SAVAGE CURIOSITIES
Karen Ami

Pamela Irving

SOFA 2016 • Savage Curiosities • Bridging Cultures / Laurel True

CMS New Location • Channelling the Goddess

Mosaic Snapshots • Characters in a Book • Fusterlandia
I traveled to Chicago on Wednesday, November 2, 2016, to begin SAMA’s booth setup at SOFA Chicago 2016 (Sculptures Objects Functional Art + Design). Catching an early flight from Miami, I arrived at the Navy Pier Exhibition Hall by noon to meet up with Kim Wozniak and Laura Rendlen. Kim’s vehicle contained the exhibition art (a giant three-dimensional egg to be mosaicked on site) and all our materials. She received and return-shipped all the exhibited mosaics and brought everything to Chicago from Wisconsin! THANK YOU KIM!

I spent the first evening at my daughter’s apartment, watching the CUBS, GAME 7 of the World Series—in CHICAGO! What a kickoff to an amazing week! So much fun and they won! It was totally crazy. People were screaming in the streets, fireworks were going all night, and I was there because of SAMA!

On Thursday, we finished the setup of our demo space and hanging the “Egg-hibition.” Thank you to all our members who participated in this fun display. We had examples of every style and type of materials to show the many students, galleries, and exhibition visitors who wanted to know more about mosaics. Thursday night was a packed house at the VIP opening and the show had great crowds through Sunday.

I was concerned that the Cub’s celebration parade, that passed Navy Pier on Friday, would keep visitors away. Busloads of students usually attend on Friday and though many roads were blocked for the parade, the visitors were not deterred. We had fantastic crowds of students and teachers that listened to Kim give a brief explanation of mosaic techniques, while they watched us mosaic a giant egg and a sunny-side up egg mosaic, and everyone took lots of selfies with the art.

I am so proud of our organization and this wonderful relationship we have developed with SOFA thanks to SAMA Committee members, Kim Wozniak, Gwyn Kaitis, and Laura Rendlen. The Board is always looking for opportunities to showcase mosaic art and we were excited to open this exhibition to all skill levels and styles.

Many SAMA members stopped by to see our booth and say hi while attending the show. Natalia Garcia Berges, a student of Atelier del Mosaico, came all the way from Puerto Rico to see her egg displayed in our booth! A big THANK YOU to the SAMA volunteers working in our booth: Judy Davis, Joan Schwartz, Kim Kelly, Patti Gran, Peggy Schuning, Lenni Gilbert, Cody Abbott, and Chris Furillo. SAMA is able to do more for our members because of the dedicated volunteers and generous contributions of our membership.

Watch for our “Call for Artists” next year for SOFA Chicago 2017!

Jacki Gran

Besides serving as SAMA president, Jacki is a mosaic artist in Miami, Florida. She is married with three grown children. Her passions include art, cooking, traveling, and most of all—family and friends. jackigranmosaics.com
Rave Reviews of SAMA’s 2016 Mosaic Demonstration

By Gwyn Kaitis

Walking by, first a glance, then a longer gaze, and finally, a glimpse of recognition and a smile. This characterized the reception of SAMA’s display of members' mosaic works. “Incredible” “beautiful” “clever” “amazing.” These were some of the responses to viewing the art work. Most people took their time and looked at each and every one of the mosaics, then identified their favorites, marveling at the craftsmanship and materials.

More than 32,000 people attended this year’s annual Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design Fair: SOFA CHICAGO, which took place at Navy Pier, November 3 – 6, 2016. 72 galleries from many countries exhibited the work of numerous established and emerging glass, ceramics, wood, fiber, jewelry, and metal artists.

The Society of American Mosaic Artists (SAMA) was pleased to participate in SOFA CHICAGO once again by presenting a space in which fairgoers could learn about mosaic art and materials, while watching artists work continuously during the fair to create a large, “egg mosaic” or the “death star,” as it was dubbed by some attendees. This year’s demonstration included a call to SAMA’s artists to create standardized, egg-shaped mosaics, and more than 30 SAMA members rose to the occasion.

SAMA shares a commitment to education with SOFA, which makes for an industrious affiliation. The partnership has undergone growth over the years, beginning with a table in the Partner Pavilion and culminating in live demonstrations and even an exhibition space filled with SAMA members’ art over the past few years. Art patrons have learned to seek us out every year to see what’s new on the mosaic front. “It’s always so interesting to see what SAMA brings to the fair every year—and so exciting to see what you are up to. Each year brings an even higher ‘wow factor’ than the previous year,” stated one attendee.


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Sales of other artwork were reportedly lively throughout the show. (The demonstration space is given to us as an educational booth and no sales are permitted there.) Collectors, curators, students, and artists discovered many new talents from within the contemporary art world during the show. “I was exposed to many of the best works in the craft world as a visitor to SOFA Chicago, and have received incredible inspiration for my own work once I get back to the studio,” said one of the college students who dropped by the SAMA demonstration area.

Other students wondered why mosaics were not part of their art training and planned to suggest it be added to the curriculum when they return to the classroom. They were very enthusiastic about the possibilities of incorporating mosaic into their current work. Some teachers also stopped by to talk about how they might introduce the art form to their own students.

All in all, SAMA had another incredibly positive year in our partnership with SOFA Chicago.
The SOFA Experience was very rewarding and gratifying as an emerging artist. For new artists like me, it was a great way to introduce our artistic medium to the venue. SOFA is a great platform that introduces mosaic artistry to the world as well as the different backgrounds of each artist. It also gave me the chance to inspire other colleagues. It was a privilege that SAMA extended their invitation to all their members, including myself.

-Natalia Garcia

Gwyn Kaitis, Kim Wozniak, and Laura Rendlen chaired the SOFA 2016 Committee for SAMA. Photos: Patti Gran.

SOFA Egg Artists
Top L to R:
- Martha Crandall Sunnyside Up
- Peggy Schuning Opened
- Brenda Pokorny Springtime Meditation
- Vaishali Sanghavi Interruption
- Laura Rendlen Sunny
- Danielle Klapproth Untitled

Middle L to R:
- Kim Wozniak Impact
- Laurie Mika Sanctuary
- Judy Walton Davis Humpty Dumpty
- Anne Marie Price La Debut (The Beginning)
- Ellen Burr Dragon Rising
- Shelly Beaumont Warm and Wonderful

Lower L to R:
- Carolynn Friedman Sweet Edie
- Melanie Berry Nested
- Bonnie Fitzgerald Egg Cups
- Pauline Mills Untitled
- Kim Immenhausen Kelly Bee Inspired
- Dianne Sonnenberg Eggstraordinary

Left: Natalia García-Berges New Beginnings
An Innovative Collaboration:

Savage Curiosities

Karen Ami and Pamela Irving

By Colin Thiel

In fall of 2016, an exhibition titled Savage Curiosities was presented at The Gallery of Contemporary Mosaics (GoCM) Chicago. The show was the culmination of an 18-month collaboration between Karen Ami (Chicago, USA) and Pamela Irving (Melbourne, Australia), featuring their raw, primal imagery manifested in mosaics, drawings, ceramics, and prints. Their process of working together (yet continents apart) in their respective studios reflects a shared admiration of non-western artifacts and early 20th-century artworks.

Both artists have parallel backgrounds in art history, ceramics, sculpture, and mosaics. They discovered they shared an appreciation for fetish objects, non-western art, underground humor, as well as the works of Paul Klee and Picasso. These subjects became the basis for discourse and a visual collaboration culminating in the exhibition. Using the Internet to communicate and connect regularly, they exchanged photos of their works in progress. Research and experimentation with specific imagery and themes led to shifts in their individual practices. Ami and Irving were inspired by how each had interpreted an image and gained new perspectives regarding ritual objects and the personal stories within their works.

Karen Ami utilizes handmade, inscribed, broken ceramic pieces in her narratives. Her uses of textured and incised ceramic slabs are imbued with words and hackneyed marks. Within her artworks lie fragmented stories, poems, and drawings that inform and become the skin to her sculptural figures and tablets. Pamela Irving is a storyteller who uses playful and slightly menacing imagery to deliver her narratives. She uses found ceramics, old china, pottery, back stamps, and other elements on her lively sculptural figures. The history of each fragment is often integral to the figures, giving each work its own voice.

Above: Karen Ami, Good With the Ladies, 2016. H 21” x W 16” x D 3”. Clay, slip, marble, metal, mortar on polystyrene.

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For Savage Curiosities, the artists have incorporated materials that challenge the norm; their methodology questions the traditions that exist within contemporary mosaic. Many of the works employ pieces of metal, broken china, glass, and miscellaneous objects that capture the raw essence that is present within the non-western art and artifacts they admire. This exhibition reflects Ami and Irving’s curiosity about the process of creating and the joy of their collaboration. They will be continuing their artistic communication for future projects in the US and abroad.

Colin Thiel is a graduate of The School of the Art Institute and a practicing artist. Originally from Minnesota, he lives and works in Chicago.


View of the Gallery of Contemporary Mosaics (GoCM), Chicago, during Savage Curiosities exhibit.

May 2016

I was honored to be selected by the US Department of State and Meridian International Center, to be the first mosaic artist to participate in the International Community Mural Arts Program sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I had been to Turkey once in 1992, traveling and studying ceramic tilework and Turkish decorative arts. So I was very excited about the opportunity to return for a project.

The aim of the International Community Mural Arts Program is to foster cultural diplomacy through art in specific regions of the world through cross-cultural community engagement.

The first mural project was to be located in the municipality of Beykoz, on the outskirts of Istanbul, and was to focus on themes of peace and understanding while fostering gender equality and youth empowerment.

By Laurel True

Global Mosaic Project founder and SAMA member, Laurel True, was chosen in a competitive selection process to be an arts ambassador in Turkey, through the International Community Mural Arts Program, a program of the US Department of State and Meridian International Center.

Laurel shares a journal-style account of the two projects she created, working with teen girls and Turkish artists near Istanbul, and with art students from Gazi University in Ankara.

Edited by Shawn Newton

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The American Consulate arranged for me to work with the assistance of Turkish mosaic artist, Suha Semerci and, upon my request, with teenage girls from a local vocational school to create a mosaic mural for the facade of a municipality building. The building we created the mural on was located in a busy plaza with lots of foot traffic and visibility, and was where civic marriage ceremonies took place, so it was very much a community destination. We had an 11-day timeframe to create and install the mural, including training participants and taking part in events organized by the municipality of Beykoz.

**Project Planning and Design Development**

Based on conversations with, and the desires of project stakeholders, I created a design for the mural that included a bridge, based on those that span the Bosphorus, as a symbol of bridging cultures and unity, and natural elements inspired by the decorative arts of Turkey. The wall was 40-feet long and angled from six to two feet in height. Suha took measurements and sent images of the wall, and we communicated via internet with the help of translators from the US Consulate and Google Translate. I created a mural design that I thought was realistic for the timeframe and experience of the participants. The designs were approved by the municipality of Beykoz and the Consulate, after which I created scale templates for the mural in my studio in New Orleans, and carried them with me to Turkey.

Suha and I work in different styles and with different materials for larger projects, so I created the design to include a combination of materials and setting styles. Large, mandala-like forms were to be executed in vitreous glass and the rest of the mural was to be executed in ceramic tile. And, of course, we used mirror. Suha was in charge of procuring all the materials for the project and with much searching, he was able to get fantastic colors.

When I arrived in Istanbul, I was met by Sevil Sezan, from the American Consulate, who was my point person while in Istanbul. Day one included getting acclimated, visiting the project site, checking out the materials and meeting project stakeholders at the municipality. I was introduced to Adrienne Bory from the Consulate, who was instrumental in organizing the project.

**Project Launch**

On the first official day of the project, the teenaged girls and teachers from a nearby vocational school arrived. It was great to meet them and practice the four Turkish words and basic greetings in Arabic I have retained over the years. All the girls have apps on their phones for selfies (that somehow took ten years off me) which went a long way in breaking the ice. The girls were shy at first, but over the course of the ten-day project, they warmed way up—it was a great group with lots of good energy.

The first morning began with a big press event and welcome breakfast with the girls, Assistant Mayor of Beykoz, and officials...
So two great things happened: we divided the girls and teachers into groups for morning and afternoon shifts, so everyone could participate; and I put a call out to my former student and fellow mosaic artist, Ozgur Ozer, who is Turkish and lives in Istanbul. Ozgur joined us on the project as a co-facilitator, and proved to be a great role model for the girls. Her energy is inexhaustible and infectious and she added greatly to the project.

When all the design elements were complete, I worked with a small team of girls to transfer the entire design onto the wall using a combination grid technique and templates. Ozgur and I worked on the bridge using small strips of black tile cut by Suha, and mirror strips we had cut ahead of time. After about five days of working inside on the large design elements, we moved outside for installation and onsite mosaic setting—the more public part of the project.

Community Support
It was so great to be outside, working with the team, and experiencing people walking by—hundreds it seemed—every day, saying things like “blessings to your hands” and from the municipality and American Consulate.

After the cameras and interviews, we got started. I showed images of my work and talked about life as a professional woman artist. It was a good, girl-empowerment session. Suha talked about art education and the importance of pressing forward in life. It was a good way to get to know one another and gave some context to our project.

Suha and I worked with the girls, each demonstrating our techniques for cutting and arranging pieces of tile and glass using the pre-enlarged patterns from my studio. It was great to see the girls breaking tile and getting into it. Everyone loosened up and we shared laughter, support, and tea—lots of tea in Turkey. It was a great atmosphere.

We worked long days over the course of the week to create giant flower forms using tile tape. Suha’s and my styles combined in the more detailed, radial, mandala-like forms, and we worked together to finalize colors for different areas of the mural.

After in-depth lessons and demos, I could see the girls’ mosaic setting skills improving by the day, and they were very dedicated. Word about the project spread to the principal of another girls vocational school and soon the number of participants—including teachers, visitors, and girls from two schools—was swelling to numbers that exceeded the capacity of our space, and interfered with effectively teaching and monitoring the techniques required for the level of complexity of the project.

Community Support
It was so great to be outside, working with the team, and experiencing people walking by—hundreds it seemed—every day, saying things like “blessings to your hands” and
wonderful stuff like that. People from all walks of life, young and old, were complimenting us and saying how they loved the mural and watching it develop.

The girls were really proud. And people were proud to see the girls working on the project. I could tell the mosaic techniques were really clicking in for them, and at the end of the project, I asked for a show of hands of how many girls thought they would continue to work with mosaic. Every hand shot up into the air!

Relationship Building
The project was very large in scope for our timeframe, and Ozgur and I stayed until after dark almost every night, working to finish certain areas, make adjustments, clean up, etc. We were so in tune, like sisters. She will remain a life-long friend.

One evening, a man came up to us, sharing his reaction to the mural with Ozgur in Turkish: “All we need is peace and happiness and beauty. This country needs more women like you.”

After work, Ozgur took me to open air markets, bakeries, and small street food stands that served freshly caught fish from the Bosporus served on newspaper and tin foil with piles of arugula. Amazing at the end of a long, hard, hot, 12-hour day.

Celebration
I can’t say enough about the effort and energy put into the mural finale and dedication. What an event! The municipality of Beykoz put on a spectacular event and put up huge banners celebrating what they called the “Peace Mural.”

The municipality brought in a band of traditional Turkish musicians, tents, flags, and a podium with microphone. In attendance was the Mayor and Assistant Mayor of Beykoz, US Consul General and Consulate staff, lots of press, everyone who worked on the mural, the girls, teachers, principals from the schools, Adrienne, Sevil, lots of community members from Beykoz, plus all the people who happened to walk by. It was well-attended and super fun.

The Mayor of Beykoz, US Consul General, Suha, myself, one of the girls, and other project stakeholders spoke. Suha and I were presented with lovely gifts, lots of hand shakes, and hugs. A formal ribbon cutting and surprise confetti machine rounded out the festivities—it was over the top! A special, heartfelt ending to one of the most special community projects I have ever worked on.

The mural is now a premiere photo-taking place for the local community, newlyweds, and their families. I was sad to leave but was also looking forward to the next project at Gazi University.

On to Ankara
It was an hour flight to Ankara, and I was met by Gozde Dogan from the US Embassy, who was point person during my time in Ankara, and a pleasure to work with.

Top: Adrienne Bory, from the US Consulate, and me. Above: The committee went all out...confetti at the dedication.
Everyone was so welcoming, not only in making sure we had the right tools and supplies, but also that I was comfortable and felt supported, which I very much did. I was treated like a guest of honor, which was, in fact, quite an honor.

I worked with eight students from various departments: Özü Koç, Ersin Gücenmez, and Ozan Eroğlu from the painting department, Hasan Can Atasoy and Melike Küçük from the restoration department, Nurcan Göleç specializing in graphic design, and Duygu Pekşen from the sculpture department. Hüseyin Topcu from the film/photography department joined us as official documentarian.

They had all scoped me out on the internet well before my arrival, but I still did a digital presentation on the first day that showed some of my projects using mosaic and stencils. They were most inspired by the street art I’ve recently done and my use of mirror in relief and toned-down colors. The ensuing discussion sparked ideas about the conceptual approach to the project and how these concepts might be communicated visually.

**Ankara**

I knew the project in Ankara would be completely different than Beykoz, and it very much was—and also deeply impactful for all involved. Both projects celebrated diversity and connection, and invited viewers to take a closer look and see the beauty and complexities of the work and of life.

Meridian, the US Embassy and the Dean and Faculty from the Art Department at Gazi University worked together to coordinate a project that would have a more intimate process and approach. I was to work with a small group of selected art students in their late teens and early 20s to create a mural for the facade of the art building. The design for the project was to be developed with student input and collaboration, which was fantastic.

**Arrival**

On the first morning I was met by Giray Selçuk, from the film department faculty, who accompanied me on the short walk to the art building on the grounds of the peaceful campus, where we met with Dean Eskici Bekir, and members of the faculty, who helped prepare for the project and my arrival.
I speak no Turkish beyond a few words and phrases ("please hand me the scissors" only gets you so far), these guys had to really reach. Mainly, we really just had to work at it. I have to say, it was a success—and very rewarding.

My students were incredibly activated, motivated, creative, and thoughtful, and I enjoyed every minute of our time working together. They brought fresh ideas, perspectives, and initiatives to the table and participated throughout in conversations about the importance of seeing deeper on both a personal and a global level. We worked long days, sometimes into the evenings, forging friendships, exchanging ideas, and laughing. The stuff of life.

I was definitely a foreigner, and my approach and creative philosophy was very different from what my students were used to. Sometimes I knew they thought I was a nut—and they were kind of scandalized by my use of color. But that made for some good jokes and inspiring exchanges. We really learned a lot from each other.

**Dedication**

The US Embassy and the Gazi Art Faculty held a wonderful dedication ceremony for the mural, which was attended by the University Rector; Holly Holzer Bass, artist and wife of the US Ambassador; Gozde and representatives from the Embassy; Dean Bekir; art faculty; students; friends; and the creation team. Speeches, high fives, thanks, hugs and interviews were all dispensed. Nurcan designed a wonderful, small book about the project and the media department at Gazi put together a time-lapse, three-minute film with video and photos taken by Hüseyin.

I congratulated my students for their graceful, open, and intelligent approach to art-making and their super positive participation in this cross-cultural exchange project, which culminated in a piece of public art that will not only be enjoyed on the Gazi campus, but will speak to a global audience. The Bakiyor Musun? Goruyor Musun? mural is a

(Continued on next page)
Designing, preparing, and installing the mural was a group effort.

1. Nurcan tracing projected words.
2. Students’ sketches, my sketches, and final design.
3. Arranging templates on wall.
4. Ersin and Özü setting mirrors on the wall.
5. Mirror cutting lessons.
6. Hasan setting mirror.
7. Hasan working on mural.
8. Ersin and Özü painting the wall.
10. Duygu with mosaic kaleidoscope.
11. Melike touching up paint.
12. Ozan and Özü spraying stencils.
15. Nurcan in the center of the Universe.
17. Completed mural.

Photo: Emre Uğantaş.
wonderful example of fostering mutual understanding and peace through the power of art.

My whole experience in Turkey was life-changing. I work with communities in many different parts of the world, and all the projects I do are so special in their own, unique ways. These projects, and my time in Turkey had a very deep impact on me. Turkey has a rich, important history and the many Turkish people I met were welcoming, warm, thoughtful, and kind on all levels.

I am in regular touch with many of the people I met and worked with, thanks to social media, and I hope to return for another project. I am grateful to be walking a path that intersects with so many amazing people and opportunities for connection and creation.

Acknowledgements
Thank you to Meridian International Center (www.meridian.org/), the State Department, US Embassy and Consulate staff, Mayor and Assistant Mayor of the municipality of Beykoz, and the faculty and staff at Gazi University for hosting me in this inspiring transformative experience that I was honored to be part of. My deep gratitude to project participants, my students and team members, who I admire and respect, and who each brought their unique energy and skills to these projects.

A link to the time-lapse film mentioned above can be found on my website, www.truemosaics.com, as well as the first edition of a series of Project Journals, which goes into more detail about the techniques and materials used, step-by-step project organization, and creation methods, substrate preparation, design development and training processes I used.

Laurel True specializes in community-based public art and works with communities in the US and internationally to create mosaic murals and street art that have cultural significance and communicate messages of empowerment, awareness and social justice—while fostering well-being through creative expression. www.truemosaics.com

Field Trip

The US Embassy arranged for me to visit Estargon Kalesi, a cultural center that features open, working studios for traditional artists in the municipality of Kecioren, to learn about traditional Turkish arts. It was such a cool space—it looked like a castle, with many examples of architectural tile, mosaic, and decorative wall painting.

I spent time with several artists—learning a bit about traditional calligraphy with master calligrapher, Kadir Sakoğlu; minute line painting using pure gold with Hasan Türkmen; marbled papermaking with Uğur Taşatan; and traditional ceramic painting with master painter, Ayse Ozkan.

We all ate lunch together on the rooftop restaurant and shared stories, tea, and ate maybe the best dessert I have ever tasted. No joke. It was cooked chunks of pumpkin drizzled with tahini and grape reduction syrup and sprinkled with pistachios. Bliss.

Ayse invited me to her house that evening to work on a sample project and have dinner with some of her students. I felt like I had known her for a very long time by the end of the evening. Thanks to all the artists who took the time to demonstrate their techniques; to Gozde Dogan from the American Embassy, for setting it up, and to Mustafa Arac, Kecioren Head of Foreign Affairs, for coordinating and hosting such a special day!

Photos by Laurel True except where noted.
The Chicago Mosaic School is moving to a beautiful new home in Chicago’s historic Edgewater neighborhood in spring, 2017. The 12-year-old nonprofit school will move into a larger 9,500 square-foot, newly renovated, former Chicago Public Library space at 1127 West Granville Avenue, just two blocks from Lake Michigan. CMA had been looking to relocate after a developer purchased the warehouse building on Cuyler Avenue they had occupied for 11 years. The goal was to find a growing and vital art community near public transportation. Alderman Harry Osterman says the school is “another great addition to the vibrant arts community taking root along Granville.” Construction will be completed by March this year.

The Chicago Mosaic School was founded in 2005 and is the only school of its kind in the US, attracting all levels of artists interested in learning both classical and modern styles of mosaics. The wide range of classes, workshops, exhibitions, visiting artist lectures, and private events draws artists, teachers, and students from around the world. All of this combines to help CMS fulfill its founding mission of preserving and promoting classical and contemporary mosaics through expansive course offerings, school programs, community partnerships, and teacher training programs—all with an emphasis on sustainability using proper methods and materials.

The Granville location will be developed into an arts center, featuring 11 private artist studios, The Gallery of Contemporary Mosaics (GoCM), two art supply shops, three classroom/studios, gathering spaces and more. The front windows of the school will showcase the gallery, exposing the public to curated exhibitions with world-renowned artists. In addition to the amenities inside the school, the new space provides easy access to public transportation, Chicago’s lakefront, and many nearby businesses, restaurants, and shopping. The Chicago Mosaic School is a great destination for anyone who is curious about mosaics or wants to learn more about them.

http://www.chicagomosaicschool.com/
http://chicagomosaicschool.com/
One morning this June, out of the blue, I received a message from Maestro Giulio Menossi asking me to participate in a symposium in Ploaghe, Sardinia, in August. I’d met Giulio a few times and was aware he had organized a similar mosaic event in Clauiano, Italy in 2015.

At that point, August 2016 was about six weeks away. My first thought was either: this is how they arrange things in Italy, or that I must have been the fourth person from my country on the list to be invited and everyone else had said no. (I later found out that almost every other participant had felt the same thing.) After agonizing over whether I could do it or not, I decided that I would be an idiot not to. I felt simultaneously petrified and immensely honored to be asked.

Madre Dea

Ten artists from nine countries were all given the same theme: Madre Dea—the Sardinian mother goddess—which naturally encouraged themes of fertility and fecundity, birth, life, and death. Designs were submitted for a piece at least 70 x 70 cm, which could be either two or three dimensions.

The Symposium

The symposium lasted for 16 days, including a two-day exhibition at the end. Each of us had an individual sponsor who covered our board, lodging, and materials. A huge range of materials greeted us on arrival—pizzas of smalti, cut smalti, and marble. We each had our own workstation in the courtyard of a disused Capuchin monastery in the centre of Ploaghe, which was also used for concerts and other public events.

The Work Begins

So it began—exciting, exhilarating, and very hard work. Like most artists, I’m used to a solitary existence and setting my own schedule, so working in public alongside others to an externally imposed rhythm was very different. People came through the courtyard during the day and spoke to us while we were working. Most days we started at 9:00am, working till 6:00 or 7:00pm, after which there were usually scheduled evening events.

While sometimes personally challenging, I found working in a group fantastic. It was great to get feedback from other artists and Giulio was very supportive of us as individuals.

The final exhibition was combined with a party that went on into the small hours. Our work remains in Italy and will do some travelling to other exhibitions, and after that, remain with the individual sponsors. All in all, it was a fantastic and thrilling experience—challenging—but one I wouldn’t have missed for the world. A huge thank you to Giulio Menossi and all our sponsors and supporters from Ploaghe.
The Work

Liliana Waisman - Argentina

**Spatial Goddess**

H 90 x W 46 x D 17 cm.
Transparent smalti; transparent, handmade polyester resin on styrofoam and cement sculpture; LED lights.

She is a three-dimensional Mother Goddess with a fertile and nurturing internal space, capable of engendering and giving birth, and illuminating humanity with her creation. Light, heat, spatiality, and movement are present in the work, as well as strength, energy, and pain of giving birth. The observer must move to capture the external and internal volume of the Goddess’ space. The mosaic is made of handmade, translucent resin tiles and joints, without any other element—using my technique, the spatial mosaic. Each tile can be seen in three dimensions and lets the light pass from inside, expanding its ethereal presence beyond its own limits.

Marian Shapiro - Australia

**Source**

H 70 x W 70 cm. Smalti, marble on hand-formed substrate.

The mother goddess cult is firmly rooted in what are seen as the eternal feminine qualities of fertility, fecundity, and giving birth. I took as my starting point, the starting point of most of us. I covered the ‘pod’ shape in red smalti using opus circumactum. The marble background used andamento reminiscent of the helical shape of DNA. Red for blood and birth. Black, red and white are also the national colors of Sardinia.

Erin Pankratz - Canada

**Eva**

H 90 x W 60 cm.
Smalti, tinted mortar.

The voluptuous contemporary forms used by artists Eva Hess and Louise Bourgeois in their sculptures have always fascinated me. They are reminiscent of the female body, and in fact, are the direct inspiration for Eva—as they evoke the very essence of the Madre Dea itself. Staying true to my own style and process, I used color, which is my comfort zone, to express the inherent vibrancy and power that creates and sustains life.

Carolina Kawall - Brazil

**The Flow of Life**

H 80 x W 80 cm. Smalti, gold, glass, millefiori and ceramic.

The inspiration of this work was from nature. It represents the feminine, the importance of giving birth, fertility, and femininity.

Ariane Blanquet - France

**Grand Madre - Great Mother**

H 90 x W 90 cm.
Marble, semi-precious stone, mortar.

My mosaic is a skin. The skin of the earth from where the remains of Nuragic (the ancient Sardinian civilization) worlds suddenly emerge. This mythical civilization, rich in legends of giants and heroes, from where it takes its name of Great Mother. The human skin, that of the original mother goddess, is made from tesserae of marble, of precious stones and mineral beauties, picked up on pathways by chance, on our cool morning walks.

(Continued on next page)
Suzanne Spahi - Canada

*Ogni Vida un Storia - Every dress tells a story*

H 90 x W 60 cm.
Smalti, antique gold, marble, millefiori, plastic bottle, textile.

When confronted with the theme of the Dea Madre for the symposium, I immediately researched the tradition of rugs in Sardinia. My prototype was an actual antique rug used to commemorate the dead, and I reinterpreted it into a rug of life—blue represents the Sardinian sky, and the gold lines are the sun’s rays. The lady figure represents the women from the mountainous Desolo region in Sardinia, where women make and embroider their clothes and wear them for many years.

Virginia Zanotti - Italy

*La Dea di Tutti, Tutti Sono La Dea - Everyone’s a Goddess*

H 100 x W 70 cm. Marble, local stones (pumice, basalt), smalti, crystals, shells, wood, gold, fabrics, feathers, dry seaweed balls, mural plaster.

My work is a print of my body translated in mosaic with stones, wood, shells, and other organic material I found in Sardinia. The decoration (all inspired by Sardinia’s goddess archaeological finds) is in smalti and the background is formed by ancient fabric pieces (handmade by my great grandmother). The ‘head’ is outside the mosaic and is built with fabric from my grandmother’s work, as well as plumage. It is a hole where anyone can insert the head—from this comes the concept and the mosaic title: Everyone’s a Goddess.

Nirit Keren - Israel

*The Source*

H 70 x W 50 x D 35 cm.
Smalti & marble on concrete-covered styrofoam.

When I started my research on the Dea Madre of Sardinia, I fell in love with the Nuragic culture, especially ceremonial sites, which contained sacred wells. The earth represents the source of living and water is a life source. Entries were shaped as key holes, and leading down into the well (which resembled a vulva) was a well-engineered stone staircase. My sculpture is an abstract female shape that is the source of the universe, and the stepped form represents the sacred wells.

Aida Valencia - Mexico

*La Guerriera - The Warrior*

H 228 x W 152 x D 50 cm.
Smalti, recycled glass, shells, ceramics, metal.

My inspiration was the idea of the warrior, inspired in the force and the strength of women. The experience of working together with this group was just incredible—getting to know each artist and working together as a team was just the best. We had a great group of artists where everyone was helpful and supportive.
CHANNELLING THE GODDESS (CONTINUED)

Angela Turner Sanders - USA

Eternal Force

H 88 x W 56 cm. Antique gold smalti, aluminum, Sardinian obsidian, minerals, copper, sea shells, California abalone.

My piece is about my personal connection to the Dea Madre icon and how the symbolism behind this ancient piece is still relevant today. She is a representation of feminine power and everything that is associated with the earth and women. I hope this mosaic gives the feeling of strength and a feminine life force that moves through time with the same importance now, as in centuries past. It is important that the art also represents the place and time where the Dea Madre was found. Two colors were meaningful to these ancients—black, the color of fertile, nourishing soil; and red, the color of blood and life. I incorporated Sardinian rocks, minerals, and metals to connect the modern piece to the ancient place.

And the last word goes to Giulio...

“I have always tried to find new solutions and experiment with ideas to make mosaic a technique that lives by its own light. This idea culminated in three exhibitions—Clauiano, Italy, in 2015, followed by the 2015 Mosaic International Symposium, also in Clauiano. Their success paved the way for the Ploaghe International Symposium in Sardinia.

“It was a challenge! In less than two months, together with a few ‘brave’ others, we decided to organize the symposium. Today, I can say it was ‘madness’—a gamble—but also a tremendous success! A beautiful thing that has flourished because of talented fingers. That the dream came true is mainly due to the extraordinary capacity of the ten artists invited to live our dream with us, and turn it into reality. I entrusted to them and their abilities, the chance to be born and grow a project.

“And the results have been incredible. Every story, every culture, every technique could give life to a work of art that has become the visible realization of the dream. Ten artists from nine countries have made the archaic myth of the Mother Goddess ‘born again’ in the ancient land of Sardinia.”

Marian Shapiro lives and works in the lower blue mountains just outside Sydney, NSW. She has been making mosaics full time since 2003, and has shown, taught, and spoken widely both in Australia and internationally. Her work has also been featured in a variety of books and magazines, and on television. Plans for 2017 include a residency in Ireland, and teaching and speaking in the UK. www.dariandesign.com.au

A version of this article was first published in the MAANZ eMag and appears here with the permission of the artists. A video of the symposium can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opjPjn28jE
Mosaic Snapshots Fish

Mosaics have always told us the stories of how people lived and worked through the centuries, illuminating their cultures. Aquatic life was often chosen to illustrate bath suites (including public baths), pools, public banquet rooms, fish shops, and appropriate trade guilds.

The recurring appearance of certain vignettes or scenes might have been due to the existence of a source book, which codified diverse themes that may not have been familiar to many artists. The use of such a tool would have sped the process of preparing and executing projects.
From August 6 to October 16, 2016, The Lexington Public Library (Lexington, KY) presented *Characters in a Book*, an invitational exhibition depicting a variety of literary characters in glass and tile. This provided an exciting opportunity for the art-viewing public to experience high-quality contemporary mosaic work produced across the world today.

“While more traditional art forms such as painting and photography are seen frequently throughout Lexington, mosaic art exhibits are less common, and these particular pieces were beautifully crafted. The comments about the exhibit from both library customers and staff were overwhelmingly positive. People really enjoyed seeing the wide range of styles possible with mosaic art,” commented April Torbush, Library Gallery Director.

Curator, Terri Pulley said, “Lexington has become mosaic-crazy for exhibitions and I am working with the City of Lexington and the City Arts Gallery Director, Celeste Lewis, to plan future exhibits.” Torbush had invited Pulley to do a mosaic exhibition, but due to previous engagements, she instead suggested curating what turned out to be the perfect topic for a library: *Characters in a Book*!

**THE CHARACTERS:**

Linda Biggers

**The White Witch, Jadis**

*Book: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis 2016. H 16” x W 12”. Eggshell, beads, Apxoy Sculpt, polymer clay, mirror, slate, glass frit.

This mosaic depicts the scene in the book where the White Witch has turned the creatures of Narnia into stone. Edmund is her prisoner and Aslan the Lion sees all. lindajb99@yahoo.com

Lilian Broca

**Judith’s Revenge & The Flight to Bethulia**  
(from the Series: A Heroine of a Thousand Pieces: The Judith Mosaics of Lilian Broca)


The story of Judith and Holofernes is like the story of David and Goliath—an Old Testament tale of the oppressed vanquishing the oppressor, or virtue conquering vice. Judith is a rare Biblical heroine who took violent action to save her people from complete annihilation. Through sheer determination and an invulnerability to fear or intimidation, she destroys the enemy singlehandedly. ibroca@shaw.ca
CHARACTERS IN A BOOK (CONTINUED)

Debora Aldo

**Big Dog, Bone Garden**

Book: *Big Pets* by Lane Smith

This is a take on the dreams of children as they fall off to sleep and visit a series of magical gardens created by Lane. My version is a semi, self-portrait featuring Deb the Doggie Driver; Brandy, the Tail-rider Knight in Shining Armor; and Chance, the Siberian Puppy Prince; prancing happily through the dreamscape.
Deb.pietredure@gmail.com

Jacki Gran

**Jadis, The White Witch**

Book: *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis
2016. H 23” x W 12”. Smalti, iridescent smalti, white gold, titanium crystals, Swarovski crystals, pearls.

I love to read and automatically visualize how I think the characters look. I have always been intrigued by the ‘good versus evil’ characters in stories and wonder how each character becomes who they are. I chose to create Jadis because she is as beautiful as she is evil. It teaches one to look beneath the surface to the person below.
jgmosaics@gmail.com

Karma Duff

**The Joker**

Book: *The Joker* by Brian Azzarello and others.
2016. H 19.5” x W 19.5”. Stained glass on glass, grout.

I first met The Joker on television and he scared me. I knew he was bad to the core and was everyone’s archenemy. Yet I was fascinated with how cleverly his ominous plots unfolded. Creating this captured my imagination and held it hostage for weeks. karmas@tampabay.rr.com

*Karma Duff received the Viewers’ Choice Award for The Joker.*

(Continued on next page)
CHARACTERS IN A BOOK (CONTINUED)

Atsuko K. Laskaris
Where are you Peter?

Book: Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie
2016. H 15.5" x W 15.5". Stained glass.

For this show, I chose Wendy and her brothers from Peter Pan. Peter is just one of those characters that is easy to relate to. He is full of mystery and joy—one never needs to see him to know that he is there. atsukolaskaris@yahoo.com

Shawn Newton
The Fortune Teller

Book: Beautiful Jim Key: The Lost History of a Horse and a Man Who Changed the World by Mim Eichler Rivas
2016. H 24" x W 24". Stained glass.

I have portrayed characters from an extraordinary, forgotten story. Beautiful Jim Key tells the story of Dr. William Key, a self-trained, African American veterinarian (and former slave), known for his kindness as a horse trainer. While raising Jim Key, he discovered his unusual talent and taught him to spell, do simple math, and more. Performing from 1897 to 1906 to large crowds at world’s fairs and other venues, they became instrumental in advancing the emerging US humane movement. This mosaic depicts Jim at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair with Theodore Roosevelt’s daughter, Alice. Two years after he spelled her name, “Al...
It was spring 2016, and I had been teaching a workshop retreat in Todos Santos, Mexico, and was planning to vacation with my husband and friends when it was finished. The plan was to relax and enjoy Todos Santos and its beautiful surrounding areas—until my husband threw out the idea of going to Cuba. Of course, we were already in Mexico and we would travel back here to vacation after Cuba, so why not?

Once we made the plan we started to research Havana and the surrounding areas. I knew Havana had a lot of art, culture,
and music to explore, but I had no idea there was a mosaic presence as well. It is called Fusterlandia.

Fusterlandia is approximately four city blocks in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Havana called Jaimanitas. Imagine if Gaudi and Niki de St Phalle got together and decided to mosaic their community—building after building mosaic'd in tiles, custom painted ceramics, and found objects.

The story behind Fusterlandia is quite fascinating, but so is the history of Cuba. Our trip to Cuba was a little unconventional in the sense that we did not take a large bus tour. We hired a local driver/tour guide to show us all around Havana and take us to Fusterlandia.

Raphael, our tour guide, was more like an old friend sharing his city with us. It made the trip that much more special. He took us to the original Tropicana Hotel—think Ricky Ricardo all day and night. We spent a couple of hours touring the Hotel Nacional (if those walls could talk), and went to a must-see attraction for artists called Fabrica de Arte Cubano (FAC). It is an old factory that has been converted and houses a multitude of art installations, performances, and offers good food and drinks.

Raphael knew one of the main reasons we came to Cuba was to see Fusterlandia and based on our interest in mosaic art, it was very important we spend some time exploring the area. He was more than accommodating in getting us there and making sure we met the right people when we arrived.

Fusterlandia is named after the artist behind it all, José Fuster. Fuster, as he is known, is an accomplished painter who has exhibited in many countries around the world including the US. His style leans towards Picasso and Jean Dubuffet, and is apparent in both his paintings and mosaics.

Arriving at Fusterlandia for a mosaic artist, is like arriving in the land of OZ. I felt like I was in my home away from home—which was somewhat true since we were actually visiting José Fuster’s house. This is where it all began. Entering Fusterlandia you are completely surrounded by mosaic art—the archway as you enter, every inch of wall space from roof tops to floors in a three-story building (which contains his studio enclave), itself filled with structural three-dimensional mosaics.

As we began to tour around this epicenter of Fusterlandia, we were introduced to José’s son, Alex, and best friend, David. Both of these incredibly generous
gentlemen gave us the VIP tour into the private art world and history of José Fuster. It was incredible to see firsthand how Jose works in his art studio, painting and creating his ceramic painted tiles. Pictures of friends and colleagues—including a recent picture taken there with Isaiah Zagar—hang all over his studio.

José Fuster has been an artist since the 60s and had begun to receive recognition 30 years ago when he set up his studio in the run-down village of Jaimanitas, northwest of Havana. When he decided to give back to the community, he found many canvases of a different nature available to him.

Residents of more than 80 homes have allowed Fuster to transform their homes, walls, benches and more with ceramic mosaics. After taking note of the personalities living there and using them as creative inspiration, he has concocted magical creations such as a chess park with giant boards and tables, domes, murals, and an Artists’ Wall “quilt” made up of dozens of tiles, signed and donated by Cuban artists. Fusterlandia, itself, has become a living, growing art museum that has lifted the spirits of its inhabitants and attracts tourists that recognize the influence of Fuster’s revered Picasso and Gaudi. Often described as a magical mosaic kingdom, it is made up of many maze-like walkways and multi-level presentations.

Fuster has funded most of the work through the sale of his own artwork. His work can be found in collections at the Center for Cuban Studies in New York; the Museo de la Cerámica, Castillo de la Real Fuerza, in Havana; the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana; and of course, his biggest collection in Jaimanitas, Cuba!

Clockwise from top: Tami and the chicken bench; street and address marker; mural tribute to Gaudi on street corner; cowboy and the fish mural, Tami’s purchase of an original José Fuster piece.

(Continued on next page)
We spent a few hours talking with Alex and David, as they explained, in a mini history course, the story of the Cuban revolution and how it had affected their lives and the lives of their families and friends. It was fascinating and we felt so honored to get a glimpse into their world and a better understanding of Cuban history from their perspective.

Unfortunately José Fuster was not there that day, but we learned that Fusterlandia was created because the artist wanted to decorate his home and those of his neighbors, hoping it would improve the quality of their lives. Times had become very hard in the nineties for many Cubans. Fuster was fortunate enough to have a successful career, so he decided to take his funds and use them to work on revitalizing the look of his home and the surrounding areas. Thirty years later, there is no stopping him or his son as they continue to create and give life to older, rundown buildings in their neighborhood.

It was such an inspiration to walk through an entire neighborhood and see how broken pieces of tiles, ceramics, and many found objects could be put back together in a way that gives it life. Fusterlandia tells many stories, but to me, the most important one is follow your passion and your dreams, and you can move mountains—or at least cover city blocks with colorful creative art!
Sanna Banszegi’s story begins like many artists—one idea opens the door to another. She has always designed and made jewelry, but when she decided to include natural materials—seeds, rice, etc.—she enlisted the help of her husband’s grandfather, a woodworker who produced the wooden trays that would inspire the current line of products. Husband, Balaz, soon acquired the family woodworking skills and manufactured the growing number of styles Sanna began to develop.

They launched the new business on Etsy in 2013, receiving positive reviews from satisfied customers around the world—mosaicists, mandala, and jewelry makers among others. Their new website displays their unique product line. Customer suggestions for specially made items are encouraged and very popular!

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