

Mandala is the Sanskrit word for circle. It has evolved to mean many things over time, primarily as a pattern for concentration while praying or meditating. Religious contemplatives also used a length of knotted cloth for counting their prayers prior to strings of prayer beads and rosaries being developed. Guirlande du Monde, this circle, is of a scale that one can only see the entire form by not looking directly at it. Peripheral vision is necessary to see it in its entirety, which places the viewer within its center.

History:

When I was a child, my mother knit a sweater for me with all the flags of the world on it, or so it seemed at the time. Of course, all the flags were not really there, and despite the loving intention of my mother, I was embarrassed to wear it because it made me stand out. My mother also braided rugs for the floors of our family home, created from recycled fabric (a very thick felt) from the drying machines at the St. Regis paper mill where my father worked.

Long after she had died and the last of her rugs was to be discarded due to wear and tear I instead brought it to my studio. This material -physically flattened with the history of my family's weight for 40 years- soon became a swirling three dimensional sculpture resonating a very different culture's history. Five more sculptures using hand-braided rugs were created within the next few years, culminating with "Judith" in the year 2000. Based on the Shwedagon pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar which is covered in gold leaf, this more modestly scaled work was covered with a hand-braided rug to express similarly precious qualities of the human spirit.

From a very early age I knew that if I were ever to braid anything together it would be flags. And not just a few flags, as my mother had knit for me, but all the flags of the world. In 2004, I was given the time and space to create such a work at the Camargo Foundation in the south of France. Central to this international project was an expression of unity and peace. All the flags (193) had to be donated (gifts) and over 100 embassies donated their own national flags, many having been taken out of service (used) from flying above their embassies in Washington.

Seeing this sculpture completed, a friend told me that for her it was both politically and poetically correct. For me it is an expression of gratitude. The kindness and care given to me by complete strangers during extensive travels was truly a blessing, this garland of the world is my way of returning that gift.

“Metaphors are the means by which the oneness of the world is poetically brought about.”

Walter Benjamin