Encircling art with spirituality

By Louise Kennedy
GLOBE STAFF

WELLESLEY — In a contemporary art gallery at Wellesley College on Wednesday afternoon, about 100 people were sitting on canvas camp stools, gazing at an empty wooden platform painted the color of bricks.

“This blank space is actually quite an extraordinary moment, because it won’t be blank for long,” Victor Kazanjian told the crowd at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center. Kazanjian, Wellesley’s dean of religious and spiritual life, was introducing the artists who would soon be transforming that blank space into a work of art: eight Tibetan Buddhist nuns from Keydong Thuk-Che-Cho-Ling, a nunnery in Kathmandu.

The nuns are the first women ever trained in the art of making a sand mandala, a symbolic circle that is central to Tibetan Buddhist spirituality and art but that has traditionally been made only by monks. They were scheduled to begin making a

Tibetan Buddhist nuns from Keydong Thuk-Che-Cho-Ling, a nunnery in Kathmandu, chant prayers before the making of a sand mandala at Wellesley College.
Revitalizing Buddhist spirituality on campus

Tibetan nuns take measurements for their sacred mandala, a symbolic circle central to their Buddhist spirituality and art.

Moving through ‘Circles’

The Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, 106 Central St., Wellesley, has scheduled a number of events as part of “Circles of Healing, Circles of Peace.” All are free and open to the public. For details, visit www.davismuseum.wellesley.edu.

Through March 1: Eight Tibetan nuns from Keydong nunnery create a Mandala, or sacred painting, in sand in the Davis Museum. Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, until 8 p.m. Wednesdays, noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. Closed Mondays. Hours may vary to honor sacred intervals in the Mandala-making process.

Sunday, Feb. 20: The Keydong nuns perform a puja, or blessing, at 1:30 p.m. in Houghton Chapel. It includes visualizations, verse recitations, overtone chanting, and prayer. A reception with Wellesley president Diana Chapman Walsh follows.

Thursday, Feb. 24: “Windhorse,” a film about the Chinese occupation of Tibet in which the nuns appeared, is screened at 7 p.m. at the Slater Center, with a discussion afterward.

Tuesday, March 1: Starting at 4 p.m. at the Davis Museum, the nuns will ceremoniously begin to dismantle the Mandala, ending by sweeping the sands into nearby Lake Waban. At 5 p.m. in the Slater Center, Wellesley Theater and Wellesley Summer Theater will celebrate the occasion with a “Theatrical Mandala.”