

EAST MEETS WEST ON THE RIVIER CAMPUS

Tibetan Monks Build Intricate Sand Mandala in Memorial Hall

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(From: *Rivier Today*, Fall 2005)



Photo by Jodie Andruskevich

Grain by grain, millions of particles of colored sand are deliberately placed to form a pattern, each one representing the tolerance and compassion of the Tibetan Buddhist culture. The end result of the four day ritual is an intricate creation, known as a sand mandala, a sacred art form of an endangered culture.

In October, members of the Rivier College community and the city of Nashua experienced firsthand a culture little known to most in the western world. Ten monks of the Drepung Gomang Monastery in Southern India visited the city, offering cultural programs, public talks, and providing *pujas*, prayer blessings offered in a distinctive overtone chanting.

Rivier's Memorial Hall was the temporary home for the creation of the Mandala of the Medicine Buddha, representing the manifestation of healing energy of all enlightened beings. The mandala is created in a five-foot area, with each particle of sand poured in an ultrafine stream using traditional metal funnels called *chak-purs*.

The art form, symbolic of a "world in harmony" according to the Sanskrit translation of mandala, was on display during the construction, and students, faculty, and members of the community were awed by the attention to detail and patience involved in the project.

"Everything in our society is so fast-paced and immediate," says Director of Multicultural Affairs Sharron Rowlett, who was instrumental in bringing the sand mandala exhibit to the Rivier campus. "The display offered students and members of the community a glimpse of a set of values and beliefs that has had a profound impact on the rest of the world."

After days of labor, the delicate form is dismantled in just moments as the sand is swept away and dispersed in a local body of water, symbolizing the "impermanence of all things."

TIBETAN MONKS BUILD INTRICATE SAND MANDALA IN MEMORIAL HALL

According to Rowlett, the Monks' visit to the Rivier campus was a natural fit, as the College's mission of peace and social justice is very closely aligned with the tolerance and compassion shared by Tibetan and Buddhist philosophies.

* As Rivier's Director of College Relations, **KAREN COOPER** oversees the College's marketing and advertising, public relations, publications, communications, and the website. She earned her Master's of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing from Rivier in 2003, and this fall she will be teaching graphic design in the College's Professional Communications program. Some of her accomplishments at Rivier include the design of the current College logo; the development of the College magazine, *Rivier Today*, of which she is the editor; and the launch of the new College website in 2005. She also serves as Associate Editor of the Online Academic Journal.