



E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE

November  2006



Here's What's Below:

Elit-tile Opens in Santo Domingo

Submissions Sought for New Tile Book

Pillars Workshop Report

Traipsing Through Michigan

Poem by Deborah Hechts

Tunisian Treasures



Museum of Modern Art in Santo Domingo hosts the "Third International Ceramic Tile Triennial."



Rafael Sepúlveda (RAS),
Dominican Republic. WI

Open Invitation to elit-tile!

The Igeri Foundation/Art & Archaeology, the Museum of Modern Art, the Altos de Chavon Cultural Foundation, and the Puntacana Group invites you to the "Third International Ceramic Tile Triennial" (elit-tile) Inauguration Night, **November 16th**, to be held at the **Museum of Modern Art (MAM)** of Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic.

More than 255 works from artists representing 53 countries will be shown until **January 27, 2007**. You are invited to the elit-tile exhibition and to attend the festivities on Inauguration Night!

Visit www.elit-tile.net/home

New Tile Book from Lark. Submissions Sought

Lark Books is taking submissions for an upcoming book, "500 Tiles," that will focus on ceramic tiles and mosaics. The deadline is **February 1st, 2007** and there is no entry fee. **Angelica Pozo** will serve as juror. For more information: www.larkbooks.com/submissions

“Pillars in Clay”: Workshop Extraordinaire!

From Sheila Menzies

“Pillars in Clay,” a clay sculpture and majolica workshop, was held in Solana Beach, California in early October directed by majolica artist **Irene de Watteville**. What fun the eight of us had for two days! The workshop was held in support of “Keeping the Craft Alive,” the workshop series presented each year by Tile Heritage.

Irene introduced participants to hand-building in clay and majolica techniques. Most people were already familiar with clay as a medium but some were not. On the first day we designed our ideas for pillars and worked on creating individual, hollow clay elements to complete our maquettes, most less than two feet tall. Each pillar was ‘strung’ on a length of pipe embedded in a cement base. By the end of the first day the pillars were taking shape.



Sharon McBride proudly sports her finished elements.

As Irene had prepared some elements in advance, already bisqued and with a majolica base glaze applied, we could experience painting with the majolica technique on these pieces on day two, the third step in completing the pillars. The elements we were producing then needed to be dried and bisque-fired prior to the application of glazes.

The beauty of maquettes - these miniature pillars – is that they are scale models complete in themselves, but they can also be utilized in the future by transposing them into full-size forms, large-scale garden sculptures, for example, if one chooses.



"Sonja Devine , on the left, completes her pillar elements. She says the whole is a support for the top plate which is for serving mellon balls!"

Traipsing Through Michigan

From Joe Taylor

Detroit can be a lovely place to visit in mid-August, especially when the weather cooperates. The staff at **Pewabic Pottery** had scheduled a tile festival that weekend, the first of its kind at the pottery itself; and not having seen many of our tile maker friends in several years, I was anxious to reconnect.



Detail from The Inn on Ferry Street.



The Inn on Ferry Street.

Finding a reasonable round trip out of San Francisco, I made a reservation at The Inn on **Ferry Street**, a series of four restored Victorian houses in Midtown, just a few blocks from three major tile treasures: the **Detroit Institute of Arts** (Enfield tiles and the Dragon of Marduk from Babylon's Ishtar Gate), the **Detroit Public Library** (Pewabic tiles and mosaics and a large mural by Millard Sheets), and a massive **Hubert Massey** designed mural at the intersection of Brush and Kirby. Titled "**Patterns of Detroit**," the 3000 square foot mural was created with the input of 27 community groups. **Hubert Massey**, a local muralist, designed the central panel, which depicts a mother



Detail of Hubert Massey's central panel, part of a massive 3000 square foot mural, "Patterns of Detroit."

and child surrounded by important neighborhood landmarks. The mother works to bind together colorful patterns representing the various cultures in the city. The fabric winds through the central images and spills out into horizontal panels, each produced by a different local school or nonprofit organization. The mural was dedicated on October 5, 2005.



Pewabic raffle prize!

The white tent raised out front at the **Pewabic Pottery** served as a suitable attraction for passers-by on East Jefferson. I would guess perhaps 600 people paid the modest fee to enter the sale area. Probably 25-30 tile artists were present with their work, many of whom were friends, both current and former members of Tile Heritage. In suitable contrast **Kathy Rae** occupied the largest space with her wide variety of historic tiles. **Terese Ireland**, executive director at Pewabic, treated me to a delightful lunch downtown in the shadow of the new Tiger Stadium, where we occupied ourselves talking tiles, not baseball. She must have rigged the raffle as I won the first drawing!

Royal Oak, Michigan, about 11 miles north of downtown Detroit, has been for some years a growing community preferred by those who wish to live and raise their families outside of the city. It's now a haven for tilemakers. Last year Marcia Hovland and her husband Denis DeSandre purchased retail space on Fourth Street and have since opened a studio/gallery where Marcia makes her one-of-a-kind tiles and sells an assortment of handmade tiles from around the country. For more than ten years Marcia has specialized in hand-making tiles with whimsical subjects: bugs, bees, fairies, mermaids and nature scenes. She also makes beaded bracelets, ceramic buttons and bowls.



Ceramic panel surrounded by glass mosaic by Marcia Hovland.



From the left: Laurie Eisenhardt, Joe Taylor and Marcia Hovland in Laurie's garden.

Friend and fellow tilemaker Laurie Eisenhardt is not far away. Laurie's studio behind her early 20th century home is surrounded by a lush, well-kept flower garden, accented by an intimate patio snuggled in back for the family barbeque. Recently, Laurie was commissioned to provide a series a decorative 12 x 12 tiles for the newly built Southfield (Michigan) Public Library. The tiles, each with a different children's theme, are inset in the circular wall around the outdoor garden designed with special plantings and sculpture for young people to enjoy. The library also has a comfortable reading area with a large fireplace and hearth adorned with Pewabic tiles.

While in Royal Oak don't miss a visit to the Detroit Zoo where tilemaker Gretchen Kramp, another local artist, has two sizeable murals. The first, installed in 2000, takes up a wall of the entry to the National Amphibian Conservation Center. The other, produced two years later, adorns the entrance of the Nunavut Gallery in the Arctic of Life exhibit. A large polar bear stands under the motto Nunatsiaq, meaning "the beautiful land" in Inuit.



Tilework by Gretchen Kramp at the Detroit Zoo.



Pine Landscape by Motawi.

If you ever plan to visit Motawi Tileworks in Ann Arbor, don't try to get there from Detroit. Driving west out of the city, it takes forever, even without traffic. You're sure you're going to drop into Lake Michigan before you get there. I suggest you use the phone or visit the website at www.motawi.com. It'll be a lot faster and you won't make the mistake of turning north on Rt. 23 and getting lost! (Lesson: never leave home without Mapquest in your back pocket.)

We've all heard about the two-car garage where the company started in the early '90s, and we choose to forget the cramped, dark quarters on Staebler as producers of Arts and Crafts products need a "clean and well-lighted" place to work. Motawi Tileworks today fits the bill. Located in the mid-Michigan countryside, in a natural setting west of Ann Arbor, the factory would blend right in were it not for its white exterior and the massive Pine Landscape mural, inspired by

Grueby Faience's "The Pines" and now a Motawi trademark, painted on the building's façade.



Motawi Tileworks, Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Nawal and Karim Motawi outside the office.

Putting aside the beauty and exquisite craftsmanship of the individual decorative tiles, one has to marvel at how the staff manages the keep track of the myriad of choices available to customers, considering the number of decorative options, glaze choices, trim shapes and sizes. For any other company this would prove to be a nightmare. At Motawi it's now all part of the routine, and you can tell by the look of their faces—everyone's.

A Gift: A Poem by Deborah Hecht



Custom Design on Tile, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan whose oldest son was married this past summer.

A GIFT

*A gift-a skill-a ball of clay
To have the will to see the way
To find the statement it can say*

*To push and pull and form unending
Deal with mess and constant mending
Build it up and carve it down
Pick it up if it falls down
And don't give up until it's done
Let it dry and slowly bake it
With some luck the kiln won't break it
Add some color fire it in
Over and over and over again*

*Eventually with lots of time
Comes the vision once in mind
But when it's art it isn't mine
Although I sowed I cannot reap it
Even if I want to keep it
It's lost if others cannot see it*

*A gift-a seed-a ball of life
To hold and love in need and strife
Nurture guidance firm but gentle
Find within his full potential*

*Feed and clean with care unending
Children need a lot of tending
Build him up so he'll be strong
Scold him gently when he's wrong
Pick him up when he falls down
Help him choose but don't choose for him
He needs to handle what's before him
School will test him I'll adore him*

*When he's ready to depart
And seize the world with all his heart
The day comes soon in little time
My son's the man I had in mind
He has to leave he isn't mine
I must let him go for life
To journey forward with a wife*

*A life of art the art of living
Joy and sorrow interweaving
Borrowed treasure fleeting pleasure
To give to get and not to measure*



Peter Handler sizes up Tunisian pottery.

Tunisian Treasure Trove: A Report from Karen Singer

I am writing to tell you about a recent travel experience that might be something to share with the THF membership. My husband Peter Handler and I, both artists, toured Tunisia last summer on our honeymoon, and we met and worked with some incredible ceramic artists and crafts people. This is a country that few Americans visit and it's fascinating! It is a treasure trove for anyone interested in tile!

We were both fascinated and impressed with the range of work in

Tunisia that is of interest to craftspeople, especially ceramists. This ranges from extensive Roman mosaics and the Islamic and Spanish inspired tilework that is installed all over the country to the work being done today. Everywhere you look, there is tile work - on the mosques, in the streets, on the ceilings, walls and floors in both rich and poor areas. We saw the Bardo Museum in Tunis, with perhaps the biggest collection of Roman mosaics in the world, and two ancient Roman cities, Bulla Regia and Dougga, where mosaics are intact

in the walls and floors of numerous buildings.



Roman mosaics preserved at the Bardo Museum in Tunis.



Karen Singer, standing, puts finishing touches on her mural at a ceramics workshop in Nabeul.

We also met people everywhere. I spent an afternoon doing claywork with a Berber family of women potters in the pottery village of Sejnane, to tour the pottery town of Guellala on the island of Djerba, and to make a small tile mural in a ceramic workshop in Nabeul, center of Tunisian ceramics manufacturing.

web address is: www.handlerstudio.com. I am a sculptor/ceramic tile maker - in business since 1991 - my business name is Karen Singer Tileworks, Inc. My three person staff and I make large-scale ceramic tile murals, most of which are installed in hospitals, universities, and other non-profits across the country as donor recognition walls. My web address is: www.karensinger.com.

Peter makes studio furniture. He is well known nationally in the craft community as he has been exhibiting in high end craft shows for about 30 years. His



Typical rooftop "garden" where people congregate in the evenings.

Karen is organizing a 14-day ceramics and cultural tour of Tunisia for Spring 2007. If you are interested, karensinger@karensinger.com