

Sand Mandala Preservation

Report by Laura Jennings, Claire Hoewel and Laura Reutter upon the preservation of the Amitayus sand mandala made by Drepung Loseling monks at the Tibetan Cultural Center in December of 1993

The sand mandala was executed the week of December 26, 1993. An initial spraying of the mandala was made before it was complete, to prevent the sand from shifting due to vibrations in the floor. At this time the central area contained within the raised square ridge of sand was consolidated with two coats of Krylon Crystal Clear (#1301). The first coating was made from a height of about 24+ inches. A second coating was applied somewhat more closely. After the mandala was finished, spray coatings of Krylon Crystal Clear (#1301) and Krylon Matte (#1311) were made over the entire surface. Approximately 6 to 8 cans of varnish were used to consolidate a 5" by 5" mandala, applied in repeated coats with a 10 to 15 minute interval between coats.

(A senior chemist at Krylon was confident that both fixatives were extremely stable acrylic resin formulations and stated that many successful aging tests had been performed without any yellowing.)

One problem was encountered using the Krylon Matte (#1311) spray which made it undesirable. As it was applied, the matting agent in the varnish (fumed silica) formed a whitish haze over the areas of the mandala not being sprayed, dulling the colors. This may have been due to the spray drying before it hit the surface of the mandala. This problem was corrected by discontinuing the use of the matte spray and going over the dull areas with the gloss varnish at a fairly close distance. The whitish haze disappeared, restoring the vivid colors to the sand.