect the simple beauty of life's layers. To see more of Jamie's work, visit her website [alajamie.com](http://alajamie.com) or contact her by email at [jamiemj@me.com](mailto:jamiemj@me.com).

The art background can really be anything you imagine—acrylic, paper, collage. Think of the background as the frame around the photo. For the background, use Venetian Plaster, stencils, and Annie Sloan paints to provide depth and color. First, spread plaster with a trowel randomly. Let it dry, and lightly sand. Spread more plaster around the edges using various stencils and sequin remnants. Trust your eye, and place items randomly. Once dry, lightly sand again. Lightly paint several layers of chalk paint with a foam brush. Sand off stenciled areas, add wax to entire piece, and buff with a soft cloth. Drill a small hole for the screw and nut. ✦

