



## NEWS

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### **Florida CraftArt Unveils the Healing Beauty of a Mandala: A Gift of Hope and Art for Our City**

**January 13 – January 18, 2025**

**St. Petersburg, FL** – Florida CraftArt is honored to host the return of the **Sacred Arts Tour**, featuring eight Tibetan Buddhist monks from the Drepung Gomang Monastery. Drepung is the largest of all Tibetan monasteries and is located on the Gambo Utse Mountain, five kilometers from the western suburb of Lhasa. From January 13 to January 18, visitors will experience the breathtaking creation of a sand mandala alongside immersive events that celebrate community, mindfulness, and artistry. This year, the monks selected the healing mandala to reflect the challenges our community has faced in recent months.

The creation of the sand mandala at Florida CraftArt has long been a cherished tradition for St. Petersburg and the surrounding community. Over the course of several days, the eight monks will meticulously place millions of grains of vibrant sand into an intricate mandala—a stunning geometric representation of the universe and the enlightened mind. This ephemeral masterpiece symbolizes the impermanence of life and the beauty of creation.

The event begins on **Monday, January 13**, with a powerful **Opening Ceremony** at 10:30 a.m., marking the start of the mandala's creation. Visitors are encouraged to stop by throughout the week to witness the meditative process as the monks work with steady hands and unwavering focus to bring the mandala to life. **Morning Meditation** on Wednesday, January 15, offers an opportunity for reflection and peace, while Friday, January 17 and Saturday, January 18, invites the community to participate in a **Mala Making Workshop** alongside the monks. The making of Mala beads, traditionally used for prayer and meditation, will allow participants to engage with this sacred tradition in a meaningful and personal way.

The week culminates on **Saturday, January 18**, with the awe-inspiring **Dissolution Ceremony**, a moving ritual where the monks sweep away the completed mandala. Following this act of impermanence, the monks lead a vibrant procession to the bayfront, where they scatter a portion of the sand into the water as a blessing to the environment and the world. Portions of the sand will also be shared with onlookers, creating lasting connections to this powerful experience.

In celebration of the Sacred Arts Tour, Florida CraftArt will also present ***The Mandala Project***, an exhibition featuring works by over 80 renowned regional artists. Now in its second year, *The Mandala Project* invites artists to explore the mandala's timeless symbolism through their own creative lenses. The exhibition opens with a festive **reception on Friday, January 10, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.**, where visitors can meet the artists and explore a wide range of mandala-inspired works.

"The Sacred Arts Tour is a special chance for our community to experience a centuries-old tradition that blends spiritual practice with incredible artistry," said Jorge Vidal, CEO of Florida CraftArt. "Art has a way of bringing people together. It reminds us that making of things, beauty, and expression are things we all share, no matter our culture."

Florida CraftArt is proud to host the monks of the Drepung Gomang Monastery, offered free of charge to the public, made possible only through the generosity of our sponsors. We extend our deepest gratitude to **Tyler Jones Premier Sotheby's International Realty** for their generous support in presenting the Sacred Arts Tour, enabling us to bring this transformative experience to our community. Sponsorship opportunities are still available—please contact **Liz Cooper** at (727) 821-7391 or [liz@floridacraftart.org](mailto:liz@floridacraftart.org).

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#### **Event Schedule:**

##### **The Mandala Project**

- **Opening Reception:** Friday, January 10, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
- **Exhibition Dates:** January 10 – January 23

##### **Sacred Arts Tour**

- **Opening Ceremony:** Monday, January 13, 10:30 a.m.
- **Sand Mandala Creation:** Monday, January 13 – Friday, January 17, 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. daily
- **Morning Meditation:** Wednesday, January 15, 10:15 a.m.
- **Mala Making Workshops:** Friday, January 17 at 3:30 p.m. and Saturday January 18 at 11 a.m.
  - \$30 for members / \$45 for non-members
  - Space is limited. Reserve at **FloridaCraftArt.org**
- **Dissolution Ceremony and Procession:** Saturday January 18, 2:00 p.m.

All events take place at **Florida CraftArt**, located at **501 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg**. Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.

For more information, visit [www.FloridaCraftArt.org](http://www.FloridaCraftArt.org) or call **(727) 821-7391**.

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#### **About Florida CraftArt:**

Founded in 1951, Florida CraftArt is a nonprofit organization located in the historic Rutland

Department Store Building in downtown St. Petersburg. Its mission is to grow the statewide creative economy by engaging the community and advancing Florida's fine craft artists. Florida CraftArt's 2,500-square-foot gallery features fine craft art for sale by Florida artists, alongside curated exhibitions that showcase innovation in craft. As the only statewide organization of its kind, Florida CraftArt provides artists with a vital platform to exhibit and sell their work.

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**Cutline:** Over-the-shoulder view of four monks from the Drepung Gomang Monastery, deeply focused on creating an intricate sand mandala. **Photo by Brian James.**