

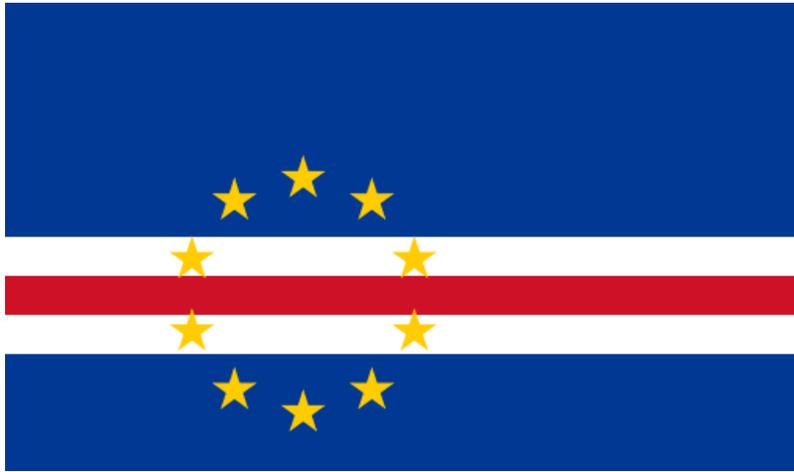
# Mandalas ~ Spirit In Art

Building Bonds Through Art

Praia, Cape Verde

July 8 – 15, 2013

Chris Flisher



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## **Cape Verde Mandala Workshops, Praia, Cape Verde, July 8-15, 2013**

Trip Report by Chris Flisher (chris @chrisflisher.com) [www.chrisflisher.com](http://www.chrisflisher.com)

### **Introduction**

This workshop was the collaborative effort of the Art In Embassies (AIE) organization and the Embassy of Cape Verde along with myself, Chris Flisher. I was selected to be a representative of the Arts In Embassies program after an inquiry by Ambassador O'Neal of Praia, Cape Verde. I agreed to lend the embassy three pieces of my art for the duration of the ambassador's term in Cape Verde. My artwork was sent to Cape Verde during the summer of 2012. During the year I received some very positive press coverage about my artwork there and approached the AIE about possibly doing a workshop in Cape Verde. This idea was originally discussed between the ambassador and myself. Through the work of several members of her staff and the AIE we were able to establish a grant for the workshop.

### **Daily Activity**

I arrived in Praia on Monday morning and I was greeted by Rebecca Marquez of the US Embassy. She was most gracious and helped me get to my hotel, get cash from ATM, and telephone. I was able to refresh and then arrived at the US Embassy where I took a tour of the facility and had lunch with the Ambassador. I met the embassy staff and was greeted warmly by all the team members. My next stop was an interview with the TBC which will be available to view shortly when the links are available.

The next morning, a group of local artists led by local artist, Misa, arrived at the hotel at 9:00 AM for our excursion to Porto Madiera. Porto Madeira is about an hour north of Praia and is high up in the hills and quite remote. It is the site of an artist's colony led by Misa. The settlement was very poor and the people lived close to the land. We were greeted very warmly and toured the area and the artwork. We gathered to watch my introductory film and then broke for lunch provided by a local family. I spent the remainder of the day teaching the children who ranged in age from 6 to 18 how to create the mandalas. Since language was a barrier and the facilities were fairly crude, I did my best to get the basics across to the students to get them started. They responded very well and within a few hours they had created a wonderful array of colorful artwork. I was unable to follow my usual teaching pattern and opted to simply plant a seed of intrigue which worked quite well as the students took to the art very well for

about 4 hours. Later, Misa mentioned that the students never sit so intently and concentrate so hard as they did that day. Very gratifying. At the end we took photos:



**Day one with Misa at Porto Madiero**



**Finished art work at Porto Madeiro**

Later that evening I was the guest of honor at the Ambassador's residence where I presented my artwork and explained my creative process and my intentions. After, we

enjoyed a wonderful meal with local dignitaries and a warm toast. I was very well-received and I thoroughly enjoyed the dinner. I felt very honored to have been recognized and appreciated in this wonderful setting. Art is such a hard occupation, so to be recognized is quite an honor.



#### **Ambassador O'Neal reception at US Embassy, Praia, Cape Verde**

The next morning, Thursday, again very prompt and on time, the group left for Assomada where we were slated to work with another group of orphaned children at the SOS facility. These were very well behaved and attentive students from about 12 to 16. The facility was much better equipped than the previous, but the enthusiasm was the same. We played the film and the interpreter worked with the language. We handed out materials after some primary instructions and the students began to create immediately. They were very intent and dedicated to their creative voices for about 5 hours. They were quiet, well-behaved and so talented. At the end of the session we took photos (attached) and several of the students asked for me to sign their artwork.



### Finished art work at Assomada Orphanage

The final session took place on Friday at the ICCA Centro Lern Cachorro facility in Praia. Before we set out for the school, I was interviewed on the “Show De Manha” a local morning television show. After we arrived at the ICCA facility we showed the film and instructed the students on the art of the mandala. They also took to it immediately and began in earnest to create art. The students were polite, orderly, and very appreciate. With a few hours they had created elaborate work that will allow them to continue on further. We had lunch at the facility and several students again asked for my autograph which I always find to be very touching and gratifying. At the end of the session we took photos (attached). This was a very rewarding experience for the students and myself. They were completely engaged and intent on creating. They never seemed bored or restless. Good sign.



### Finished art work at Centro Lem Cachorro Orphanage

That evening I was the guest of Paulo in Cidade Velha, where I was given a tour by the Cultural Minister of Cape Verde, Charles Akibode. This was a particularly moving experience for me since this is the site of the origins of western slavery. To have stood at this place in history where slavery began has left me with an indelible impression. The night proceeded with local foods, drinks and music.



### **The site where slavery began at Cidade Velha**

My weekend allowed me to re-charge. I was again invited to Paulo's house where she and her husband treated me to grogo and cachupa, the local drinks and dish. I have completed the Cape Verde experience.

I was interviewed on Monday morning for a New York publication about my work and intention. I arrived at the airport after a delicious home made meal at the house of Rebecca Marquez and her wonderfully warm family. And my time had come to a rapid ending. My impressions of Cape Verde will last forever.

#### **Summary**

I was so pleased to have been selected for this opportunity. Not only does it warm my spirit to be able to help those less advantaged, but to be an ambassador of art has been a life-long dream of mine. To break down barriers and to spread a cross-cultural message has truly been my personal desire since I was very young. I am very appreciative.

I want to say a few words about some of the people who made this all happen. First my heart-felt thanks to Ambassador O'Neal for finding me and reaching out. Without that contact, none of this would have occurred. Secondly, I want to send a very personal thanks to Rebecca Marquez who was the epitome of professionalism, dedication, and intention. She kept me very well informed, was always on time, always treated me like royalty and bent over backwards to make this trip a success. She is a natural diplomat

and a real asset to the diplomatic corps. I would have been lost without her help and genuine kindness.

My translator, Jeff Hessney was a thoroughly professional asset to the team. I have never worked with an interpreter before so the challenge was real for me, especially since I like to talk and I am animated (the radio host in me), but he was able to work both sides of the conversation without a hitch. He was a great asset to me. Finally I want to thank Armando, the driver, who got us everywhere we needed to be on time and in safe comfort, despite some very steep, mountain roads and heavy fog at times.

I am so appreciative of all that the people of Cape Verde have shown me. This trip and experience have enriched me and I hope those who learned the mandala will spread the word as well.

Many thanks to you all.

Chris Flisher  
July 16, 2013  
Boxborough, MA.

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Chris Flisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.