



# E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



May & June



2009

[THF Home](#)

(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](mailto:foundation@tileheritage.org))



**Mystery Tile: a detail of a fireplace mantel tile in a residence in Ashland, Kentucky built in 1909. Can you name the tile manufacturer?**

## Here's What's Below:

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## Preserving Imagery at THF

From Brechelle Ware, Collections Manager

Some may not realize the amount of material amassed by the Tile Heritage Foundation over the last 20 plus years; it's quite impressive. As the Collections Manager, I spend my time sorting, cleaning, accessioning and digitizing these collections. It's a laborious job requiring patience and attention to detail.

Over the last year the focus of my work has been on the digitizing of the extensive slide collection accumulated by THF. I estimate there are 20,000 slides housed in the THF archives, images ranging alphabetically from the work of contemporary artist **Cristina Acosta** to tiles produced by the **Zanesville Majolica Company** well over 100 years ago. Every slide has a story. Documenting that story has been my main task along with the preservation of the image.



**"Venus and David" by Cristina Acosta. 12" x 12", 1992. Courtesy of the artist.**

Slides have a shelf life of approximately 20 years, depending on the quality of the film and storage facilities. Slides from the 1970s and 1980s were processed and set with formaldehyde. As this chemical wears off, with exposure to light and humidity, images begin to disappear and colors start to change. Some might become green with age while other brands of film may turn to rosy beige. There is no recovery process known to bring these lost images back; the only answer is to scan them as soon as possible. The slides are carefully documented and sent to a scanning service. When they return I add the metadata, which includes their individual stories. Great care has been taken over the years to properly store the THF collection as I have yet to come across a damaged or faded slide.



Zanesville Majolica Company, 6" x 6", circa 1885.  
Private collection.

As we move through the 21st century, the viability of an organization like Tile Heritage depends on the ability to present these collections in a clean and concise format for public review. Digital archive management is becoming a necessity for all institutions large and small. Although costly, the transfer of information is imperative for the credibility of the organization and the longevity of the collection itself.

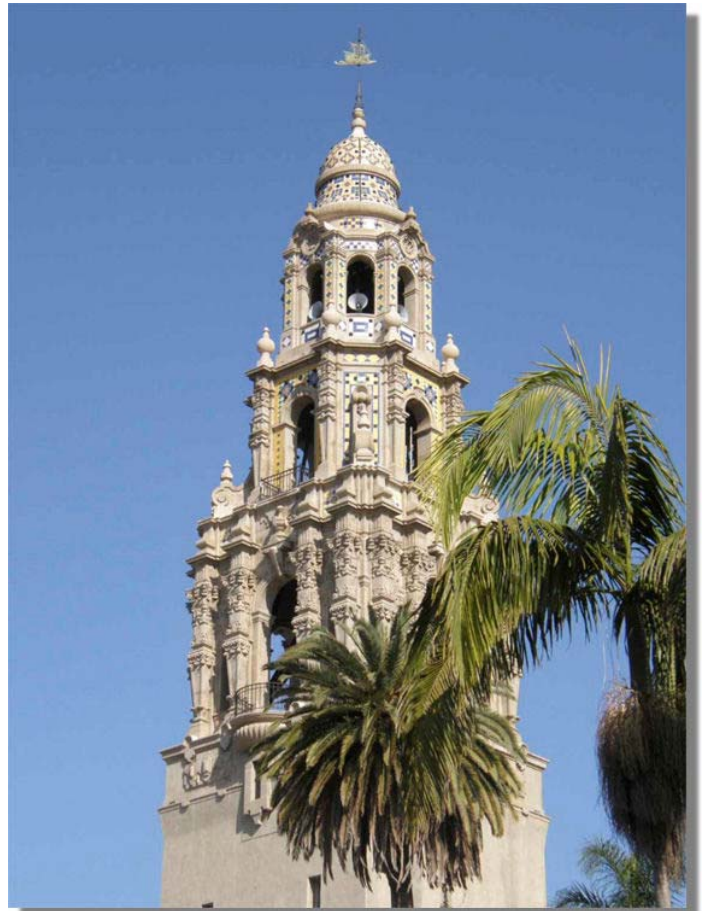
I look forward to being able to present these images and stories as the database develops. Preservation of ceramic history is most important, and without this vital step it would not be possible.

### American Mosaic Summit: San Diego

The [Society of American Mosaic Artists \(SAMA\)](#) held its 8th annual conference under sunny skies in San Diego, March 25-28, 2009. The 4-day event attended by roughly 400 mosaic enthusiasts from throughout the U.S. and beyond involved workshops, lectures, tours, exhibitions and included any number of gay social gatherings.

Sheila Menzies and Joe Taylor, cofounders of Tile Heritage, were on hand to present “**Mosaic Musing: Morphing Ceramic Tile,**” a PowerPoint with imagery selected from the Foundation’s archival library demonstrating how ceramic materials provide a wealth of fabricating alternatives for the mosaic artist/designer. Whether the result of breaking tiles into random shapes, meticulously nipping pieces into specific sizes, or producing intentionally designed pieces cut from wet clay and fired, the resulting installations that were shown ranged from the strikingly beautiful to the awe-inspiring.

We’d like to acknowledge and thank the hundreds of artists who have sent us images of their work over the years and specifically for this presentation. In addition to a series of historic installations dating back to the turn



Tiled tower of the Museum of Man, Balboa Park, San Diego.  
Tiles were produced by California China Products Co.  
in 1914-15.



of the last century, we selected the work of the following contemporary artists: Ahmed Agrama, Tina Ayers, Marlo Bartels, [Kirk Beck and Susan Dannenfelser](#) , Donna Billick, Gail Corcoran, Niki de Saint Phalle, Cary Esser, [Chuck Fitzgerald](#), Dmitry Grudsky, Barbara Grygutis, [Deborah Hecht](#), Judith Inglese, Stephanie Jurs and Robert Stout, Elle Terry Leonard, Mark Mackay, Cynthia Patterson and Hank Saxe, [Betsy Schultz](#), [Sue Springer](#), [Mary Taylor](#), Ron Taylor, and Susan Wink. A great group!



**Detail of mosaic at God's Extended Hand designed by Jeremy Wright.**

Co., 1915) and the adjacent **Alcazar Gardens**, where the fountains have been recently restored. Moving from the park into the city proper, we stopped at **God's Extended Hand** mission at 16th St. and Island Ave. where artist **Jeremy Wright** met with us, introducing a half dozen of the young people who had personally worked on the mosaic that spans two sides of the building. Four years in the making, the mosaic demonstrates what happens when little broken pieces of pottery and tiles find caring hands and willing hearts. The mission operates on a total budget of approx. \$100,000 a year and was able to serve more than 84,000 meals in 2008.

**Kim Emerson**, THF member and an accomplished mosaic artist from San Diego, organized the daylong tour that began in Balboa Park with the tiled tower and dome of the **Museum of Man (California China Products**



**Jeremy Wright explains both the process and the social significance of the mosaic work at God's Extended Hand.**



**Detail of "Neighbors Helping Neighbors."**

glass mosaic designed and fabricated by the **Botti Studio of Architectural Arts**, a Chicago-based company that dates back to 16th century Italy. Titled "**Neighbors Helping Neighbors: A Tribute to Donors, Volunteers & Staff**," the mural stands 72 feet tall and stretches to 42 feet wide. Installed in 2003, it's composed of 226 separate but integrated 3' x 5' slabs of cement, totaling more than 6.75 tons.

Just down 16th Street at Imperial we found **Father Joe Carroll's St. Vincent de Paul Village**, which houses 900 families and serves over 3000 meals each day with an annual budget that exceeds \$35 million. The aesthetic centerpiece of the huge complex is what's reputed to be the world's largest (3000+ sq. ft.) stained



**This stained glass mural, designed and fabricated by Botti Studio in Chicago, is reputed to be the largest in the world.**





**“Coming Together”**  
by Niki de Saint Phalle.

We stopped for a prepared picnic lunch on the lawn adjacent to the Convention Center at 8th Ave. and Harbor Dr. where we could admire firsthand one of many monumental projects by the late **Niki de Saint Phalle**, the mosaic artist whose whimsical creatures have endeared her to millions around the world. **“Coming Together,”** rising 38 feet in height, depicts the human face divided in half with one side mirrored and the other multi-colored ceramic, the two sides representing the duality of the self. The project was completed in 2001.

Sculptor **Donal Hord** arrived in San Diego in 1916 at the age of 14, spending the remainder of his life there. In 1939 the WPA commissioned him to create **“Guardian of the Waters,”** which stands in front of the San Diego County Administration Building, which itself is adorned



**Donal Hord’s “Guardian of the Waters”**  
stands before the San Diego County  
Administration Building.

with decorative tiles made at **Tropico Potteries** in Glendale. Highlighting the 23-foot tall Hord sculpture is the handsome mosaic that rings the piece at eye-level depicting the bounty of the land enriched by rain showers from above, symbolized by kneeling nudes pouring water from jars.



**“Pearl of the Pacific” fountain**  
designed by James Hubbell.



**Katia McGuirk (left) and Diane Ullman**  
warm themselves  
on one of the two Chinese fans.

**“Pearl of the Pacific”** is a recently completed piece in **Pacific Rim Park** designed by artist **James Hubbell** assisted by architectural students from San Diego and sister cities Vladivostok, Tijuana and Yantai, China. Made of formed and poured concrete, this dramatic sculptural environment incorporates a pearl fountain and Chinese fans with columns topped with ironwork suggestive of Russian calligraphy. A beautiful mosaic design surrounding the fountain depicts the cardinal points of the compass and includes directions to San Diego’s sister cities of the Pacific Rim. The park provides a symbol of peace, friendship and cooperation.



In contrast to the subtlety of Hubbell’s “Pearl,” [Kim Emerson’s](#) water sculpture “**Ocean Dances**” at **Sun Harbor Marina** provides a dramatic splash of excitement with its 400 square feet of colorful ceramic tile mosaic. The project was the art component for the newly remodeled marina on San Diego Bay. The waves are sculpted from expanded poly-styrene (EPS), imbedded with rebar, and covered with thick cement. Water flows from the top of the waves down into the basin below. The fish are Albacore Tuna, the main catch for the local sports fishing fleet.



Reflective complexities of “Ocean Dances,” a dynamic mosaic fountain by [Kim Emerson](#), who can be seen to the right in the background.



Interior dome at **St. George’s Serbian Orthodox Church** designed and fabricated at **Mosaicos Italianos in Mexico**.

**St. George’s Serbian Orthodox Church**, overlooking Mission Bay, was designed by architect George Lykos and dedicated in 1969. The priest first contracted for mosaic panels

to be installed above the doors and then decided to have the whole church interior covered with mosaics. **Giovanni Nastrucci**, a principal in **Mosaicos Italianos** of Mexico City,

provided the tile and fabricated the pictures in his workshop there. They were shipped to Tijuana and then installed by **Publio Cavallini and Son**, who relocated from Texas, setting up a workshop in San Diego.

**A final note:** a special thanks to **Laurel True** at IMA, [the Institute of Mosaic Art](#) in Oakland. She donated the grand prize—a weeklong Mural Making Intensive Workshop at the Institute—for the Tile Heritage raffle at the American Mosaic Summit! Thanks Laurel!!

### **NCECA at a Glance**

A note of warmest thanks to longtime THF sponsor, [Laguna Clay Company](#), for embracing the presence of Tile Heritage during the pre-NCECA workshop presented at **Marjon Ceramics** in Phoenix, April 6-7, 2009 as well as at the NCECA conference later that week at the vendor expo. NCECA, the **National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts**, holds its national conference in a different U.S. city each year, attracting literally thousands of clay enthusiasts.

The workshop was a high point and declared a great success by the ceramists who attended. **Josh DeWeese**, master potter and past executive director of the **Archie Bray Foundation**, demonstrated throwing, altering and construction of vessels; and [Frank Giorgini](#), the master ceramist of UDU drum and ceramic tile fame,



Not at all intimidated by the size of DeWeese pottery, [Frank Giorgini](#) explains how a 6x6 tile has equal integrity.





**And Josh DeWeese demonstrates that it's also possible to make SMALL pots on a wheel!**

with a number of both historic and contemporary tiles from **Joe Koons'** personal collection.

NCECA is an important educational event, and we at Tile Heritage want to encourage more tile makers and architectural ceramists to attend. Being able to interface with hundreds of ceramics teachers, potters and suppliers and to see the many fabulous exhibitions of current works in clay makes NCECA an event like no other.

Our collaboration with Laguna Clay placed Tile Heritage in the middle of this important arena. What we could never have accomplished alone we achieved in grand fashion thanks to the assistance and generosity of Laguna as our sponsor. Thanks again!



**Art Tile Villagers share a moment's peace at Coverings. From the left: Lee Gruber and David del Junco, Syzygy Tileworks; Judy Hodges, MacKenzie-Childs; Karim Motawi, Motawi Tileworks; and Bryan Byrd, American Restoration Tile.**

demonstrated model making, layering and incising techniques that he uses for his tile-inspired "Off the Wall" dinnerware. Both teachers worked well together sharing their experience and wisdom freely with the audience. There were lively discussions about clay bodies, glazes and firing techniques—pottery as an expressive art form ensued. Josh presented a PowerPoint of historical and contemporary references about the Bray's contribution to clay, and Frank presented images of his studio tile-making processes as well as a screening of his new Udu drum DVD.

Laguna's booth during the NCECA conference itself was an interesting and interactive space with wheel-throwing demonstrations as well as access to the numerous clays, glazes and kiln furniture the company is famous for. The knowledgeable staff was on hand to answer every imaginable question. Tile Heritage inhabited a section of the booth enhanced



**Laguna's Joe Koons poses with Nancy Krug of Arcana Tileworks.**

## Coverings and Beyond

In April this year Joe Taylor and Sheila Menzies had the pleasure once again of visiting **Chicago**, the city we associate with fabulous architectural terra cotta. Hosted by our close friends, **Pat and Jim Evanko**, the founders of **ME Tile Company**, we were there to attend Coverings, the international tile exposition, where Tile Heritage was a guest of the Tile Council of North America. The theme for the Tile Council pavilion was 'greening' your tile making and installation. For our booth area we chose an ancient tile panel image of the Ishtar Gate in Babylon to portray the longevity of a tile installation—equating a product's sustainability with its endurance. The floor plan at TCNA was especially inviting this year with everyone's booth space open (rather than closed) to the expo floor. The central social area of the pavilion drew people to gather, greet, meet and converse.

Although this year's show was much quieter than some with fewer large companies and artisan tile makers presenting their work and fewer people attending in general, Coverings is still a very important place for us to be, allowing us the opportunity to actually meet face to face with some of our longtime sponsors and supporters, a vital connection in maintaining support for the Foundation. Our presence at Coverings also keeps Tile Heritage visible in the tile community, where we engage many people, encourage membership, and promote the purchase of tile books and catalog reproductions. This year [Andru Eron](#) and [Chuck Fitzgerald](#), longtime THF members, assisted us in our booth. Chuck was once again being honored for his tile craftsmanship, this time with a TileLetter Award from [NTCA](#).



Books and catalogs for sale at Tile Heritage!

Our 4th DVD sponsored by Coverings, “**A World of Historic Tile in Architecture II,**” was well received by those who had the opportunity to view it during the four day event. It was presented on the big screen prior to some general sessions, between installation demonstrations on the convention floor, and daily on the hotel shuttle buses. The DVD is an educational tool that we greatly value producing each year. Our hope and expectation is that the video will be converted to a PowerPoint, which will lend itself to numerous educational formats beyond the convention floor.



A sitting room at the **Driehaus Museum** in Chicago dating to the 1880s featuring a stunning, glass mosaic fireplace mantel, as yet unattributed.

The Evankos were marvelous hosts, their new home conveniently located a short 20-minute walk from the convention center at McCormick Place. Jim served as our chef extraordinaire and Patty as our city guide when we had the opportunity to tour the town, visiting some unusual sites around the city. THF members **Joe and Rosalie Dixler** had previously informed us about the recently opened **Driehaus Museum**, a 19th century mansion at 40 East Erie Street in downtown Chicago. A byproduct of America's Gilded Age, the house was built by Samuel Nickerson from 1879 to 1883, a perfect time period for elaborate tile installations. Augmenting many of the original furnishings, the **Low art tiles** are among the most spectacular in the house. There are also several glass mosaic fireplace mantels, and several with English tiles, among them one we identified with a pair of William Morris tiles! Known as the “Marble Palace” for its exquisite assortment of exotic marbles, the Nickerson mansion was the largest private residence in Chicago at the time it was completed. Today, it demands a visit! See [www.driehausmuseum.org](http://www.driehausmuseum.org) for details.



Eclectic façade of what was **Carl Street Studios**, dating from the late 1920s.

It was THF sponsor **Ted Lowitz, Lowitz & Co.** in Chicago, who asked if we were familiar with the **Carl Street Studios**, a complex of what are today residential units on West Burton Place just west of LaSalle in what was at one time a fashionable district in the city. From what we heard, and later read online, one of the more distinctive features of the complex is the extensive and innovative use of marbles, terrazzo and tiles, in particular **Batchelder, Grueby, Rookwood and Teco!**

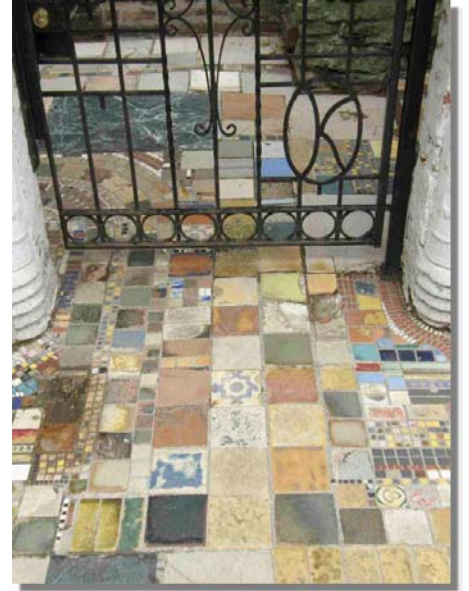




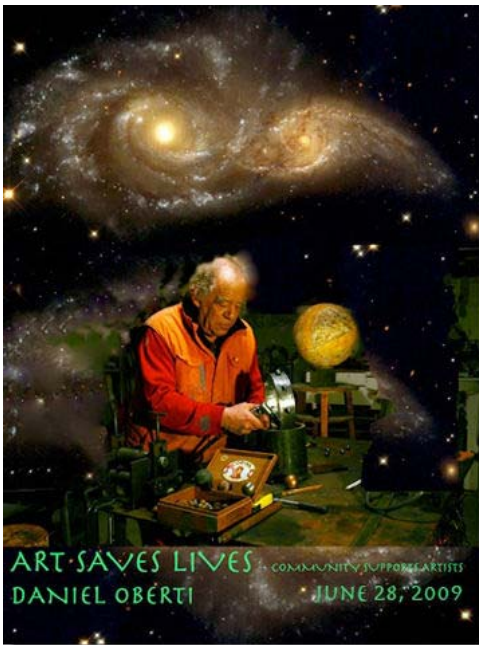
“Hey, look at all these decorative tiles in the sidewalk, of all places!”

The building, originally built in the 1880s, had been purchased in the late twenties by **Sol Kogen**, a young, well-to-do artist, who together with his friend and fellow artist **Edgar Miller** developed a series of unique art studio apartments, using bricks and an assortment of textural elements to mask the exterior and tiles to adorn many of the interior spaces. The whole idea was to make the building itself an artistic statement in addition to the studios inside.

What attracted our attention immediately were the randomly placed decorative tiles embedded in the sidewalk in front of the building, drawing one’s attention to the artistic intention of the place. A few tiles could be seen set into the exterior brickwork as well creating a high degree of intrigue. We were unable to enter the complex that day, but we have made contact with the manager who has graciously invited us to return for a tour. That we will do!



Sample of the decorative assortment at the entrance to the studios.



### Art Saves Lives

I last saw our friend **Daniel Oberti** (1945-2009) on the bus a couple of years ago. I was on my way to Sausalito to meet our kids at Heath Ceramics to do some shopping. When the bus stopped in the village of Cotati, I recognized Daniel when he boarded—he was not the kind of person one could easily miss. Although I was sitting in the front seat, he didn’t see me—he was too busy searching his pockets unsuccessfully for the right change. By this time the bus was moving south. “What are you a starving artist?” I asked, handing him the change he needed. He then joined me and the two of us had a nice long chat.

It must have been in the mid-’70s when Daniel and I first met. He had come to McIntyre Tile Company where I worked to fabricate and fire tiles of his own design for a local commission. Over the years Sheila and I would run into him at art fairs and gallery exhibitions, and we would on occasion visit his studio in Sebastopol. He was an extraordinary individual, creative, energetic, likeable, generous, just fun

to be around. Our lives have been enriched by his friendship, and we do miss him.

As he rides the celestial spheres, Daniel’s website remains operative: <http://www.danieloberti.com> . It’s a joy!

Joe Taylor

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