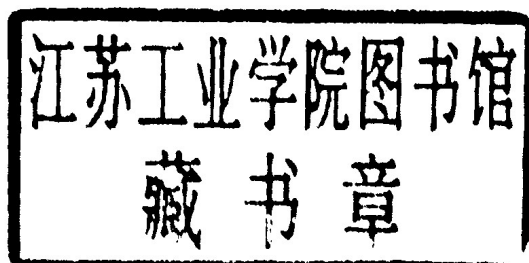


ENCHANTED CIRCLES



ELIZABETH JANE LLOYD

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ENCHANTED CIRCLES

The Art of Making Decorative Wreaths
for All Seasons and Special Occasions

Elizabeth Jane Lloyd



To all the circles of the turning year

Special Photography by
Jan Baldwin and Jacqui Hurst



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CAPTIONS TO ILLUSTRATIONS ON PAGES 1-3

PAGE 1: *A simple wired wreath of feathers, painted eggs and decorative
birds (for technique, see pages 30-31 and 122-125).*

PAGE 2: *Wired wreath of herbs and green chillis (for technique, see pages 42-3).*

PAGE 3: *A collage of pebbles and feathers gleaned from a country walk.*

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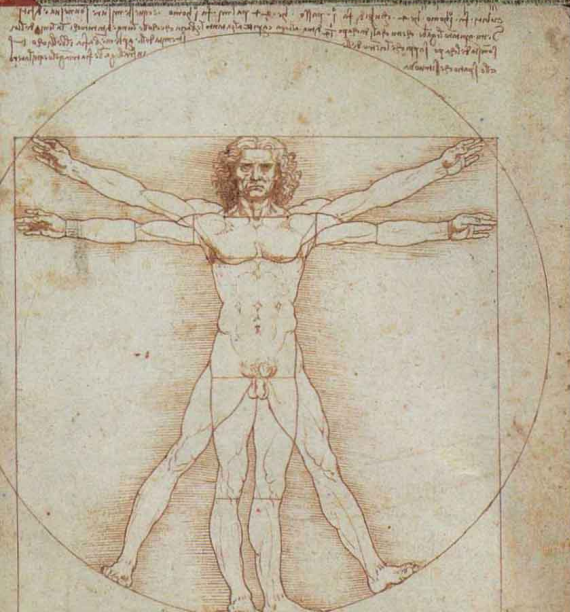
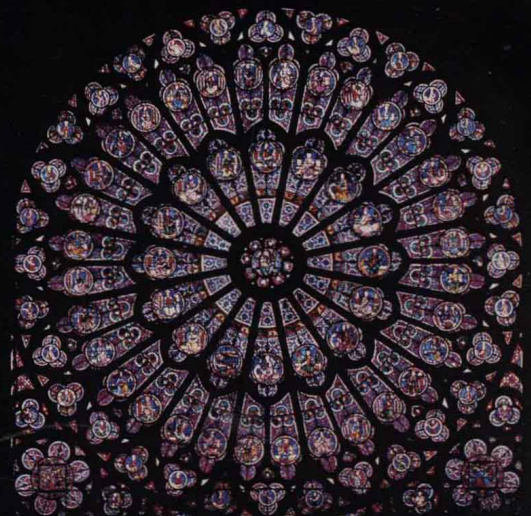
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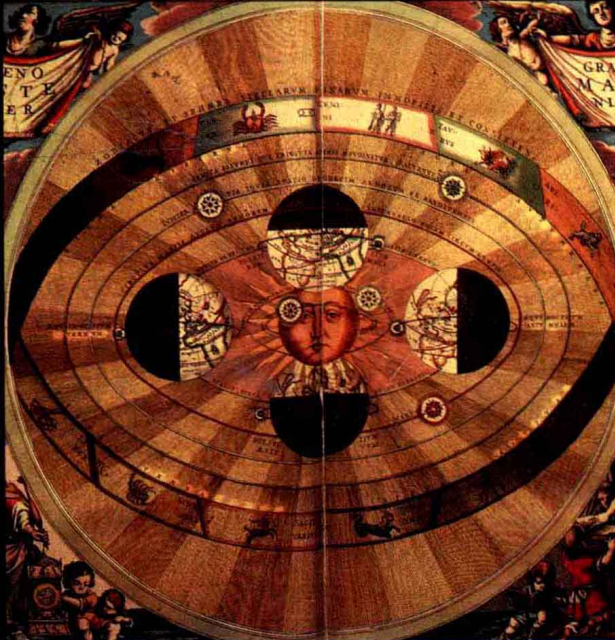
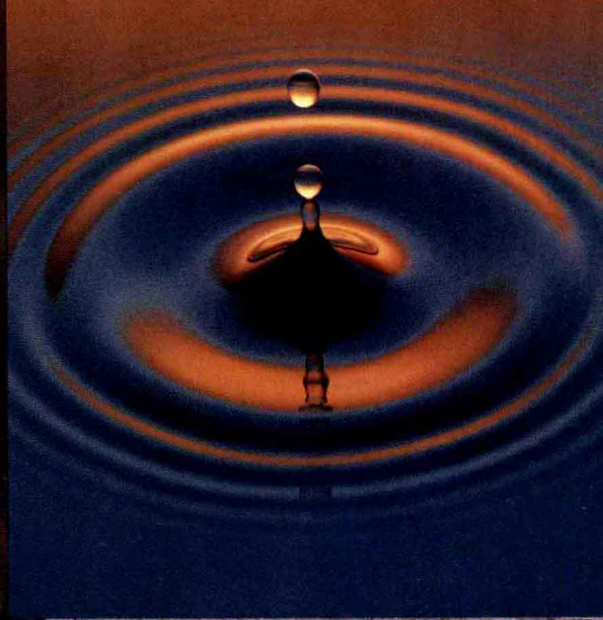
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INTRODUCTION



Throughout the world, in every culture, circles and rings have had a mythical potency for mankind since the earliest times. The spherical shapes of the sun, moon and earth and the natural cycle of the seasons formed the bases of many early rites and religions. As it was from these 'circles' that life itself derived, early peoples sought out other occurrences of the magical shape in nature, as well as creating representations of it for themselves.

The circle is used as a symbol to signify love, protection, friendship, rebirth, and even life itself. From early Paganism the circle – whether in the form of ritual dances or symbolic decorations – has formed an important part of secular and religious ceremonies for many centuries.

Dance has always been one way in which Man defined and confirmed a sense of community. Mediterranean, African and native American cultures all developed highly ritualistic dances, frequently as an expression of joy, for example to celebrate a marriage, but also as an affirmation of power, as in the widespread tradition of communal dancing. Such dances involve the participants in forming a circle which is at once joyful, protective and re-enforcing.

In North America, native tribes used circles as empowering and protective symbols. Round headdresses and teepees arranged in circles are two examples, but perhaps the most fascinating manifestation of this kind of symbolism is the tradition of sand painting. In some tribes, this solemn

ritual would be carried out by a young warrior who would use his foot to draw a circle around himself.

The circle, or the wheel of life and death, is used in many forms of Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist decoration. Some significant examples of the use of the circle are found in the Tibetan mandala used in meditation.

In many societies the circle represents equality and democracy. African tribal meetings were traditionally held with all of the senior members of the tribe sitting in a large circle so that each person could give his opinion. The English king, Arthur, created a round table for his knights so that they would all appear to be equal. Even today, the European Community's symbol of unity is a circle of golden stars, one for each of the member

INTRODUCTION

states, on a plain blue background.

For many people all over the world the exchange of rings marks one of life's most significant rituals – marriage. The never-ending circle of a fine gold band signifies eternity and fidelity, it blesses the new phase of the wearer's life and draws upon the protective symbolism of the circle.

Since the earliest times, the circle has represented spiritual protection. Like the moat around a castle, it is not just the circle itself that is important, it is the still, tranquil, safe place it creates in its centre. For this reason it is the most important shape in many religions and cultures and is drawn upon in meditation and prayer because it symbolizes hope and perpetual renewal.

Wreath making is one of the most ancient of crafts and one which is inextricably entwined with Man's historic desire to recreate nature's own circles. Traditionally made from plants – as organic material formed into a circle was seen as a way of linking the maker and the wearer to everlasting life – such ancient symbols join us to our past and confirm our place in a centuries' old tradition.

In ancient Greece, wreaths of laurel, oak and olive leaves were bestowed upon the winners of athletic or poetic competitions as well as anyone of importance. The Romans absorbed this tradition and honoured victorious generals with laurel wreaths – indeed, even today it is quite common for the highest military honours to represent oak or laurel leaves in their design. Eventually, wreaths made from foliage were replaced by

those made of gold, for example when Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of France in 1804, he did so with a gleaming crown of golden laurel leaves.

The tradition of wreath making and wearing is not exclusive to great emperors and ancient poets. All over the world, people make garlands and circles for seasonal festivals, special family celebrations and simply to decorate their homes throughout the year. This craft has grown up independently in many different countries as far apart as India and Poland. The range of materials is immense, from simple garlands of spring flowers made almost everywhere, to elaborate woven hangings of brilliantly coloured yarn in Mexico or delicate circles of hand-painted eggs in Eastern Europe.

However diverse the materials, the festivals and celebrations are often the same – birth, weddings, Christmas, New Year, Easter or harvest. For example, throughout Europe the ancient tradition of brides wearing a circlet of flowers and her young attendants carrying hoops of blossoms is enjoying renewed popularity. In many cultures, floral headdresses are worn by both bride and groom, each one simultaneously representing a halo, crown and wreath. Haloes emphasize the purity and virtue of the pair; crowns celebrate their union; and wreaths mark the passing of the first stage of their lives.

In Greece, even today, the whole family participates in making the wedding bread, a circular centre-piece decorated with cut-out symbols of

good fortune and well-being.

As well as celebration, wreaths have traditionally had a practical purpose. Circles made of flowers, grasses and crops such as corn and barley were a good way of drying and preserving seeds for the next season. In many rural areas, elaborate harvest-time rituals were associated with the weaving of these circles. They were made from the last sheaf to be harvested not just to preserve the seed, but also, it was believed, to preserve the spirit of the earth until the following year.

Wreaths, circles and garlands have a noble and fascinating history and when you begin to make your own you will be entering into a special centuries' old tradition.

There are a few better ways of capturing a special moment than this – use your imagination, draw on your immediate surroundings for inspiration and, as well as being decorative, your wreaths will become unique and lasting keepsakes to treasure.

CAPTIONS TO ILLUSTRATIONS ON PAGES 6 AND 7.

TOP ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

False colour image of the sun; earth, photographed from the Apollo 17 spacecraft in 1972; false colour image of a diatom; cross-section through the trunk of an oak tree; spider's web; waves produced by a droplet of water.

CENTRE ROW: *Buddhist tanka painting; Persian painting of a flight through the celestial spheres; the north rose window of Notre Dame, Paris; Yin-yang symbol; sixteenth-century astrological chart; clock face at Hampton Court Palace.*

BOTTOM ROW: *Leonardo da Vinci's representation of Man's proportions; French village settlement; Syrian folk-dancers; wooden cartwheel; Portuguese windmill; compact disc.*



SPRING



*Love is a circle that doth restless move
In the same sweet eternity of love*

LOVE WHAT IT IS

ROBERT HERRICK

‘WELL COME’ TO THE WORLD

Down the centuries, childbirth has been surrounded by ritual and magic – it was such a hazardous affair, that the joy of creation was always tainted by the fear of death. In ancient Greece, wreaths were attached to the door of a home to announce and bless a baby’s safe passage into the world – olive leaves signified a boy, and a wool band or ribbon, a girl.

In many parts of Britain, friends and relatives traditionally gave the newborn baby presents of salt, eggs, bread and matches – salt for a healthy body and healthy mind; eggs for fertility and immortality; bread to ensure all the necessities of life; and matches to signify the path of light from the mortal world to heaven.

The exact moment of a child’s birth is considered by many to play a part in his or her destiny. In 3000BC, Babylonian priests observed the patterns of the sun, moon and planets, believing that the cycles of movement might govern the seemingly random course of events on earth. In many cultures, wealthy parents would engage an astrologer to be present at the birth of their child so that, knowing the exact time, date and location of the baby’s birth, they could predict the child’s path through life accurately. Even today, many people still believe that a person’s birth sign influences their character.

An unusual gift for a newborn baby would be a watercolour circle like the

one shown opposite. If you do not feel confident enough to paint one yourself, you could make a unique collage using pictures of the baby’s family, clippings from newspapers, labels and small toys – in fact, anything that reflects the world into which the baby is born.

The moment of birth is a portentous time, and good luck gifts, such as this circle of a baby’s footprints, are still an essential part of a child’s welcome to the world. If you want to make this kind of keepsake, remember to use a water-based paint.

Like an ancient baptism, a circle or ring puts the newborn child into the circular framework of life and is a perfect symbol of family renewal.



RIGHT: Water-based paint is used to make this circle of tiny footprints

OPPOSITE: An astrological circle in watercolours would make a special gift for new parents.



VALENTINE CIRCLES



ABOVE: Stiff card forms the base for this amusing circle of plastic cherubs and lace ribbons – a suitable gift for a child.

OPPOSITE: Shiny red satin hearts are sewn into a ring and studded with pearls.

Since the eighteenth century, it has been the custom to exchange anonymous love-tokens on 14 February. Over the centuries, many amusing 'mating' games developed: 'It is a ceremony, never omitted among the Vulgar', one eighteenth-century record states when referring to these traditional games. It continues 'The names of a select number of one sex are by an equal number of the other put into some vessel; and after that

everyone draws a name, which for the present is called their Valentine, and is also look'd upon as a good omen of their being man and wife afterwards'.

The element of chance is still alive today in the tradition that the first member of the opposite sex seen on the morning of 14 February is supposed to be your Valentine.

A Valentine circle is a particularly romantic gift to give to someone





ABOVE: A simple wired ring of miniature roses and rue. For technique, see pages 122-125.

OPPOSITE: A circular bowl containing dampened Oasis, overflowing with violets and miniature roses.

close. In common with other traditional love tokens, such as Welsh love spoons or Victorian cut-paper greetings, the more elaborate and labour-intensive the offering, the more sincere the affection is supposed to be.

For your Valentine circle, you could, as one alternative, forget the turbulent emotions associated with this time of year and make a light-hearted ring like some of the ones shown here. The

first (see page 14), is made from small, synthetic cherubs and lace. To make this type of wreath you will need to cut a piece of stiff card into a circle with a diameter of approximately 9in (23cm). Use a strong, bonding glue to attach lace ribbons and love tokens of your choice. The second (see page 15), is a glamorous concoction of red satin hearts and tiny fake pearls that have been sewn together. Alterna-

tively, you could choose flowers and decorations for their associations and meanings (see page 26), such as tulips which symbolize the heart burning like a flame. Or, what could be more romantic than a circle made of fresh or dried lavender, roses, jonquil, and red and blue salvia, meaning respectively, devotion, love, 'I desire a return of affection', 'I think of you' and 'forever mine'?