



# E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



**September**  **October 2008**

(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))

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**It's a Mystery!**  
**A portion of a 6' by 3' mural in a home in Spokane, Washington.**  
**Looks like it depicts an early printing or letter press.**  
**Any ideas? Let us know!**  
**Photo courtesy of Wendy Budge.**



## Grab a THF Logo

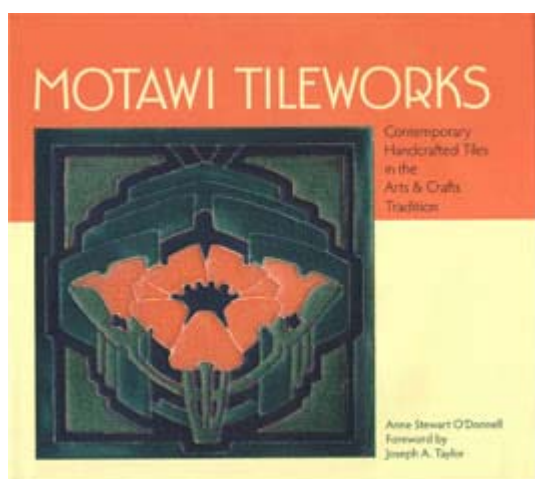
In recent years many Tile Heritage members have requested a **THF logo** to display on their websites. It's certainly honoring for the Foundation to have its graphic symbol displayed among all those beautiful tiles in cyberspace. You may simply grab it here and drag it to your site, linking it to <http://www.tileheritage.org>.

## THF Commemoratives in Stock!

The 2008 Tile Heritage Commemorative is now in stock. Designed and produced by **Chuck Fitzgerald at Fitz Tile** in El Cajon, California, the “**Hands On**” tile features the THF logo embraced by a human hand. This unique ceramic piece, measuring approximately 6" x 7", is equipped with an incised notch on the back for ease in hanging, and each tile is personally signed by the maker. (The tile was originally produced in late 2007—[see here](#)—the current batch is dated 2008.) The tile may be purchased from Tile Heritage. Price: \$45 (apply your member discount!), add 7.75% sales tax for California residents, plus \$8 for Priority mail.



THF Commemorative Tile for 2008



### New Book: Motawi Tileworks

Contemporary Handcrafted Tiles in the Arts & Crafts Tradition  
By Anne Stewart O'Donnell

This luscious new book from Pomegranate Press is a tile treasure melding historic traditions with contemporary fine art tile work. Truly a 'must have' book! It is an illustrated essay, 112 pages in length, following the development of the **Motawi Tileworks** from its inception in an Ann Arbor, Michigan garage, converted to a studio, through the present day studio factory that employs roughly thirty people. **Nawal** and **Karim Motawi** together have crafted a successful company through vision, innovation, creativity and impeccable design. Inspired and nurtured by the works of artisans that have come before them, especially in the Arts & Crafts

movement, the sister and brother team have firmly established their tile work as a standard to strive to attain in the world of contemporary art tiles.

**Anne Stewart O'Donnell**, Editor-in-Chief of *Style 1900* magazine, is most engaging as she relates the Motawi story. The Foreword by **Joseph Taylor** of Tile Heritage further validates the exceptional artistry and tile magic performed within their walls. The photography is excellent and leads the reader through the whole tile making process, presenting over 125 pictures of Motawi tiles, murals and installations. It's a gem! Buy it for yourself and gift it to your friends, especially if they are interested in Arts & Crafts design, fine sculptural elements and fabulous glazes.

Reviewed and enjoyed by Sheila Menzies

You may purchase this new book from Tile Heritage for \$29.95 (CA residents add 7.75% sales tax) plus \$4.50 for shipping/handling. See <http://www.tileheritage.org/THF-BookOrderForm.html>.

## Documentation Assists Preservation Effort

Foundation member **Kristin Henderson**, an ardent preservationist, recently called upon Tile Heritage to provide material documenting the importance of the tile work at the **Downtown Post Office in Martinez, California**. This period building—designed and constructed as part of the Depression-era WPA—was being nominated for placement on the **National Register of Historic Places**. THF wrote a statement to help identify and explain why the tile work was an important component that added to the character of the building.

This project is an example that inspires us to make an appeal to membership and the public at large to appreciate that preservation of historic ceramic surfaces is integral to the Foundation's mission. THF has the capacity to assess a wide variety of types of tile work and to explain the importance of each within a broad context. Please don't hesitate to call upon the Foundation for this kind of assistance. When the preservation of a historic building is at issue, such documentation may carry considerable weight.

(In a future issue of E-News we hope to announce that efforts on behalf of the Downtown Post Office in Martinez have been successful, that it has been placed on the National Register. In the meantime, see <http://tileofmartinez.multiply.com>.)



Interior of Downtown Post Office, Martinez, California.

Photos courtesy of Kristin Henderson.



Rene Murray

## Transformations: 6x6

The **Clay Art Center** in Port Chester, New York is presenting an exciting national invitational exhibition titled *Transformations: 6x6* at the nearby **Choy Gallery** from **October 3rd to November 22, 2008**. The exhibition features more than 600 6 x 6 tiles by over 180 noted clay artists and is being held in conjunction with *All Fired Up!: A Celebration of Clay in Westchester* (County, NY).

The goal of *Transformations: 6x6* is to have all participating artists, many of whom do not usually work with tiles, apply their creative voice and aesthetic into the format of a 6 x 6 tile. The walls of the gallery will be filled with work that has been transformed from three dimensions into two, creating a visual assortment of color and content along with a synchronization of design and purpose.

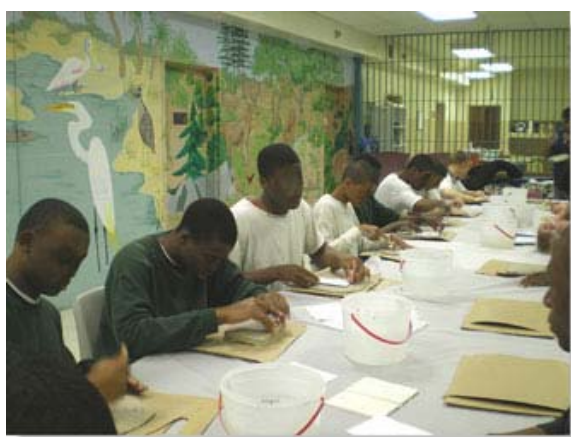


Immediately before the opening reception **Susan Tunick**, president of **Friends of Terra Cotta**, also a tile maker and mosaic artist, delivered a lecture entitled *American Decorative Tiles*, reviewing the origins of decorative tiles in the U.S. and exploring some of the unique aspects of the field that developed as innovative potters and tile makers began to find their own voices. Tunick's focus was on site-specific installations, showing the valuable contribution of tile to the history of design in the decorative arts and architecture.

Transformations: 6x6 was made possible in part by the Arts Alive program of the Westchester Arts Council, with funding from the Decentralization Program of the New York State Council for the Arts. For more information, please contact Leigh Taylor Mickelson at [leigh@clayartcenter.org](mailto:leigh@clayartcenter.org).



**Susan Tunick**



**Young men engage in the basics of tile making.**  
Photos courtesy of Sharon Jones.

Ms. Jones was excited to be involved with the young men in Columbia, especially after reading about a similar program in Kansas City, Missouri. The Kansas City program, called MyArts, has produced significant results. According to a study conducted by the Criminal Justice Department at Central Missouri State University, the MyArts and related programs have resulted in a measurable increase in such areas as self-esteem, learning, effort, and attitude. The study also found that court referrals for arts program participants had dropped by 75% and substantial improvements were seen in their grade points.

The Columbia program is just beginning but both Jones and Kice are optimistic that they will see some of the same results in their program. According to Jones, "Many of the young men were hesitant at first, but once they got their hands in the clay, they opened up and expressed themselves in a creative and positive way. This is evident in their final artwork which is really exciting and expressive."

### **Art in Juvenile Institution Reveals Talent, Hope** *Youth Offenders Create Art that will have Positive, Lasting Impact*

After months and sometimes years of creating problems for the community, a small group of inmates at Columbia South Carolina's Juvenile Detention Center will now have another means to give back.

A unique program was introduced by **Jimmee-Lu Kice**, Project Coordinator at the Center, which allowed inmates to decorate ceramic tiles that will be used by Habitat for Humanity in homes for victims of Hurricane Katrina. In order to expand on the ceramic tile program, Ms. Kice recruited **Sharon Jones**, artist and owner of **SJ Studios, LLC** for the job of teaching the craft of making hand-sculpted tiles from raw clay.



**Tile artist Sharon Jones oversees the activities.**



A colorful example of a relief tile framed in mosaic.

At the start of the program the young men were asked to create a design for their tile that represented their vision of “Life” and what was important to them. Many created tiles with gang symbols, dollar signs and “Rest in Peace” designs with the names and dates of the deaths of friends and loved ones. Jones discussed the impact of thinking beyond their past and encouraged them to create a second set of tiles that represented the lives they wanted to lead in the future. The new tiles were filled with symbols of hope and beauty, including three-dimensional designs of palm trees, sail boats, sunshine and flowers. Jones and Kice agreed that giving the young men an opportunity to create rather than destroy has been instrumental in opening yet another window to the possibilities waiting for them. They saw that none of the young men believed they were artistic or even creative at the start of the program, but they dug into the clay and they really had fun. Jones hopes to continue working with the Center in the future and looks to expand to other facilities next year.

## DNA in a Swirl of Color

In a swirl of color and small bits and pieces, a mosaic image emerges revealing the foundations of evolution, the structure and chemistry of DNA, the foundations of agriculture and the microbes and pests that challenge our food supply. This is the story of the **Art/Science**

**Fusion** program on the **University of California at Davis** campus, how scientists and artists catalyze a new way of giving students ownership of scientific understanding, and how the art/science fusion process allows the seeds of community to grow and a “sense of place” to emerge and expand. This is the story of a process, the unfolding of a new way of teaching and learning where layers of rich experience and creativity are more important than a single outcome.



Over six hundred children from five elementary schools participated in this project with their science teachers.

Photos courtesy of Donna Billick.

Our goal is a case history that opens doors for educators and provides a framework for bringing art/science fusion into their classrooms and communities. The art to science connection inherent in the teaching and learning methods we propose supplies a bridge that engages people, young and old, captures their attention and gives them skills and knowledge to build the wisdom needed to help the planet endure and thrive.

The **Robbins Hall Columns** renovation project was conceived as a collaboration between the **UC Davis Plant Genomics Program**, **Billick Rock Art**, and the **UC Davis Art/Science Fusion Program**. The goal was to unite science and art to catalyze innovative life-long learning and contribute a beautifully aesthetic, informative, unique, permanent, and durable addition to the architecture of Robbins Hall. The approach was unique in that it engaged scientists, artists, elementary school teachers and students in a collaboration revolving around the genre of Community Build.



**Donna Billick**, MFA, founder and director of **Billick Rock Art** and co-founder and co-director of the **UC Davis Art/Science Fusion Program**, led and facilitated all phases of the project. **Diane Ullman**, PhD, the other co-founder and co-director of the UC Davis Art/Science Fusion Program, helped in evaluating the program in preparation for the creation of a book on the entire process. The UC Davis Plant Genomics Program, directed by **Dr. Pamela Ronald** coordinated participation of five UC Davis scientists (academic coordinators, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students).



**The finished columns  
at Robbins Hall on the UC Davis Campus.**

Billick facilitated bringing the instructional programs developed by the scientists to five elementary school science teachers and their pupils (670 kindergarten and fifth grade students). From conception to translation through realization, all above agents worked in collaboration as a catalyst to science education and the creative experience.



**Mosaic artist Mark Rivera supervises  
the taping of the panels.**

In the months ahead this whole process in book form will be available to educators nationwide. Tile Heritage plans to add the links and resources to “Clay in the Classroom” here at the THF website. For more information: <http://artsciencefusion.ucdavis.edu/index.html> or contact Donna Billick: [rockartus@aol.com](mailto:rockartus@aol.com) or Diane Ullman: [@deullman@ucdavis.edu](mailto:@deullman@ucdavis.edu).

## **Restoring a Vintage Fireplace**

Tile Heritage was contacted by a commercial property owner in **Berkeley, California** to determine the provenance of the fireplace in a circa 1920's building. The fireplace was in need of restoration.

After a careful examination and evaluation by our knowledgeable group of three, we determined that the majority of the structural fireplace tiles were made of cement with the heatilator vents being ceramic as were some small decorative fascia elements. The entire fascia and surrounding mantle had been painted multiple times and from its appearance had been stripped using harsh chemicals leaving a badly stained and marred finish on the cement tile and on the grout. In addition, one of the vent tiles at the top of the fireplace was badly damaged; it needed to be repaired or replaced. The hearth tiles were further marred with black fireplace sealing epoxy that had not been cleaned up after a previous repair. All in all it was a mess but probably could be salvaged and restored.



**A fireplace in need of repair.**



**Detail of the vent tiles.**

could be achieved at a modest cost. The first move was to fully clean the surface of the fireplace and see clearly what flaws in the finish existed. After cleaning, the fireplace looked very raw and dry. Next came the initial refinishing of the cement tiles. I decided that the best outcome could be achieved using layers of waxes, both colored and clear. These were mineral spirit-based and helped to create a receptive 'skin' over the raw looking cement tile finish.

The question was, since the installation did not consist of historic ceramic craftsman-style tiles, what type of restoration



**Sheila takes an impression from an intact vent tile.**



**Vent repair in place.**

The next step was to prepare to mold a replacement piece for the broken vent. I used a soft molding material and when it was dry I poured the mold using a totally non-shrinking, strong plaster. After it dried the next task was to finesse and install the molded replacement piece into the broken vent. This was accomplished successfully and the vents were then repainted with a graphite-colored paint that blended with the fireplace background.

When the paint on the vents was dry, the cement tiles were again waxed with a pigmented product to restore the integrity of the tonal qualities lost in the earlier paint removal process. The wax finish was buffed to a soft sheen and the whole fireplace had a lustrous finish once again. It is a very satisfactory outcome and the client is happy. (Coming soon: look for the story in full detail in Special Features.)

Sheila Menzies



**Restored fascia. Job complete.**



## Follow-up Report from Royal Oak



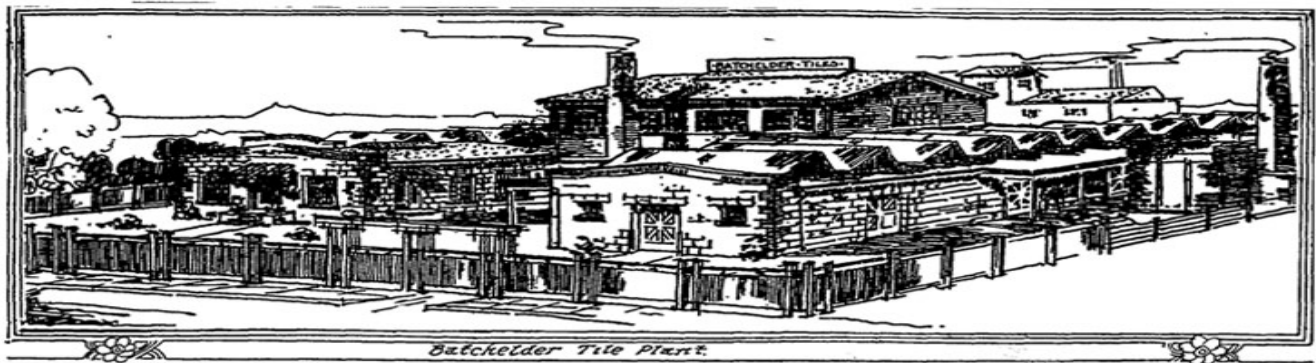
Larry Mobley and Diana Barrer pose in front of the newly restored Flint Faience fireplace mantel at Addams Elementary in Royal Oak, Michigan. Photo courtesy of Diana Barrer.

It is with great pleasure that I send you these photos of the reinstalled **Flint Faience** fireplace at **Addams Elementary** in **Royal Oak, Michigan**. Although the school board did not approve of the reinstallation of The Story of Little Black Sambo tiles, we were very lucky to find replacement Flint Faience tiles of the exact size from another closed Royal Oak elementary school that were saved by one of the district's maintenance workers a few years ago. As always, we could not have completed this project without the superb craftsmanship of **Larry Mobley** and the ceramic expertise of local ceramic artist, **Laurie Eisenhardt**. We also had the support of our principal, Judi Juneau, the school board, and our generous PTA membership, which raised the money to save this historic artwork for the children of our school. Thank you for all your information and expertise.

Diana Barrer, Addams Elementary PTA Communications VP

## Batchelder Tile Plant Revealed

From the *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1920: **Batchelder Tile Company is Enlarging Factory**. "Plans have been prepared...by local architects, the contracts for construction have been awarded, and the work is now proceeding. Until recently the plant of the **Batchelder Tile Company**, manufacturers of the well-known **Batchelder tile**, was located in Pasadena. Several months ago the company purchased a site of one and one-half acres at 2633 Artesian Street, in the north end and commenced the erection of the first units of its plant. The Pasadena factory was permanently closed last month and work has been conducted in the units of the local plant which were completed."



The Batchelder Tile Company has removed its main plant from Pasadena to the industrial section of Los Angeles and is increasing its capacity through the construction of additional units, Krempel & Erkes, architects. From the *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1920.

"Plans have been prepared by **Krempel & Erkes** for a new group of buildings consisting of a mixing plant, blower house, boiler house, kilns and office building, in addition to the main factory. At the present time work is being concentrated on the new shipping and warehouse unit, comprising an area of about 12,000 square feet of floor space. When this work is completed the construction of additional kilns will be started immediately. All of the buildings are to be of mill construction, with brick and tile walls. The sawtooth type of roof was adopted in order to assure a maximum amount of even light during the working hours. Through the adoption of the unit system, the company can expand and enlarge its plant according to the requirements of the business. The new factory is served by both the Santa Fe and Salt Lake railroads".

Special thanks to **Ernest Marquez** for discovering this important piece of tile history and to THF member **Cristi Walden** for bringing it to our attention. The article is made available through the Los Angeles Public Library Database program Proquest.