

# Enthusiastic Response to SAMA's Mosaic Demonstration at SOFA CHICAGO

by Gwyn Kaitis

More than 34,000 people attended the 20th year of SOFA CHICAGO, an art fair dedicated to Sculpture, Objects, Functional Art + Design, held at Navy Pier's Festival Hall November 1–3, 2013. Galleries from 11 countries exhibited the work of numerous established and emerging glass, ceramic, wood, fiber, jewelry, and metal artists.

The Society of American Mosaic Artists (SAMA) was pleased to participate in SOFA CHICAGO for the fifth year by presenting a space in which fairgoers could learn about mosaic art and materials while watching artists work continuously during the fair to create a "mosaic of mosaics." This year's demonstration had artists utilizing all-white tesserae out of glass, stone, and ceramic, which were then used to construct a larger wall mosaic that progressively developed over the course of the fair.

## Educational Partnership

SAMA shares a commitment to education with SOFA that makes for an industrious affiliation. The partnership has undergone growth over the years, beginning with a table in the Partner Pavilion and culminating in live demonstrations over the past three years.

SOFA's educational mission was readily apparent in the wide array of lectures and special events that took place during the show. Part of the show, Special Exhibits, is organized by museums and arts organizations. The latest exhibits included *Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art*, which created an "exquisite corpse" game for visitors to use their smartphones to explore their creativity and interact with other visitors. More than 3,300 people attended this year's Lecture Series, which included talks by such luminaries as Lino Tagliapietra, William Morris, and Richard Jolley and included "Paley on Park Avenue," a discussion with Albert Paley about his current New York City public sculpture installation.



(Above) William Morris, Burial Urn, blown glass, steel stand and photo courtesy of William Morris Studio, Wexler Gallery.

(Right) Mosaic created by Terrie Bollaert during SOFA CHICAGO demonstration. Photo by SAMA.



*SAMA artists demonstrating mosaic art to the public at SOFA CHICAGO.*

### **A Prime Mosaic Marketplace**

Sales were reportedly lively throughout the show with a Morris work from the *Man-Adorned* series selling for six figures by Wexler Gallery, which also sold works by Richard Marquis, Toots Zynsky, and Tagliapietra. A number of works by Jolley were sold by Litvak Gallery. Gallery owner, Thomas Riley of Thomas R. Riley Galleries in Cleveland, Ohio, shared: “SOFA CHICAGO has become a prime market driving force with a 20-year history of presenting fine art in a three-dimensional format. Artists and galleries have learned that this venue deserves the newest and best work.”

Collectors, curators, students, and artists discovered many new facets of the contemporary art world during the show. “I learned some of my first lessons about the contemporary craft field as a visitor to SOFA CHICAGO, and it continues to be an invaluable gathering of the field’s best and brightest,” said Dr. Glenn Adamson, newly appointed Nanette L. Laitman director of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City. “Nowhere else can you see such a breadth of objects in glass, ceramics, textiles, and other media.”

Visitors to SAMA’s exhibition area expressed considerable interest and enthusiasm in learning of the work involved in creating mosaic art as well as seeing the breadth of contemporary mosaic as shown in continuously looping DVDs of Mosaic Arts International (MAI) exhibitions, a juried show sponsored each year by SAMA in various parts of the country. The next Mosaic Arts International will take place at the Williams Tower Gallery in Houston, Texas, April 24–May 30, 2014. Also in Houston, more than 500 international artists and arts enthusiasts are expected to attend the American Mosaic Summit, April 30–May 4, 2014.

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*The Society of American Mosaic Artists, a nonprofit organization of over 1,200 members, is dedicated to educating, inspiring, and promoting excellence in mosaic arts. SAMA is the largest mosaic arts organization in the world. More information about SAMA can be found at [www.americanmosaics.org](http://www.americanmosaics.org).*

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