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CIRCLES OF HEALING AROUND THE WORLD

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE
ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN
SPIRITUAL HEALING AND CIRCLES
IN ART**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of

the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

at

James Cook University

by

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2004

College of Music, Visual Arts and Theatre

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Abstract

Inspired by the strong visual presence of the circle in this author's prior research into spiritual vibration as a formative influence in art, this thesis extends existing research into the shape's spiritual associations. The pioneering work of Jung on *Mandala Symbolism* (1973) highlights the opportunity to achieve this in the search for an answer to why, above all other shapes, it is the circle which is associated with spiritual healing.

This thesis thus traces the trajectory of the circle's spiritual healing associations around the world, and documents such ascribed associations in the key cultural contexts of its employment for healing as a visual art form, supported by unique contributions from contemporary spiritual practice. From these cultural contexts, on the primary criterion of availability of documentation, selection of a case study is made for the purpose of conducting an in depth analysis of the circle at work – specifically the case of Hildegard of Bingen.

The visual drivers of this research are informed by the inter-disciplinary overlap of art documentation and history, architecture, art therapy, psychology, alternative healing, medicine, spirituality, sociology and anthropology. The implications of the research include a reappraisal of the originality of Jung's psychological theories regarding the mandala, the observation, from a group of different cultures, of points of congruence in the beliefs surrounding the circle for which academic comparison is novel, and the identification of possible answers to the question of why it is the circle which associated with spiritual healing.

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