



E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



March



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(Available each month to Tile Heritage members who e-mail the Foundation from the address they would like E-News sent to. Contact: foundation@tileheritage.org)

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Come see us at Coverings
April 29 - May 2, 2008
Booth 2816



The Casino on Santa Catalina Island, 1929.

Catalinaware: An Exhibition at SFO

“Catalinaware: Pottery and Tile from the Island of Romance” is on display at San Francisco International Airport in the F-3 United Gallery until August 2008. The exhibition features Catalina tile and pottery from the collections of guest curator Carole Coates and fellow collector Jerry Kunz. Due to national security regulations you must be a ticketed passenger on United, flying in or out of SFO, to see the exhibit.

“Twenty six miles across the sea...” Those who remember rotary phones and black-and-white television know that the lyrics to this Four Preps song refer to California's Santa Catalina Island, also musically known

as "the Island of Romance." Inhabited by Native Americans for almost 7,000 years, visited by a succession of Spanish explorers, pirates, otter hunters, and ranchers, Catalina Island has long been a source of lively myths and romantic fantasies.

Before the advent of jet travel, the Island was one of Hollywood's favorite retreats and a must-see destination in Southern California. Today it is a cruise ship stopover and a nature sanctuary stewarded by the descendants of chewing gum magnate William Wrigley, Jr., who purchased Catalina sight-unseen in 1919 and spent the following decade developing and promoting his "tile isle."

Catalina's pottery and tile factory was formed in 1927 as a practical endeavor to build the resort town of Avalon with bricks and roofing tiles made from local clay deposits while providing year-round work for its residents. As the range of Catalina's products broadened to include gifts and souvenirs for visitors, the Island enterprise attracted skilled painters, designers, and ceramicists. By 1931 the Catalina Island Pottery and Tile Company was producing more than 4,000 items a month and selling them from stores on the mainland—first marketing their products as Avalonware and later as Catalinaware.



Streets of Avalon adorned with Catalina tiles.



Storefronts welcome shoppers!

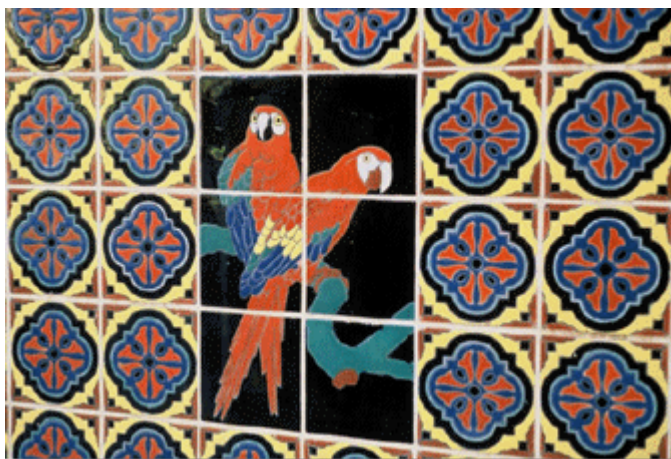
Geography played a significant role in the distinctive pottery that emerged from the small, seaside factory during its brief ten-year existence. Artists working on Catalina—and at other California potteries—were liberated from the conventions of pottery makers closer to the cultural centers of the East Coast and found their inspiration locally. Catalina's pottery reflected the southwestern landscape, California's Spanish Colonial history, and the vivid color palette of the art and ceramics of California's closest neighbor—Mexico.

The wit and ingenuity of Catalina's artists resulted in a great diversity of original pottery and the introduction of new forms for traditional functions. Ashtrays were formed as cowboy hats, salt- and pepper-shakers as cacti, and vases appeared as nautilus shells. Catalina's artists also derived new functions from traditional forms. Lamps were created from vases and urns, and oil jars were produced as decorative pottery for the gardens and patios that featured so prominently in California's indoor-outdoor lifestyle.

Catalina's pottery provided a degree of cheer and affordable luxury for many households during the Great Depression and helped to popularize colorful ceramic dinnerware and kitchenware throughout the United States. Although Catalina Pottery ceased operating after it was purchased by one of its competitors in 1937, its legacy is reflected in the vivid, solid-color pottery found in today's department store showrooms and housewares catalogs.

Catalina Island is increasingly recognized as an important source of California's nearly forgotten ceramic art tradition. Most visitors reach the Island by catamaran from Los Angeles and take walking tours of Avalon's tiled storefronts, fountains, and historic theater and dance hall—all evoking Mr. Wrigley's resourceful and influential Island enterprise.

Courtesy San Francisco Airport Museums. For a copy of the exhibition brochure/poster, email Tim Taylor: timothy.t@sfoarts.org. Be sure to include your snail mail address.



Catalina is recognized for its 6-tile bird panels.



Flint Faience reinstalled at Jane Addams Elementary.

Photo courtesy Diana Barrer.

meeting before we have final approval from our school board. Without your help we would not have known where to begin.” Thanks Diana. That's what we're here for!

Mobley's Magic: Part 2

Last fall **Larry Mobley of Mobley & Co.**, Cohoctah, Michigan, successfully removed a Flint Faience fireplace mantel and drinking fountain from Longfellow Elementary School in Royal Oak, north of Detroit.

Recently, we heard from local resident **Diana Barrer**, who spearheaded the effort to save the tiles. “Larry has just been wonderful and on Jan. 21 he reinstalled the drinking fountain [in Jane Addams Elementary]. It looks more beautiful than we had ever thought. We hope to have enough money raised to reinstall the fireplace after school gets out this summer. We had a great and pleasant meeting with the NAACP, but we have one more

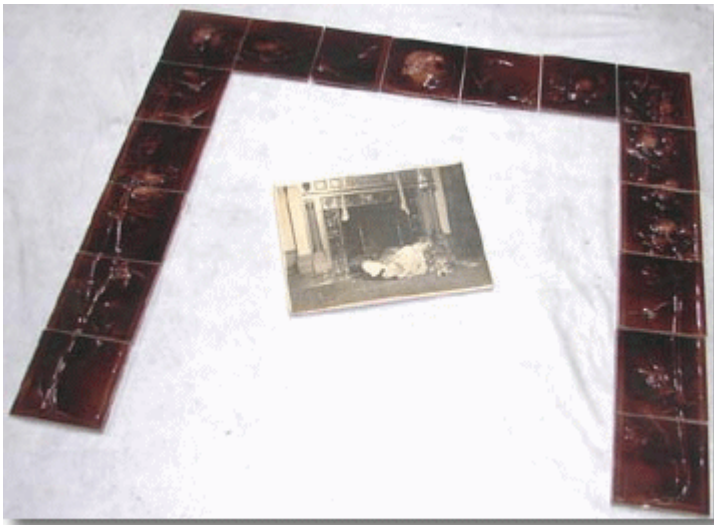
Patsy Rodriguez' Pond in the Round

“I wanted to share with you “**Pond in the Round**,” a public art installation in the first universally accessible playground in the Tampa Bay area. **Freedom Playground** had its grand opening February 2nd, and Tampa turned out with pirates, roughriders, violinists and storytellers. It was a great success and good exposure for our craft. I also wanted to thank Tile Heritage Foundation for its advice along the way. Knowing you are there as a resource helped give me the confidence to take this project on.”



Pond in the Round by Patsy Rodriguez.

Photo by Timothy Healy.



Fireplace surround by J. & J.G. Low Art Tile Works.
Photo courtesy Christine Minnix.

Low and Behold!

THF member **Christine Minnix** at **G & N Flooring by Design** in Stratham, New Hampshire was kind enough to send us this breath-taking fireplace surround by the **J. & J.G. Low Art Tile Works** of Chelsea, Massachusetts. “I thought you would like to see this beautiful fireplace of Low,” she wrote. “The woman [who owned the house] died last year; she was in her 90s.” According to the Low's 1887 catalog, it's called “Butan” with an original copyright date of 1881. What's especially fascinating is that the catalog shows the right side on the left and the left side on the right. The center tile up top is not a portrait but a bowl. It's always unfortunate when tiles are removed from their original location unless, of course, the house was scheduled for demolition. In this particular case the tiles were purchased by an antique dealer whose intention was to resell them.

True's Nouveau Roman

Laurel True, True Mosaics in Oakland writes: “We just installed a mosaic fountain at a new upscale shopping plaza in Lafayette, California. The project was created in our studio and installed on site. I contracted for the project in December of 2006 and the designs were approved in June of 2007 (they suggested Roman style, but I offered 'Nouveau Roman' style). We created the piece in November and December and just installed it this week.”



Fountain in Lafayette by True Mosaics.
Photo courtesy Laurel True.



“These projects can be really drawn out, but it is always so cool to see the result. It was a fun project. There is a restaurant right next to the fountain site that just opened and will eventually have outdoor seating right next to the fountain. So those of you in the Bay Area who find yourselves in Lafayette, you can have a cocktail at Yankee Pier and throw some coinage into the fountain.”

“Born to Dance”

Eric Rattan's slate mosaic, “Born to Dance,” is a triptych, each panel measuring 4 feet by 8 feet (the whole measuring 8' x 12'). The mosaic loosely portrays the teachings of Paracelsus, a 16th century alchemist, philosopher, mystic, astronomer and physician. The mosaic reflects the commonality potentiality of the components of our universe. In this case, the slates coming out of the ground closely relate to our above ground earthly environs and to what we see in the sky. The sylph, the salamander, the nymph and the gnome were imaginary beings inhabiting the four elements once believed to make up the physical world.



“Born to Dance,” a triptych by Eric Rattan.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

“Born to Dance” was created from slate, garnets and miscellaneous colored slates. Symmetry in the piece was achieved by striking the natural fissures in the rock to delaminate and render mirror image pieces. No paints were utilized in the coloration of the stones.

The work is currently on display at Restaurant Magnus in Madison, Wisconsin, the artist's hometown.



Palapa at Todos Artes

Todos Artes in Baja Sur

Todos Santos is a unique, desert oasis on the Tropic of Cancer, nestled amongst ancient orchards of mango and palm, with spectacular views overlooking its white sand beaches and the Pacific Ocean. The town is located in Mexico near the southern tip of Baja Sur, equidistant between the resort cities of Cabo San Lucas to the south

and La Paz to the northeast. Blessed with a favorable climate, Todos Santos has become a haven for artists, craftsmen, surfers and travelers seeking adventure, natural beauty and a healthy lifestyle. It is here that mosaic artist **Donna Billick** has established **Todos Artes**, a center for seasonal workshops in tile making and the art of mosaic.

At Donna's invitation, Sheila Menzies and I joined tile makers Irene de Watterville and Katia McGuirk for five days in early January. Fun in the sun? Fun, yes, but we were inside most of the time working on a 80 sq. ft. mosaic for one of the bathrooms in the complex.



Plumbers Donna and Katia at work.



"It's got to fit somewhere!"

another large building that Donna has built from scratch. It houses two separate units, each with a bathroom/shower. Each unit is equipped with a small kitchen and a living room. Again the Saltillo pavers throughout pull the whole complex together.



Irene: "Even the French don't make tiles this hard!"

The walls are painted in an assortment of bright Mexican-style colors and the whole place is held together by the 12 x 12 Saltillo pavers that have been expertly set.

Keep an eye on E-News and Workshops at the Tile Heritage website as there will be opportunities for you to join us in this magical place in the not too distant future.

Joe Taylor

The first day we cut the backer board to fit the space in one of the shower rooms. We did two walls, each 8 x 5 feet, with the boards stacked on two adjacent walls. We then laid out the boards on tables in the workshop/studio and set the mosaic on the flat surface. Donna did a rough sketch on paper, as she does, and Sheila and Irene worked out the center of the design while Donna, Katia and I were at the beach. They accomplished so much in the three or so hours we were gone that the rest of us pitched in with gusto.

There's a large courtyard behind this building and beyond it



The mission gets its final touches.

The ceilings are tall, like maybe 10 feet or more. Up top is her palapa where she has a full sink and counters, a wet bar, and a dining area, all under a grass roof. From that height you have a 360 degree view of the ocean, the town, and the far off mountains. It's pretty incredible.

The complex itself—Donna calls it **Todos Artes**—is very impressive. Although there's a lot of work yet to be done, it's incredible what she's accomplished in a few short years. The building closest to the street has three bedrooms, each with a separate bathroom and shower, a full kitchen, a large common room that's currently unfurnished, and the studio/workshop.



Mosaic complete with the final taping.