



# Martha's Mandala: Figures in a Family Circle

*Martha Oliver-Smith*

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## **Martha's Mandala: Figures in a Family Circle** Martha Oliver-Smith

According to Archetypal Psychologist James Hillman, it is the work of the soul to create meaningful experience out of the facts of one's life. In *Martha's Mandala*, Oliver-Smith entwines strands of her own personal journey of self-discovery with an imaginative accounting of her grandmother's life-work: to give beauty and coherence to the dark and mysterious voices that shattered Martha Bacon's psyche as a young mother; to find a quiet center and create a peaceful "home" amidst the tumult of an extraverted lifestyle of uncertain privilege and patriarchy; and to proceed throughout all of her life's circumstances with a private diligence and faithfulness to her own Truth.

**Jennifer A. Fendya**, PhD, Psychologist, Curator of Art, CG Jung Center, Buffalo

Parsing the complexity of a family influenced by mental illness, Martha Oliver-Smith subtly weaves her grandmother's story into her own as both women work to solve the perplexing problem of the split self. Her grandmother's symbolic watercolors "made out of her darkness" evolve beautifully in the telling as talismans of solace and balance.

**Kathryn Abajian**, author of *First Sight of the Desert: Discovery of the Art of Ella Peacock*

This history and reflection stands on its own as a rich psychological biography. Of greater value is the chance it may open doors for each of us to personal and archetypal elements that determine our lives, relationships, and our connection to that which is present "called or not called."

**Frances M. Parks**, Ph.D., ABPP, Graduate, C.G. Jung, Zürich

The limitations upon the creativity of women—both imposed and self-imposed—chronicled in *Martha's Mandala*, is genuinely heartbreaking. Here we glimpse some of the 20th century's most important figures—notably Carl Jung—who the reader must re-evaluate in light of this story of family privilege, patriarchy, and downfall. Martha's Mandalas—beautifully written as text and elegantly produced as object—offers us a glimpse of the author's grandmother—a member of the American aristocracy, a witness to history—and what might have been, had her considerable artistic and intellectual talents been recognized by the influential men around her, which they were not. This concise and insightful memoir makes us take stock of the "progress" women—especially creative women—have, or have perhaps not, gained. Read this and get (retro-)actively outraged. Read this, and appreciate the work of this author who is now the important voice of the women in her family, now telling her grandmother's story.

**Sue William Silverman**, author of *The Pat Boone Fan Club: My Life as a White Anglo-Saxon Jew*

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