



E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



Sept. - Nov.  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)

Here's What's Below:

[Tile Images Available](#)

[Camel Before the Pyramids](#)

[Mobley Rescues Masterpiece](#)

[Tilers Gone Wild in the Northwest](#)

[Inspired by SAMA](#)

[Community Embraces Mural](#)

[Youth Group Captures History](#)

[Tile Heritage Prize](#)



Tilemaker Joan Gardiner shows off her ceramic "eye piece," from her just-completed project at the Rust Library in Leesburg, Virginia, which will be featured in December's E-News.

Photo courtesy of the artist.



Looking west from Ross Lake dam on Hwy. 20, North Cascades

Photo courtesy Brechelle Ware.

Tile Images Available (and Wanted)

From Brechelle Ware, THF Collections Manager

The image database at the Tile Heritage Foundation continues to grow. Now with over 22,000 images, organized and identified, we're able to provide an amazing selection of historic, tile-related photos. A helpful resource for anyone looking for that perfect tile or tile installation shot, whether it's of a complete Malibu bathroom or a close up of a mosaic you saw in passing, we most likely will have an image to provide. Online viewing is one of the exciting new options for presentation. No more CDs in the mail or low-res images to try to discern. Send a detailed request of what you're looking for and the use the images will have while in your care, and we will do our best to accommodate.

Contemporary tile artists are well represented in the image

database, but I know that there are more of you out there who have yet to send us pictures. And if your work is already here, it's important to send new projects or individual tile shots from your portfolios, for preservation and education of current and future generations. Specifically, images demonstrating new techniques and innovative applications would be excellent choices to receive. Containing thousands of images so far, the Tile Heritage collection is shaping up to be one of the largest of its kind. I look forward to seeing your high-resolution jpeg images and accompanying Word docs with information about the images, stored on CD or emailed. The imagery will become a permanent part of the Tile Heritage archival database where images are stored for posterity and used by us for educational purposes.

"Camel Before the Pyramids"

From Brian Kaiser

In March of last year the owners of the Lafayette Complex of historic buildings in Long Beach, California were trying to deal with a serious leak that had occurred in the roof of one of their oldest buildings. The 11-story Campbell Building was built in 1928, and rain had percolated down to the 10th floor causing some serious damage and requiring some major repair. The city did a core sample to see how many layers of old roofing existed, and everyone was surprised to learn that there were layers of roofing dating back to the original construction. The city then insisted that the roofers tear off all the decades of roofing down to the original substructure.



Detail of the camel designed by Cerillo Torres for D&M Tile Company, Los Angeles, 1928
All photos courtesy Brian Kaiser



Rare signature of Cerillo Torres, chief muralist at D&M

After tons of roofing was removed, the workers suddenly struck a layer of dark red terra cotta with black diamond-shaped tiles in the corners, a formal and quite elegant geometric design. Working more carefully now and moving closer to the center of the roof, the men encountered a double row of colorful 6x6 tiles in blue, red and yellow comprising an 8' x 8' border surrounding a large mural straight out of the Arabian Nights! Here was a camel seated in the desert of Egypt in front of the great pyramids, adorned with a bright, colorful saddle with tassels and pompoms, looking like a vibrant tapestry.

The workers had uncovered the original floor of the Starlight Ballroom, which was originally an open-air night club when the Campbell Building was first opened. We can only surmise that the floor may have been covered up after the 1933 Long Beach earthquake and may have been buried for all those years. Within a generation or two, everyone had forgotten that the mural existed.



D&M mural "unearthed" atop the Campbell Building, Long Beach, California

A picture of the mural appeared in a local newspaper, and Tile Heritage member Candace Mead, realizing it was something special, asked me to join her for a meeting she arranged with the management of the

Lafayette Complex. We both recognized the border as D&M Tile, but the mural was somewhat in question since it was a one of a kind. In the lower right hand corner was a signature, and although it was hard to make out, we concluded after some further research that "C. Torres" was Cerillo Torres, the chief muralist for the D&M Tile Company. Of the many known murals that D&M produced, this was the only one with the Torres signature.

Our having identified the mural did not mean it was out of danger. The roofers would have to dig down another 8-10 inches to reach the actual substructure of the building. Their "practical" solution was to tear out the tiles! The financial officers of the Campbell were concerned with further water damage, and they hesitated to spend their money to save the mural. In the end, however, the management hired Bill Casey and myself to extract the mural and to clean the tile for later installation within the building.



Tile preservationist, Brian Kaiser, tools in hand, poses with the desert creature.

Generally speaking, the extraction went very well. Although there was some old damage to the border tiles, the mural tiles themselves were in very good shape. The finance committee was not able to expend any additional money on the tile at that time, so the tile slabs were put into storage for future work.

Then the Lafayette Complex was approved for a Long Beach Naval Grant to pay for the cleaning of the tiles and their reinstallation. In the next few months, we hope that the job will be completed, and the mural will be installed on the exterior of the building, at the second floor level where it will be safe from vandalism and easily seen at 130 Linden Street, just a few blocks from the ocean. A

collaboration of many people at many levels has made it possible to save this wonderful piece of tile history. Long Beach is a city rich in beautiful tile, and this unique D&M mural may well be considered one of the crown jewels of the city's ceramic treasures.

Mobley Rescues Masterpiece

The last two weeks of July were busy ones for **Larry Mobley**, the semi-retired master tile setter from Cohoctah, Michigan, who had accepted a commission to remove a 14 x 20 foot mural from the office building, One Oliver Plaza, in downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Each of the 11" x 11" tiles by the French abstract artist **Pierre Soulages** weighed close to 10 pounds, the entire mural 3000! What made matters worse were the hours, 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., and having to clean up and remove the scaffolding after each session so business could be carried as usual on during the day. Then August was spent cleaning the tiles, removing debris and mortar from the backs and side edges of each tile, in preparation for reinstallation.

The Soulages ceramic mural, created originally in 1968, will find its new home at the Butler Institute of American Art, Trumbull Branch, in Warren, Ohio, just north of Youngstown. The Institute intends to



14 x 20 foot mural by Pierre Soulages prior to its removal
Photo courtesy Larry Mobley

reinstall the mural in a window facing East Market Street where it can be seen by passers-by. Some years ago the Butler tried to buy the mural but the building's owners refused the offer. This time around, however, the owners gave the masterpiece away for the cost of its removal.

Larry comment? "So much for retirement!"



Mosaic panel by Nadine Edelstein.
All photos courtesy Mary Lynn Buss.

Tilers Gone Wild in the Northwest

From Mary Lynn Buss

How wild and crazy can a bunch of tilemakers get? How would you respond if someone asked you to hang a full-blown art show in an alley and dismantle it completely four hours later? Well, the dozen members of the **Vashon Tile Guild** on Vashon Island in Washington accepted this challenge and with only two weeks notice hustled to put just such a show together.

Several Seattle non-profits that promote walkable cities and sustainable environments had been planning a "take-back-the-alley" party during Seattle's July art walk. One of the organizers, Todd Vogel, who had recently gone on Vashon's first "Tile Tour," suggested a

tile art show in the alley to highlight the party.

With only two weeks to prepare, Guild members scrambled to scope out the space, calculate the logistics of hanging the works, and to source, cut and paint plywood boards to fit the alley's irregular window and wall spaces. Todd and his crew got the permits, planned the refreshments, persuaded the city to remove the alley's dumpsters, and engaged a marimba band.

On the morning of Party Day, a fleet of cars, pickups and a flat bed truck with a full-size mosaic horse ferried over to Seattle and converged on the alley at midday—the transformation began. Vehicles were shuffled when delivery trucks needed access, parking patrols were fended off, the occasional police officer who looked in on the activity received a charm offensive, cigarette butts and trash were swept up.

By 5 p.m. the alley had morphed into a vibrant, inviting space filled with café tables, flowers, hanging plants, and a spectacular tile art display. "Prince Tolerance," **Elaine Summers'** mosaic stallion and **Clare Dohna's** standing heron flanked the entry to the alleyway and invited people in. **Irene Otis's** "Madonna" gazed down serenely from her high window perch. Large tile pieces were stunning, set against old brick walls, and tiles artfully placed adjacent to graffiti



"Prince Tolerance," Elaine Summers' mosaic stallion and Clare Dohna's standing heron flank the entry to the alleyway.



Tilework adorns both walls for Seattle's "take-back-the-alley" party.

maximum legal speed toward the ferry dock, the crew night before the fourth of July? No way that was going to happen. Three ferries later the tilers were finally headed home—the trip back lasted longer than the show. That's just how wild and crazy a group of Vashon tilers can be!

Vashon Tile Guild participants in the Alley Show:

David Blad, Mary Lynn Buss, Clare Dohna, Nadine Edelstein, Irene Otis, Steve Roache, Jack Strubbe, Elaine Summers, Terry Vanderwaal, and Cory Winn.

successfully married art and place.

Finally the tilers changed into party clothes and relaxed with wine and munchies, friends and the lively crowd. Earlier worries that no one would come quickly dissipated. People clearly engaged with the art in this unique setting, asking about techniques, wondering at the diversity, even having pictures taken standing by tile displays. Though not set up as a sale show (no prices were posted), several sales were negotiated on the spot.

Shortly after 9 p.m. the artists changed back into work clothes, dismantled the show in record time, and took off. The horse on truck back, followed by cars and pickups, caravanned down First Avenue at confident that they would make the 10:15. Thursday



David Blad with his moon.



Future mosaic artists at work during "Arts in Bloom 2009."
Photos courtesy Christie Beniston.

Inspired by SAMA and a Gardener's Guide

From Christie Beniston

I thought you might be interested in this recently completed mosaic mural project. Inspired by the SAMA conference in March, the following week I proposed this project for a local art walk, "Arts in Bloom 2009." We set up for the afternoon and had people of all ages drop by to help.

Located at the main entrance to **Flower Hill Mall**, 2720 Via De La Valle in Del Mar, California, the 5' x 9' mural features oversized flowers inspired by Nan Serman's **California's Gardener Guide** (see

<http://plantsoup.com/blog/?cat=59>). The flowers pictured are meant to represent verbena, cape mallow, California fuschia, matilija poppy, penstemon and marigold. First, she painted a cartoon outline on the cement substrate to help guide the placement of the broken tiles. Both commercial and handmade tiles were broken by Teen Korps volunteers and then applied with thin set. "The best grout job ever" was executed by Tile Heritage board member, **Irene de Watteville!**

According to Nan Sterman: "The mural's beauty is the result of Christie's magical touch, just as she has a magical touch with all the art pieces she creates."

Christie Beniston of Solana Beach, California has been creating public art projects, residential commissions and fine art for more than 25 years. During this time her work has been exhibited at museums and galleries across the country. Her large-scale sculptures are installed in Reno, Nevada, Palm Desert, California and, most recently, her "Time Interwoven" at the San Diego International Airport.



Christie Beniston's completed mosaic at the main entrance to Flower Hill Mall, Del Mar, California.



Hand-painted mural bordered with Wisdom Tiles ready for installation on the Oso Park Trail, Mission Viejo, California.
Photo courtesy Jenny Koons.

Community Embraces Native American Mural

From Jennifer Koons

The Artes de la Vida and Earth Day Expo on Saturday, April 25, 2009 at Oso Viejo Community Park in Mission Viejo, California will be remembered. The Native American mural that was originally created by community members at Studio One is now installed on the Oso Park Creek Trail. At the start of the day white tiles, silk-screened with a Native American village depicting the process of turning acorns into mush, were laid out on one table. Another held the border of Wisdom Tiles, and a third held reproductions of 1920s

Spanish Moresque tiles decorated with cuerda seca, all ready to glaze with Creatable Colors donated by Laguna Clay Company.

Community members and volunteers began by brushing the Creatable Colors clear matte onto the Wisdom Tiles. One of our volunteers, **Janet Panozzo**, donated these to honor her mother, Jeanne Tapia, who before succumbing to Alzheimer's passed on her words of wisdom. Throughout the day, people of all ages came over to this table, eager to take a Wisdom Tile home. The Spanish Moresque tiles were next on the agenda. Young and old alike sat down to practice the glazing technique using Creatable Colors, contributing magnificent touches to the mural. And finally the Native American scene was transformed from a white canvas into a brightly colored mural. A variety of techniques are now possible with one simple set of Creatable Colors. As people would come over to our studio, we thought it important, especially on Earth Day, to emphasize that this community mural was made from the earth and for the people. As the mural

was fired in a kiln to 1850 degrees, it will withstand the heat, wind and water on the Oso Park Trail for decades as future generations enjoy the work that was created on that Spring day.

Special thanks to our team of volunteers: Jenny Koons, Joe Koons, Melanie Yarak, Rich Lopez and Janet Panozzo.

Youth Group Captures Oral Histories

From Nikki Szajer

Yet another Youth Mural has been added to the portfolio of those that add character and inspiration to Grant County communities in southwestern New Mexico. The most recent mural to be completed, the **Chihuahua Hill Oral Histories Mural**, is on the east-facing wall of Manzanita Ridge just across the street from **Syzygy Tileworks** in Silver City. The creation depicts the memories, photos and oral histories of Chihuahua Hill residents that were shared with the students, student interns, lead artist **Zoe Wolfe** and assistant artist **Buck Burns** during the 2009 Summer Youth Mural Camp presented by the **Mimbres Region Arts Council** (MRAC). The summer camp was a two-week experience in which the group learned about the foods, cultures, music and life in the Chihuahua Hill area. The completion of this downtown Silver City mural marks the second in the MRAC 30th Anniversary Season.



Chihuahua Hill Oral Histories Mural,
Silver City, New Mexico.
Photos courtesy Syzygy Tileworks.

The **Mimbres Region Arts Council**, one of the top-rated art councils in New Mexico, brings top-quality music, performances, outdoor festivals, dance, and art events to the area. This mural program is sponsored by MRAC, **Syzygy Tileworks**, Manzanita Ridge, Prudential Silver City Properties, Chino Federal Credit Union and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Syzygy Tileworks, the latest Tile Heritage “Hub,” is dedicated to producing a truly hand-made, aesthetically pleasing product that is durable, environmentally safe, one that benefits the local community artistically, economically and environmentally. The goal is to keep the hand-made craftsman tradition alive in our production of this beautiful tile.

(<http://www.tileheritage.org/THF-Joints.html#Hubs>).



Tile makers pose outside Syzygy Tileworks.

"Tile Hubs" are designated locations throughout the United States where people can go to talk tiles and seek information about local tile installations. If you have a factory, studio, showroom, gallery or even your own home, and you're willing to host tile enthusiasts, contact Tile Heritage for details. Minimum requirements include a browsing library of tile books, a list or map of local installations in your area, a display of THF postcards, a complete set of Tile Heritage publications (provided at no cost), and membership in the Tile Heritage Foundation of \$100 or more each year. We would welcome your participation!

Tile Heritage Prize

Congratulations to **Mary Lynn Buss**. Her triptych tile piece titled "Great Barrier Reef" was awarded the **Tile Heritage Prize** at the Artisan Tile Northwest exhibition, "Submerged," at Pioneer Hall in Seattle in October 2009. The prize is awarded to the artist whose tile in the opinion of the juror best represents the ceramic traditions in America. The juror was **John Taylor** of the University of Washington's ceramic department.



"Great Barrier Reef" by Mary Lynn Buss won the Tile Heritage Prize at the Artisan Tile Northwest exhibition in Seattle, 2009.

Photo courtesy of the artist.

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