



Expressing Oneself in Mosaics

by Gwyn Kaitis

Photos Courtesy of the Society of American Mosaic Artists

SAMA members were recently asked to tell why they use mosaic as their chosen art form. Here are three different members' stories.

Carole Choucair Oueijan, Hacienda Heights, California

I grew up walking on and touching 3,000-year-old mosaic floors and murals. I never thought that one day I'd be working with tiny tesserae and these reflections from my childhood to create contemporary mosaic art. Mosaic fine art was not as well known 19 years ago when I started mosaics as it is now. Today it is blooming, and it's a wonderful feeling to see it around us more often.

When I paint, I have an idea in mind and try to translate it onto paper or canvas with my colors. But when I try to work with tesserae, I become a young child who's trying to assemble all these shapes and colors to create something exciting.

You are supposed to stand away from a painting to get the whole picture and capture the feeling that the artist put into his or her work. It's the opposite in mosaic. You are drawn closer and sometimes even tempted to try to touch what you see. You stare, admire, and discover over and over again. Mosaic takes your eyes and emotions on an artistic journey. The endless materials and creativity used in contemporary mosaic make it the richest medium ever.

Shug Jones, Richardson, Texas

I have worked in many media over the years—graphite, ink, colored pencil, oil, watercolor, and even scratchboard. They all have their place in my repertoire of art supplies. Today, however, I choose to use tactile materials such as glass, stone, porcelain, and beads to make my art.

It is the textures and the colors that draw me in—the need to create something that moves, converses with, and surprises the viewer. I love the challenge of combining the colored tesserae in such a way as to create a color entirely different, the process of gluing thousands of tiny pieces of glass to a surface that, when viewed from a distance, becomes a realistic image.

Mosaic has broadened my view of what art is. It has given me the desire to go beyond the two-dimensional surface and seek the third dimension. It has opened my eyes to possibilities that I never knew existed and abilities I never knew were there inside me.



*Carole Choucair Oueijan, Cerulean Rendezvous,
Mosaic Arts International 2014.*



*Shug Jones, Coming into the Light,
Mosaic Arts International 2014.*

Gary Drostle, Erith, Kent, United Kingdom

Mosaic is a medium that never ceases to amaze me. Just when I think I have the measure of it or it can't possibly hold any more, some amazing new facet reveals itself.

I don't think there is another medium like it. From that simple cube, generating a pattern that is open and accessible to anyone— young or old, no matter how limited their artistic ability— mosaic seems to open its heart to all. There is definitely something very primeval in a human's ability and need to seek out pattern in our lives, and mosaic is a great way to feed that need.

I also find great satisfaction in the combination of artistic and aesthetic endeavor, together with the sheer physical force of mosaic making—the breaking of tesserae, mixing cement, and pushing the pieces in. Mosaic has a truth and balance built into its existence, the balance of design and labor, and a truth in the direct way in which the tesserae reveal that labor in all its myriad forms. As one fellow mosaic artist whispered to me recently . . . mosaic is magic! **GA**

The Society of American Mosaic Artists, a nonprofit organization of over 900 members, is dedicated to educating, inspiring, and promoting excellence in the mosaic arts. SAMA is the largest mosaic art organization in the world and includes mosaic artists, collectors, materials suppliers, and art educators. More information about SAMA can be found at www.americanmosaics.org.

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