

The Book of Shrines

Heyoka Merrifield



When I met Heyoka Merrifield in 1975, I was taken by his art and jewelry. The pieces he has made for me have become part of my life and travel with me wherever I go, especially the miniature shrine to Lord Ganesha. Not a gem nor precious metal passes through Heyoka's hands that is not instilled with a spirit of its own in the process of being transformed into a work of art and beauty.

– George Harrison

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Dedication

I dedicate The Book Of Shrines to my grandchildren Siena and Rowan, also to
all the grandchildren in the future of our world.

Acknowledgments

I strive to be a storyteller, and with a little help from my friends, a writer. The correct rules of the English language are way over my head and I am very thankful for the editing of *The Book OF Shrines* by Terry Croghan. The book design and computer work are by KJ Kahnle and Jason Gutzmer. The photographs are by myself, and several friends, including; Karl Cordes, Jim VanGundy, Kirt Anderson, Zig Jackson, Natalie Obolenska, and KJ Kahnle.

Sacred Muse

Sacred Muse, I feel you
Awakening in my heart

Welcome back, I am open
Touch softly my dreams

Ancient stories are joining
Blessing a new beginning

Together we are walking
Down a bright verdant path

Upon the altar a Shrine
Within a spirit unfolding

Illuminating the Goddess
Our sacred feminine

Becoming whole as our
Archetypes become one

Prologue

On the cover is the Ganesha Shrine that I created for George Harrison. It counts among one of the most wonderful creations in my career as an artist. During his morning ceremony, at the altar in his home, George liked to burn incense and meditate, even though he spent a large part of his life traveling the world. He asked me to make a small Ganesha Shrine to be his ceremonial altar while journeying away from home.



For many years, I had been making sacred ceremonial artwork. However, this shrine took my creations into another dimension. George gave me a mantra [Eastern Indian Sacred Song] honoring Ganesha to sing as I worked on his shrine. He also told me some of Ganesha's stories, like how Lord Brahma gave him the honor to be the first archetype to worship as we enter a temple. "The different gods were arguing about who should be the first to worship and Lord Brahma told them to race around the Universe

to determine the winner. The gods jumped on their chariots and cosmic flying beings. Ganesha watched them leave and then climbed on his cosmic vehicle, which was a rat. He then walked around Lord Brahma and won the race, so becoming the first to be worshiped.”

Finishing the ivory carving of Ganesha, and before starting on his small silver home, I was holding him in my hand. For several years, I had been doing a Native American ceremony over my artwork to “wake them up” and call Spirit into them. As I held Ganesha, I realized that he was already awake from my creative process that had preceded my customary ceremony.

I have often felt the life force in various sacred statues and paintings of archetypal powers. Also, I’ve felt how replicas of the same powers could feel lifeless. The Ganesha Shrine caused me to realize that I had touched my dream to be an artist that could also help to bring the spirit of our archetypal helpers into sacred art.

As a young artist in college, the art that spoke to me most deeply was the ancient art of our ancestors. I saw that the earliest paintings in Paleolithic caves, along with the first carvings of the Earth Mother Goddess, as well as all historical sacred art treasures, bequeathed a blessing to our human family. My art then began incorporating themes from various world mythologies while still trying to work within the modern styles of my college professors.

The early success of my work as a young artist brought me national recognition. As I tried to fit into the local artist community, something felt to me to be missing. While attending gallery cocktail parties where I was trying to market my artwork, I decided that only working in the popular style of contemporary art may not be a fulfilling life's career.

I decided to move to a remote Indian reservation in the Pacific Northwest. Without electricity and other modern conveniences, I was able to live one of my childhood dreams. For several years I lived in the wilderness, growing my own food while being close to the natural rhythms of Nature. I continued making small jewelry pieces to sell at craft fairs and sacred art jewelry to be worn by my family and myself as ceremonial objects.

I noticed at the craft fairs I worked that many people were drawn to the necklaces my wife and I were wearing and I realized that there was indeed an interest in sacred art. I then began to create more artwork that depicted sacred archetypes and ceremony. Within a short time, some of the most famous people in the world were attracted to my work.

With the making of George's Ganesha Shrine, I realized that I had become an artist in the ancient traditions of the Paleolithic caves, as well as all the great temples, pyramids and cathedrals of the world. The sacred stories of all our ancestors, through the sacred art they created, became my passion as I incorporated these wonderful traditions into my life. Delving deeper into these ancient traditions, I came to know that the archetypes

in our sacred stories are not outside of us. They are the inner energies that show us our life's purpose and how to relate to our communities. The sacred art sculptures, paintings and songs were there to help us through our life's passages, adventures and challenges. That is why the stories and mythologies are similar all over the world.

The Goddess is not "out there," but rather she is the part of us that is our sacred feminine. Nor is the God out there. He is the part of us that is our sacred masculine. All ancient and sacred archetypes are part of us and we are part of them because, truly, we are all one.

Traveling to other parts of the world allowed me to experience the sacredness of the various local shrines. As I walked in sacred sanctuaries in Tibet, Indonesia, Africa, Europe and South America, I found that all peoples have had similar ways of touching the sacred. Once an object or place becomes a shrine, it is honored regularly with ceremony. The more often these shrines are honored by the burning of incense or sweetgrass, or other kinds of offerings, the more powerful they become.

While staying for a time on the island of Bali, I experienced a culture that makes offerings frequently to their gardens, market places, homes and temples. Living in these sacred communities taught me how to create my own ceremonies that were more connected to all our ancestors and all of life.

Shrines do not have to be a silver and gemstone box with a goddess sculpture inside. A simple object like a stone or crystal may become a sacred helper. For me, my

ceremonial pipe is my most sacred shrine. When my family lived in Malibu, a huge fire swept down the hills, burning 200 houses. There was only time to grab a few things and put my wife and children in the car to drive to the safety of the ocean beach. I ran into my studio and the first thing I grabbed was not my gold and gemstones; it was my sacred pipe. I realized in a flash that it was the most precious material object in my life.

Shrines can also be among the greatest works of art ever created. Marble carvings like Michelangelo's Pieta are the most beautiful and powerful sacred shrines in the world. I was inspired to become an artist as a young man by Michelangelo's work. This was several years before I had an understanding of the importance of sacred art.

I feel that sacred art is again becoming a type of nourishment that is necessary for people to live a full and meaningful life just as it used to be on our planet. The sacred stories are what helped historical communities, tribes, and nations survive and prosper. At this time in history, the mythologies of all people are merging to create a new mythology. Scientific, Asian, Tribal and Western traditions are blending together as our human family exchanges the stories that are now available to everyone.

We have a wonderful opportunity now to see what parts of all these stories no longer serve the higher good of humanity. Also, to see which parts are needed to bring well-being, health, and prosperity to the earth, its people, their children and their grandchildren for seven generations.

Jewel in the Lotus

As 2013 drew near, many of us were thinking about the end of the Mayan Calendar and the new beginning marked by the precession of the equinoxes. It was seen by many as an opportunity for us to expand into our full potentiality, consciousness, and beingness.

I received a commission to create a shrine and when I asked what archetypal energy was to be inside, the answer was “Om Mani Padme Hum” (the Jewel in the Lotus). It was the name of a small jewelry piece I had fabricated recently.

To me, “The Jewel in the Lotus” refers to how Siddhartha Gautama held a Lotus Flower in his hand to express what was beyond the embrace of the mind. He had just awakened to the fullness of creation. The life within the flower, like the life within newborn children, or the life within a sunset can bring us close to that awakened or Buddhist place of oneness.



Jewel in the Lotus

Kwan-Yin

After the Jewel in the Lotus shrine was completed, another commission arrived. This time, it was the Asian Goddess of boundless compassion, Kwan-Yin.

Kwan-Yin contemplates the golden vial of her own womb that produced the entire world. She teaches us that to find our true purpose we need to embrace compassion for all life. Next, we need to find a way to touch all creation with our personal gifts, always reaching out to life on the Bodisattva's path, bringing awakening to everyone within the light of infinite compassion.

While creating this shrine, I realized that I had been thinking about this book for years and that the time had come to start writing. So, Kwan-Yin helped me to begin the birthing process of writing "The Book of Shrines."



Kwan-Yin

Isis Shrine

The first major shrine came to me at a very dynamic time in my life, after a near death experience. A horse had fallen on me and broke my back. I moved out of the Northern Wilderness to the coastal town of Malibu, California while my body was healing.

It was a wild time in my life in general, living in the fast lane of Hollywood's crazy life style. During a quiet evening walk along the ocean beach, I had an inspiration to create my ultimate masterpiece using all my skills as a sculptor and a jeweler. I designed a statue of the Egyptian Goddess Isis in the tradition of the great archetypes created in ancient cultures.

She may never be completed for I am still working on this symbol of the sacred feminine. At the time, my thought was to create the most opulent, expensive artwork of my career although she did not end up in a gallery for sale. She became the center of my ceremonial life on the altar in my studio.

This photograph of Isis was taken for the book "Sacred Art Sacred Earth", twenty years after I created the statue. She is starting to show a few Native American influences after my dancing in the Crow Indian Sundance Ceremony for thirteen years.



Isis Shrine

Ocean Mother's Song

People often ask me where I get my inspirations and I'm not sure where they originate ~ they just happen. I like the Greek way of talking about inspiration, which is that goddesses, or the muses, bring us our artistic visions.

A few years ago, I wrote a novel about a young dolphin and her adventures and life's journey in Mother Ocean. It took me about half a year to finish the book, and by then I was exploding with a passion to create a new art piece. I began to design a shrine and, as I continued, all the characters from the new book decided to be a part of it. Path Finder, the conch shell who was the young dolphin's first teacher; Ocean Thunder, the singing whale; and Guardian, the orca all appeared in it. The piece eventually incorporated all these familiar friends, and more, who had been living in my imagination for the past six months.



Ocean Mother's Song

Mother Earth Father Sky

The inspiration for the Mother Earth Father Sky shrine came to me in the sundance lodge. While fasting food for a few days and dancing in the ceremony is not a significant challenge, fasting water can be excruciatingly painful. It was 114 degrees on the third day and I was overcome by the heat and dehydration, lying on the ground unable to move.

My grandmother brought me handful of mint from a nearby creek and the fragrance of the herb awakened my delirious mind making me feel keenly alert. I looked up at the eagle tethered to the branches of the sundance tree and the spirit of the eagle flowed into my body as I stood up feeling strong again. As I danced my prayers to the tree it was the most powerful experience of the ceremony.

When I drew a picture of what had happened to me in the sundance, the drawing was of Sky Father, the part bird and part man archetype. I decided to create a sculpture of the drawing although I felt that to make a balanced shrine, a sculpture of Mother Earth was also needed.

I choose White Buffalo Woman, the Native American archetype of Mother Earth. She is praying to the Great Mystery with the sacred pipe that she gifted to the people. Father Sky is the eagle, symbol of spirit, becoming man. As he touches the wheel of creation, the one spirit becomes many. In her ceremony, Mother Earth wakes up the winged, four-legged and two-legged spirits giving her children physical life.



Mother Earth Father Sky

Sun Dance

A friend took this picture as I was going into the sun dance lodge. The ceremony starts in the morning when a stake is placed toward the sunrise on the horizon. It takes all day to build the lodge with a forked cottonwood tree taken in a sacred way and placed in the center surrounded by twelve forked posts. Long Lodge Pole Pine trees are placed in the fork of the cottonwood tree like twelve spokes of a wheel. Small pine trees are placed around the outside circle with an opening in the East so the sunrise will come into the door for our morning ceremony. The men and women that have pledged to dance enter at sunset.

Fasting food and water for three days, we dance taking our prayers to the tree. On the third day people in the surrounding camp may come into the lodge for healing or blessing. They walk to the tree bare-footed like the dancers because the ground within the shrine is sacred. While touching the Sun Dance tree our chief "doctors" the people with his healing eagle feathers. The last ceremony is taking a drink of the blessed water brought into the lodge by our grandmothers. We can feel the help that our ancestors bring to us, from the thousands of years the Sun Dance has brought healing to the Earth and her People.



Sun Dance



Archangel Michael

Archangel Michael is the Spirit of Light within the luminous sphere of the sun. He is holding the Caduceus, his staff entwined with two snakes. The two snakes represent the spiral Kundalini energy rising up our spinal column. This staff of healing originates in Ancient Egypt with Thoth, the archetype of healing. The stories of Michael continued to be passed down from Egypt through the ages to be respected as Hermes, Mercury, and Heimdall.

In Cabbalistic teachings Michael is called "Like Unto God." In biblical stories, he was the leader of the angelic army during the war in heaven. With "Words of Power" he defeated the rebellious troops and propelled them down into the underworld.

Archangel Michael connects us with the light of healing that we all have available to us. Sometimes the most important healing we need is that of our Sacred Warrior, confronting our addictions, depressions, or inactivity.



Archangel Michael

Lady of the Lake

The water goddess awakens the potential that sleeps within the quiet mirror of the lake that is our unconscious mind. Viviane, the high priestess of Britain, was the earthly manifestation of the Goddess and she was called the Lady of the Lake.

Sovereignty and kingship could be bestowed only by the high priestess. The women of Avalon forged the magic sword Excalibur and gave this sword of kingship to Arthur.

This story resonates strongly in us because it speaks in the language of the archetypal powers that are a part of our Western culture.



Lady of the Lake

Diana

Diana the Huntress is the triple goddess: Virgin, Mother, and Crone. Chaste Diana is the Virgin Goddess of the Forest, the potential of all life. As the Nurturer, she is the mother of all animal powers. Diana is also the Huntress who slays the King Stag and gives his blood to the earth so he may be reborn through Diana's children, the trees.

We all go through the transition of death, and our life's journey embraces all aspects of the goddess. We are born with limitless potential. We have the power to nurture our children and help them grow into their life's purpose. In the autumn of our life we become the elders passing on our gathered wisdom so it may be reborn within our children.



Diana

Warriorress

I see the necklaces I create as wearable shrines, and my first shrine to Diana was this necklace. The Queen of Heaven, or Sacred Huntress, is called Artemis by the Grecians, and Diana by the Romans. Diana is also called "Diana of the Grove" and she is celebrated within the sacred groves. The priests of Diana are known as King of the Wood or the King Stag.

Contemporary culture seems to be uncomfortable with goddesses that are also warriorresses. In fact, the word warriorress is not even in my computer's spell check or my dictionary. The image in our mythology, passed down to us by most historians, is of the Goddess as the fertility and mother aspect of womankind. In Diana, her more dynamic aspect as The Huntress has survived. She retains her rightful role as The Great Goddess, the embodiment of strength and power.



Warriorress

Babaji

I was asked to create this shrine to Babaji, the Hindu Saint, for a young man upon his graduation from college. Babaji was the teacher of Paramahansa Yogananda and many other Eastern Indian holy people.

For thousands of years he has lived in the Himalayas, teaching generations of Indian Yogis and Yoginis. He reflects the part of us that longs to be a teacher in our elder years and pass on the spiritual wisdom accumulated during our lives.



Babaji

Mother Ocean

When the first astronaut looked down at our planet he was overwhelmed by the beauty of Oceana, the glowing blue water sphere. Our great Ocean Mother was the womb that birthed life on our planet. In her infinite bounty of delicately balanced ecosystems, life flourishes from the deepest depths to the rhythmic pounding surf.

Swimming through her coral reefs surrounded by her colorful children is one of the most beautiful experiences I've had in my life. Although I now live in the mountains, I grew up next to the Mother Ocean, and it is always a great joy when I get to touch her again.



Mother Ocean

Bacchus

In ancient Rome, during the autumn harvest, the god of wine and celebrations would have his yearly ceremony. Riding on a donkey, Bacchus would parade through the village preceded by the Bacchanalias, the women of the tribe playing musical instruments, dancing and carrying grape vines.

In Greece, the god of wine was called Dionysus, the archetype of the love of partying and celebration. Every evening as I enjoy a glass of wine with dinner, I honor the fruit of the year it was bottled. I also feel the spirit of Bacchus every New Year's Eve party as we dance to my favorite Montana band, The Drum Brothers, surrounded by ecstatic Bacchanalias.



Bacchus

Ganesha Necklace

When I realized that all of my necklaces were sacred shrines, I decided to make a small version of George's traveling shrine. Using the same design, I created a small replica of it, with the Ganesha archetype inside.

A ceremony is part of the creative process with which I empower each necklace. Many people that have my necklaces have told me they feel the archetypal power in the sacred art piece. I believe that this was the original reason for wearing a necklace and not for mere adornment. This is found in the earliest examples of necklaces found in Paleolithic archeological sites. Often they are shaped like the animal powers or totems that were our ancient ancestors' spirit animal helpers.



Ganesha Necklace

White Spirit Keepers

It is many winters since you came

Gifting us with the sacred teachings

Showing us how we can use a pipe

As an altar for sending blessings

Our voice within smoke made visible

Words reaching out touching everything

The sacred chanunpa bringing peace

Your wisdom drifting across our world

Coming alone from endless prairie

Walking, changing, a white buffalo

You're returning at a special time

As many white spirit animals

Medicine coming, East South West North

A blessing for people everywhere

The gift of White Buffalo Woman

Here now again for our open hearts



White Buffalo

Anubís

Anubís is the ancient Egyptian gatekeeper of the underworld. He is the Black Jackal, or Coyote, who guides us each night as we journey in the dream world. Our dreams try to connect us with parts of our psyche that needs to be healed or awakened.

During sleep, the dream spirit elders teach us with their opulent symbolic dialogue if we open ourselves to their wisdom. This sculptured archetype sits next to my bed as my dream “Kachína” or guide.



Anubís

Myth of Isis

This shrine celebrates my favorite myth from Egypt of the Great Goddess, Isis, and her mate, Osiris. He was slain by Set and his body chopped up and scattered down the Nile River. With the help of the jackal god, Anubis, Isis searches for and finds the pieces of Osiris's body. She joins them together and sits upon the dead Osiris and conceives Horus, the Falcon God sacred to the Sun.

In the shrine arched over Isis's head is her mother, Nut, goddess of the night sky with her sparkling diamond stars. On the door is the White Buffalo, symbol of the Native American goddess archetype. Isis holds in her hands the sacred peace pipe gifted to us from White Buffalo Woman.



Myth of Isis

Our Lady of Guadalupe

For three hundred years, Virgin Mary of Guadalupe in her Mexican invocation has been celebrated. The famous image of Mary has transcended the bounds of religion and institution to become an iconic folk symbol of the goddess that unifies and protects. To her devotees, she is gentle, serene, powerful and protective. They turn to her as they would to a mother, guide, and protectress.

The narrative about this archetype says that a Christianized Aztec, Juan Diego, saw the Virgin Mary four times on his way to mass. A beautiful woman surrounded by a body halo appeared to him with the music of songbirds in the background. She appeared at the site of a temple to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin and announced, "I am the Entirely and Ever Virgin, Saint Mary." Assuring the Indian peasant, she said that she was his "Compassionate Mother coming out of her willingness to love and protect all folk of every kind."



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Michelangelo's Pietà

As a young man in high school, I carved my first sculpture in art class and felt a deep connection with the process. About the same time I read the book about Michelangelo's life, "The Agony and the Ecstasy", and it made me want to live a similar life filled with passion. When my wood sculpture won first prize in the California Scholastic Magazine Art Show and went on to win the same in the national show in New York, I decided to make sculpture my major in college. After college, sacred art became my passion, and the focus of my life's journey.

The masterpiece of Michelangelo's youth was the Pietà, one of the greatest statues of sacred art in the world. It is much more than the story of Jesus's death. It embodies the sorrow every mother has felt throughout all time at the death of her child. It is the archetypal depiction of a mother's love and the indescribable pain of experiencing the loss of one's child. I feel that no other sculptor has ever produced a better, or more profound, work.



Michelangelo's Pietà



David

Another masterpiece by Michelangelo is his statue of David as a young man, who has gone into battle naked, with only his slingshot as a weapon. He has just slain the greatest enemy and won the war for his tribe. He stares frozen in disbelief at his accomplishment and also realizes he has killed another man.

The white marble sculpture is the archetypal image of a young man in his time of greatest strength, beauty and bravery. As young men, we all have times when we have to face our greatest challenges. Sometimes the challenges can lead to our death although we must face them with bravery and our learned skills.



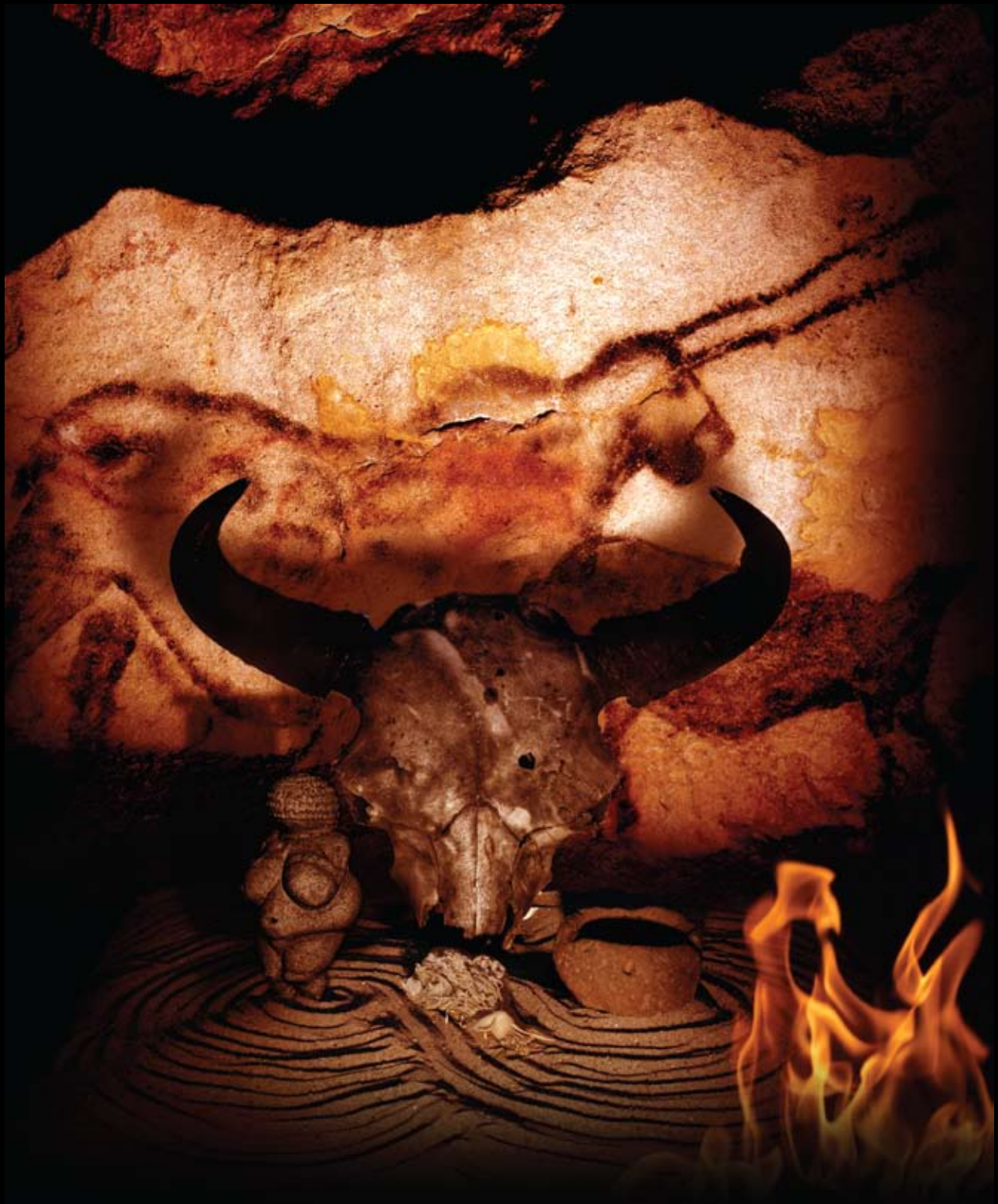
David

Paleolithic Shrine

Caves that have been exposed as a result of retreating glaciers have altar stones with bear skulls on them showing that shrines have been used for 200,000 years. The Paleolithic caves of Europe have paintings and statues of Gaia, the Great Earth Mother Goddess, that date back 30,000 years.

When I entered these caves I could still feel the sacredness of our ancestors' ceremonies. The paintings of the animal powers that were bringing life to the people were high art that can stand beside any contemporary art. I could feel the honoring and appreciation our ancestors gave to the animals for giving their life so the tribe could live. It belittles our ancestors to say that they worshiped stone images or images painted on stone, just as we would not want someone to say that we worshiped only the written word "God." These wonderfully creative cultures used the figures or paintings like we use words, as symbols when describing the mysteries.

These ceremonies are still within us in our genetic memory. If we do not have a way of connecting with our ancestors' way of honoring life with ceremony, we feel like something is missing. Ceremony is a type of nourishment for which our spirit is hungry. Sacred shrines are a way of nourishing the void that many of us feel.



Paleolithic Shrine

Warriors of the Rainbow

There are many ancient prophecies among the Native American peoples concerning the times in which we are living. The indigenous tribes were not surprised when the black, white, and yellow peoples arrived on their shores, because their prophets had spoken of the coming of other races. They knew that the new tribes would overwhelm the ancient cultures of the land they called Turtle Island, until the spirit of the Indian would almost disappear.

In our time, the spirit of the Indians will be born anew into all of the races that have gathered in this land. A portion of each of the different races of the rainbow colors will see that we are all one family. They are called the "Warriors of the Rainbow."

This new community of mixed races and cultures will recognize that other humans are "all their relations." The Rainbow People are not called warrioresses and warriors because they are waging war on other tribes. Rather, they are making war on the parts of themselves and their culture that are out of balance. In discovering the balance of the self, they will find harmony with all life. The Warriors of the Rainbow will bring with them a new time of living in harmony with our environment and with all peoples.



Warriors of the Rainbow

Pyramid Shrine

In earlier times, statues were placed on the family's altar and they were the center of attention for honoring the powers of creation. Often there was a flame nearby to celebrate the fire of creation and the smoke was used to clean and bless the home. Many contemporary people still use household altars as the center of their ceremonial life. The altar can be a focus for our mythical world and it enhances our relationship with the sacred powers of the universe. When we look into a majority of the houses in our mythically deprived modern world, the altar for most families seems to be the television set.

I made this altar shrine honoring the Egyptian Goddess, Isis. On the doors are Horus, the falcon who is sacred to the sun, and Thoth, the ibis, who is sacred to the moon. A small candle illuminates the shrine, in back of the statue and causes the quartz pyramid to glow. There is a place for incense on the doors to purify the ceremonial space of the person who has this symbol of the goddess on their altar.

Twenty years after this shrine was sold to a friend, he was moving to a smaller house and donated it to the newly completed Heyoka Studio Museum.



Pyramid Shrine

Epona

On a green hillside near Uffington, England, there is the famous 370-foot chalk-cut image of the White Mare. Epona, goddess of the white horse was honored all over Europe. In Greece, she was the mare-headed Demeter whose destroyer aspect was the Black Mare or Nightmare. The Mare Goddess was the title applied to the queen of the Amazons, the Goddess-worshiping tribes that held influence from North Africa to Northern Europe.

Ceremonies to Epona existed in England up to 1826, with Lady Godiva's naked ride through town on a white horse in the spring. In the Goddess's May-Eve procession, she would renew her virginity, consummate the sacred marriage, and provide the blessings of fertility for the coming year. In the nursery rhyme "Ride a Cock-Horse," she is called the "fine lady on the white horse."

In this necklace, you may take a look at the negative space in front of the goddess's face to see a spirit horse.



Epona

Yemaya

The people inhabiting the Caribbean Islands call the Ocean Mother Goddess “Yemaya.” She traveled to the New World when her people were taken from Western Africa and enslaved. She is called different names by the various tribes of the world and her power reaches up the great rivers where offerings and prayers are given to her as the bringer of abundance and prosperity. Similar ceremonies honor Yemaya from Brazil to Indonesia. At the Summer Solstice, offerings of food, flowers and gifts are put on small, decorated boats and then launched into the Sea.

My Western African medicine brother, Malidoma Somé, and the people of his tribe, the Dagara, worship Yemaya by the name “Mammy Wata”. When I lived near the Columbia River, he and his wife, Sobonfu, visited me during the Summer Solstice so we did a ceremony of prosperity to Yemaya. We made a little boat filled with offerings and gave it to the river to take to the goddess of the sea.



Yemaya

Freya

In Northern Europe, the leader of the Divine Grandmothers, or Primal Matriarchs, is the Great Goddess Freya. She is the ruling ancestress of the elder gods, teacher of Odin in the arts of magic and divine power.

The twin brother of Freya is Frey, the god of Yule, in the “pagan” (which means the way of the people of the land) festival at Winter Solstice. As the shortest day ends and the days begin to become longer, he is born of the virgin-sister-mother-bride.

The fifth day of our week is named in Freya’s honor. She is associated with love, and it is still considered auspicious by some to be married on Friday (Freya’s Day).



Freya

Music of the Spheres

During the middle ages, there were only seven known planets that the alchemists honored in their teachings. They taught that each planet had a consciousness that was an angel or spirit power. The seven angels gave each planet a musical tone and together they created "...the music of the spheres."

Angels are written about in many early cultures. The Hindu apsaras, or heavenly nymphs, dispensed sensual bliss to the blessed ones. They were called by the Greeks, horae; by the Persians, peris (fairies); and by the Vikings, valkyries. A guardian angel was a personal helper who took one into an ecstatic embrace at the moment of crossing over into the world of spirit.



Music of the Spheres

White Buffalo Woman

Long ago two young men were crossing the plains in the center of the land they called Turtle Island, which we now have named America. They saw a person approaching them from a distance, and soon they could see she was a beautiful woman dressed in white buckskin. She held a pipe in her hands and taught them to honor everything in the universe, when tobacco is put into the pipe. The pipe was to be an altar and the center of their ceremonies. As the woman walked away, she turned into a white buffalo.

Statistically it is very rare for buffaloes to be born white in color and yet there have been about fifty born around the world in the past twenty years. Many people see this as a sign that the power of White Buffalo Woman, along with her teachings of the path of peace, is being made available to us now.



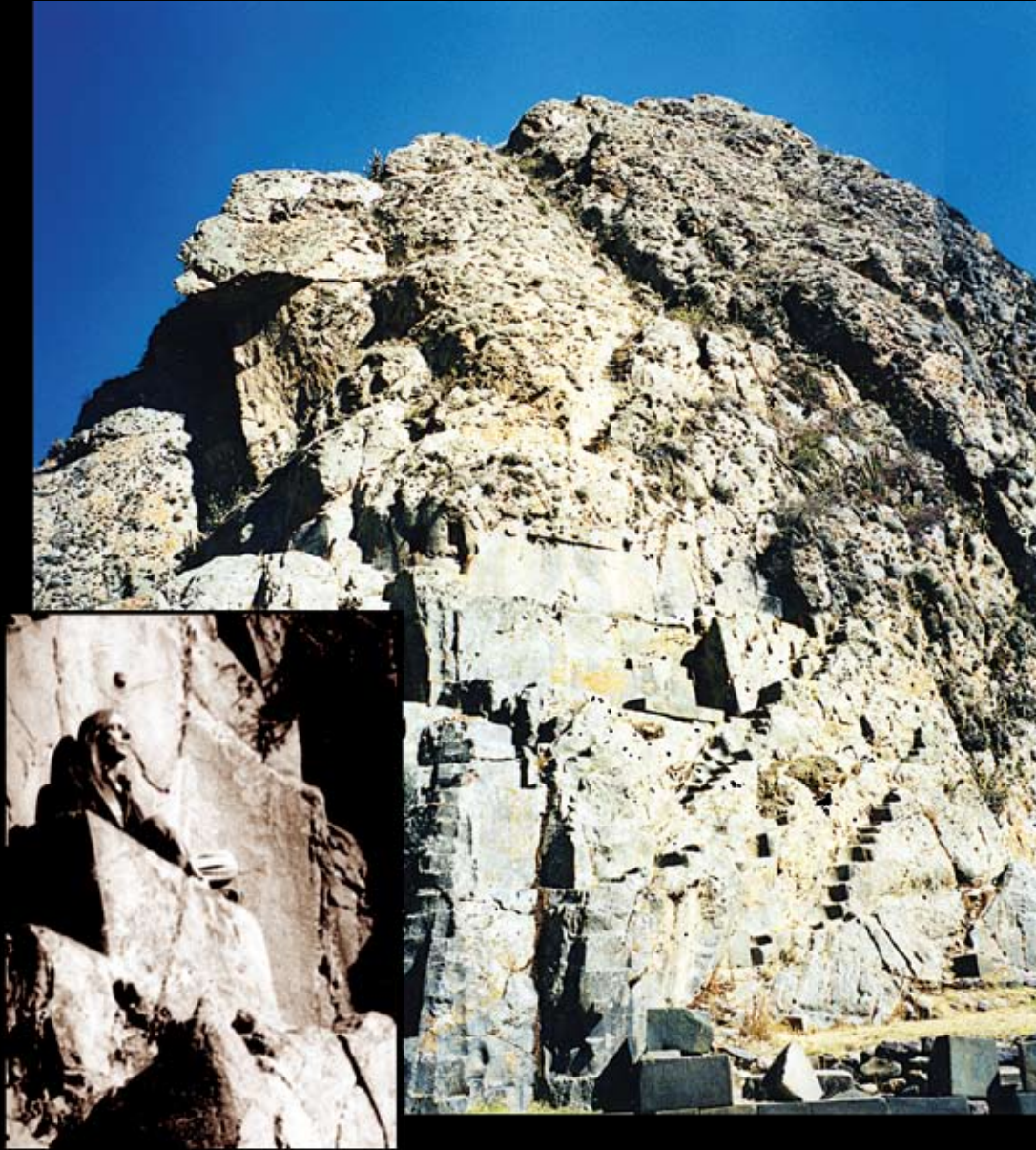
White Buffalo Woman

Condor Shrine

The Inca culture has always intrigued me so I traveled to the sacred valley in Peru to do a ceremony at Machu Picchu during the Winter Solstices. The indigenous Quechua people of the valley are descended from the ancient Incas and have kept alive many of the sacred teachings. They have a prophecy that in our time "the eagle of the north will join in ceremony with the condor of the south." I felt an incredible love for the people, temples and ceremonies in the valley and felt very much a part of the ancient prophecy. I have returned several times for the solstice ceremony and the sacred valley feels like it has become one of my homes.

On the way to Machu Picchu, we visited one of my favorite shrines in the village of Ollaytaytambo. The temple is a natural rock formation shaped like a condor, with steps cut into the rock leading to a ceremonial platform. A friend snapped this picture while I was sitting in meditation in the shrine.

From this village, we took a train along the river and at the end of the valley, on a high pinnacle, is Machu Picchu. Truly, it is one of the most beautiful temples in the world.



Condor Shrine

Machu Picchu

Clouds burning with the fire of sunset
Into the Sacred Valley
Mountains with stairways of the giants
Leading to the sky
Jungle clad cliffs soar upward with the
Wings of condors
An eagle's nest temple of stone gifted to us
By our grandparents
Masonry walls growing out of the bare bones
Of the pinnacle
The art of building, the beauty of nature join
In holy marriage
Gigantic hand hewn rocks growing together like
Clusters of crystals
On green peaks, a golden city vision now frozen
Into time and space
Celebrate a sacred union of the earth and sky
Within the shrine
An ancient sanctuary surrounds the ceremony
To the winter solstice
Eagle of the north and condor of the south dance
With children of the sun
Lost city of the Incas, Machu Picchu, heavenly home,
Heart of the Andes



Machu Picchu



Little Sleeping Child Mountain

After spending a lot of time in Peru and among its people, I have been touched by the teachings of their shamans. The Quechua tribal people who inherited the great Incan mythology honor the mountains with ceremonies of the local "Apus" [mountain spirits]. The Apus are given names and certain ones are called by the entities they resemble like the Condor Shrine.

When I moved to the Bitterroot Valley I was very attracted St. Mary's Mountain above my home. My little town was the first non-Indian settlement in Montana. A white community formed around a Jesuit mission church and I thought that St. Mary's Mountain must have an older Indian name. This mountain became a sacred shrine to me because of the influence from my Quechua friends in Peru.

One day I saw a silhouette figure along the mountain ridge and realized it was a "Little Sleeping Child". I knew the name instantly when I saw the figure, for at the end of our valley is a healing hot springs called Little Sleeping Child. It seemed to me that it was named after this sacred Apus. There are two waterfalls flowing into a pool, one hot and one cold and I am sure the hot springs have been a sacred healing shrine for thousands of years.



Little Sleeping Child Mountain



Garden of One Thousand Buddhas

When I first moved to Montana, a young man who had seen my art book asked to apprentice with me and he went on to make jewelry his career. His wife worked with the local Buddhist community and I became interested in a huge shrine they were planning to build. A Tibetan, Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche, was teaching in Montana and saw a valley that was in his vision as a young man. His vision was to create a shrine incorporating one thousand buddhas.

A sheep ranch was bought in which to build the shrine in the Jocko Valley that is part of an Indian reservation. When we were sitting in the small ranch house talking about the casting of 1000 buddhas, I was not sure we could do such a huge task. Years of hard work later, it is almost finished, with only a small number of buddhas left to cast.

The eight-spoked Dharma wheel on which the statues sit is 340 feet across and surrounded with 1000 stupas. In the center is a 24-foot high statue of Yum Chenmo "the Great Mother." When the beautiful statue was almost finished, I had the honor of setting a gemstone in the Great Mother's forehead.

Having traveled in Tibet and Nepal, I feel this is one of the most beautiful Tibetan shrines in the world. The local Native American community has welcomed the Garden of One Thousand Buddhas and the elders come to speak at our large gatherings. This peace shrine has become one of the major pilgrimage sites on this continent, and the Dalai Lama has said he would like to come to Montana and bless our Medicine Wheel when it is finished.



Garden of One Thousand Buddhas



Earth & Sky Temple

About 33 years ago I formed the nonprofit Earth & Sky Circle to help support my apprentice program, and also to create a sacred space for my community to do ceremony together in a teepee. Over the years, I have mentored over 100 apprentices on the path of the sacred artist.

In the year 2000, I started construction of a temple where we could gather for ceremony and it may have become my greatest art piece. I am still working on this temple in which I do ceremony every morning and continue to host many sacred gatherings. The sacred archetypes honored inside the 3-story high pyramid are from Ancient Egypt, Native America, South America, Asia, and Europe.

I incorporated sacred geometry into the making of the Earth & Sky Temple and labored to have the same energetic feeling in it that I experienced in the painted Paleolithic caves, the great cathedrals and other ancient temples around the world. Joining me in ceremony over the years have been many small children who now still participate in our circle when they are home from college. The Temple has been a wonderful help to me in my continued growth toward being a spiritual elder and it has lovingly embraced many visitors with its sacred touch.



Earth & Sky Temple

Cernunnos Buddha

In the north side of the Temple is a grotto I created to hold the Temple Isis statue. She almost seemed too small and lost when placed in it. In my home, I had a wooden statue of the Buddha carved in Indonesia that I blessed often with sweet grass when I meditated near it. I tried setting him in the grotto and he loved it so much he has been there ever since.

The first image of a male deity in Northern Europe was the Celtic god Cernunnos. He is a forest god with deer antlers and is shown sitting in a yogic lotus posture. I have a set of antlers shed by a deer that I found when I lived on the Columbia River near Canada. At the Spring Equinox, I went to a spot where I could see the Northern Mountains to do ceremony and at my feet were the two antlers.

I felt an affinity with this Celtic archetype since I spend as much time as possible in the forest so I decided to give the antlers I'd found to the Buddha. He felt very pleased with my gift so my male archetype became Cernunnos Buddha, the awakened forest deity.

There are several synchronicities that occurred unplanned when the Temple was built. One of my favorites is that the Winter Solstice sunrise comes through the temple's east facing door and illuminates the grotto.



Cernunnos Buddha



Scarab

The ancient Egyptians chose the Scarab Beetle as the symbol of rebirth and resurrection. The male beetle attracts a female by pushing a ball of dung along the desert floor. The female lays her eggs inside the ball then buries it in the ground. The newborn scarabs come out of the ball as beautiful green iridescent adult scarabs. The Egyptians saw this as a metaphor for the birth into the world of spirit after our bodies return to the earth.

The old name for Egypt was Land of the Black Soil. Every year the monsoon rains in the central rain forests of Africa would cause a great flood. The flood would bring moist rich fertile black soil down to the dry desert lands to fertilize and water the Egyptians' crops. They knew where to plant their seeds because the scarabs would bury their eggs where the edge of the flood would reach each year. Thus, scarabs were also sacred to the rebirth of the earth. This stained glass scarab window is in the East of the Temple facing the morning sunrise.



Scarab



Quetzalcoatl

Coatl is the sacred snake whose movements mirror the way that Kundalini energy moves up the spinal column awakening the wheels of light that surround each of the major body energy centers, or “chakras.” When this serpentine energy reaches the crown chakra at the top of the head, we are one with the Universal, or “All That Is.” Quetzal is the sacred bird that connects Earthly power with the Heavenly realms of the universe. Together, the Quetzal and the Coatl are the creatures that are closest to the earth and heaven as well as representing the sacred balance of female and male.

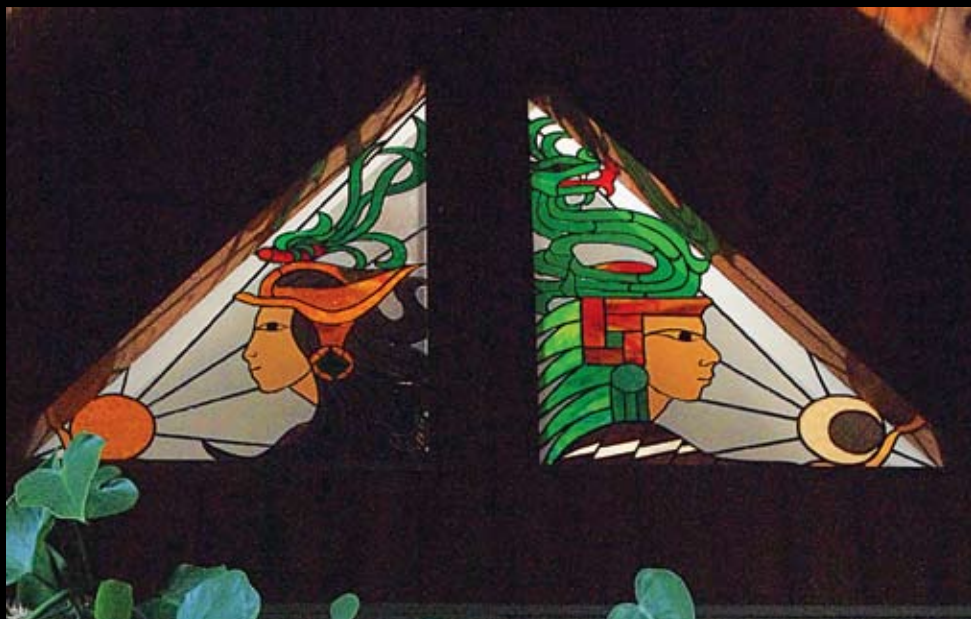
This is the teaching within the name Quetzalcoatl, the teacher/savior deity to the Mayan and other Mexican peoples. According to Mayan tradition, this deity returns at specific times to instruct humanity again. According to the Mayan calendar, we are now in the time when Quetzalcoatl is returning, and many people are expecting a savior to rescue us from all our problems.

For me, Quetzalcoatl is a power that is awakening within every human. If we look inward instead of outward for a savior, we all have the potential to become the winged serpent that is Quetzalcoatl.

Next to Quetzalcoatl is Divine Grandmother, or Lady of the Serpent Skirts, Great Goddess of the Aztecs and Mayans.



Quetzalcoatl



Totem Pole Shrine

Tribal people everywhere celebrate animal spirit helpers and many feel that there is one primary animal power that guides and protects each one of us in our life's journey. Many believe this to be a superstition of primitive people, yet most of us have a particular attraction to an animal. If we look at our favorite animal, we may see parts of ourselves that resemble that animal and the way it relates to the world.

As I learned about animal powers, I began to notice that my encounters with them often held a sacred teaching. Some of the animals in my most amazing meetings also became my family of helpers. In one such meeting, I was building my booth for an art show in a beautiful forest and gathering a tall stick from a bush. I was feeling relaxed and blissful coming out of the city into a natural environment.

An overzealous security guard at the show shouted at me "you're out of bounds!" Seized with a rush of anger, which was fast becoming a profanity to yell back, the anger materialized out of the bush as a rattlesnake flying toward my knee with its fanged mouth open. Somehow, I managed a 6-foot backwards broad jump, as the jaws snapped shut where my knee had been. This taught me that the wild animals in my environment could sense my emotional feelings.

Having had many similar encounters like this one with the rattler, I honor animals as my teachers and as my helpers. Like the northwest coastal tribes have done for a long time, I designed and had a friend carve a totem pole to be placed in front of the Earth & Sky Temple that shows my primary animal powers.



Totem Pole Shrine



Temple Isis

As my friends and I built the pyramid temple I had difficulty sleeping because my mind constantly streamed inspirations from my muses or spirit helpers. It is now forty years since I created this Temple Isis statue, the goddess symbol of the sacred feminine. Since I first sculpted the shrine, she has taken on many of the attributes of the Native American goddess archetype, White Buffalo Woman. It seems this White Buffalo Isis statue helped to create the temple that grew up around her. Now, she has this Egyptian pyramid temple filled with sacred archetypes from all over the world as her home.

My primary myth is the Sun Dance and other Native American traditions, although I have been blessed with many mythologies in my life's journey. As I traveled in the Himalayas, Andes, Africa, and Europe, the sacred wisdom of people everywhere touched me and I feel that this Temple Isis Shrine joins together the Great Goddess energies of east and west.



Temple Isis

Epilogue

The last photograph shows my traveling shrine for, like George, I also spend much of my time traveling away from my home's sacred space. I would like to encourage you to create a shrine in your home with which you can spend a quiet time each day. You may light a candle or burn incense to show appreciation for the gift of life from our Mother Earth and Father Sky. Prayers may be sent to friends, family or people anywhere experiencing difficult challenges and also you may send healing to our earth's challenged environment. It can be as simple as a shelf with a special photo, painting or object that holds a sacred meaning for you.

For me, it started with a small shelf dedicated to sacred archetypes, and over the years it grew into a temple. Finding the ancient path of the sacred artist has filled my life with joy, excitement and reverence. My path led me to create the Earth & Sky Circle as I taught sacred art to over 100 apprentices and created ceremonies for my community. Earth & Sky Circle is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) spiritual and charitable organization. If you have enjoyed my book, you may show your appreciation with a donation to help support our apprenticeship program and continuing ceremonies.

Thank you for joining me and witnessing my life's journey into the world of sacred art and shrines. Feel free to share "The Book of Shrines" with your friends and community.

Good medicine to you,
Heyoka



Donate now via Pay Pal
www.heyoka-art.com
Earth & Sky Circle
(click or scan QR code)

or

P O Box 70
Stevensville MT 59870



Heyoka's Shrine

"In his art, ceremonies and stories, Heyoka is touching into the radiance of creation." – Neale Donald Walsch: Author of Conversations with God.



"Heyoka Merrifield is a medicine man, a priest, a guardian of the doorways and a powerful conduit to the understanding of the complex intricacies between our world and the world of the spirits and the ancestors. This position at the threshold between worlds underscores the exquisiteness of the art coming out of his hands and the halo of humbling spiritual energy surrounding him. Every piece he makes is a ritual puzzle that encodes a healing message from the other world. We cannot afford to ignore his message."

-Malidoma Some, Ph.D.: Of the Dagara tribe in West Africa, author of, Healing Wisdom of Africa and Of Water and the Spirit

Heyoka Merrifield is a celebrated multi-media artist, medicine man, and author living in western Montana. Searching for the reason ancient art pieces radiated inner life and power has led him on a lifelong quest of learning. Touching the sacred within his work has brought him international acclaim, and his pieces appear in private collections around the world, including those of Cher, Elton John, George Harrison, Joni Mitchell and Neil Diamond. He has authored: Sacred Art Sacred Earth, the White Buffalo Woman trilogy, and Ocean Mother's Song.