STAINED GLASS

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE STAINED GLASS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA **WINTER 2022/23**



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***Stained Glass* Quarterly is an exchange of ideas and knowledge among readers, a means of carrying information and inspiration of our craft to the world.**

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Walking on Glass

How the Ancient Technique of Mosaics is Finding New Life in the Ground Plane

By Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett

For Robin Brailsford, it all started when she was ten years old. "I walked a mile and a half to the local hobby shop and bought several pieces of stained glass. At home, I went into the basement and broke it into pieces, then used a glue gun to create a candle holder. That's all it took; since then, I've been hooked on glass."

This love of working with glass followed Brailsford through her schooling as she received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Fine Arts. With training/residencies at premier studios such as Pilchuck Glass School and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, she honed her craft and continued her work in glass. "I have always been a glass artist, but I consciously decided not to do hot glass. I didn't want all the expense and the environmental concern of blowing hot glass. Everything I have done has been in the warm glass/cold glass department."

Brailsford's career led her to pursue art on a large scale. "I found my calling in public art and was always amazed that the ground plane in big public art projects was always completely overlooked. You look at any important building in your city or community, and the concrete is usually plain grey—and everybody has overlooked the [groundplane]. That became the place that I became interested in."

Brailsford is a big thinker. "I thrive on large and complex sites which require research, collaboration, and comprehensive solutions. I look for potential in people, places, and things and then help to realize that potential." She has been a guest instructor at the Corning Museum of Glass and has some of her work at the Tacoma Museum of Glass.

INVENTION OF LITHOMOSAICS

One project, in particular, made her question the traditional technique of creating mosaics. "I was working on a transit mall in Arizona, creating a 575-foot long river [on the ground plane]. I was working with a process called Lithocrete, which is a scatter technique of glass and stone aggregates in concrete. I practically broke my back doing it." Brailsford thought to herself "there has to be a better way."

From there, Brailsford sought to find a way to make the mosaic in the studio with installation occurring later at the site. After several years of research and development, she came up with LithoMosaics. "We patented it, and we have licensees around the country that use this technique. It has lots of benefits for artists. They do all their work in the studio. Then the artwork is handed over to licensed concrete masons who install it onsite. We've been putting LithoMosaics in for about 20 years and have them in almost every state."

Installing *The MAP* at Kellogg Park in La Jolla.
Photo: Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett

Categories of Glass Art

Glass can be utilized in a variety of ways making it an extremely versatile material. Artists have taken advantage of its flexible use and created a multitude of different methods of using glass for their artwork. The use of glass can be categorized into three main categories:

HOT GLASS

Glass artists in this category are heating glass above 2000 °F. The glass is melted and techniques like glass blowing or glass casting are used.

WARM GLASS

A kiln is used in this category to heat the glass to 1200–1600 °F. The heating allows the glass to fuse with other class pieces or to form the glass into shapes through a technique called slumping.

COLD GLASS

In this category, the glass is not heated and is manipulated by cutting, engraving, grinding and etching.

Typically a mosaic is created on-site, outside in the elements. In LithoMosaics, the mosaic is fabricated in sections using a reverse process. The tiles are placed and glued on mesh upside down and backward before installation on-site. The mesh placed into a layer of concrete; then, the mesh is removed, showing the tile beneath. The process allows the artists to create their work in a studio space, later allowing trained concrete masons to set the mosaic in concrete in a painstakingly detailed, multi-day process. Since the installation process can take place in less than a week, it is especially beneficial for places like airports or transit malls that can't close down an area for long periods of time. In addition, "LithoMosaics don't have any freeze/thaw issues or problems with UV light, unlike other methods. The biggest benefit is the creative aspect of it."

The LithoMosaic system is the only system that installs mosaics in a full-thickness monolithic pour, allowing designers the flexibility to create their art piece at significantly less cost than any other medium currently available. It will enable the artist to achieve more creative control than other techniques and a pre-installation review by the client, architect, and other team members such as funding parties. "LithoMosaic is not your grandmother's mosaic. Think of city sidewalks, bridge decking, and tilt-up buildings replete with a broadloom of art, design, and intrigue. Mosaic is no longer limited by scale, cost, climate, or durability. If there is concrete—there can be LithoMosaic."

Mosaics date back thousands of years and have been utilized over time as public art to tell stories and celebrate people, places, or events in a spectacular, visual way. Materials used can vary but typically, porcelain, stone, and glass are used. Mosaics not only add aesthetics and value to any public space, but they allow the viewer to experience the subject of the mosaic uniquely, particularly when in the ground plane. Brailsford continued her love and use of glass through her artistic creation of mosaics. "I have always loved using glass but was looking for a way to use it where it isn't overwhelming or blocking the view of the natural world through windows, so I started looking to the ground plane."

Glass adds tremendously to the LithoMosaic process. "We typically use smaller pieces of glass because of the coefficient of friction—we don't want people slipping on it," says Brailsford. "We are always mixing materials to get the visual effect we want. When glass was first invented, it was an extremely expensive and rare material. When it became more readily available, it was used in mosaics. Venice is where glass was perfected and where I get my glass from."

Through Brailsford's invention of LithoMosaics, she in collaboration with other artists have had the opportunity to complete a variety of public art mosaics from small pocket park installations to large convention center and privately funded commercial projects. Her business *Brailsford Public Art* continues to provide world-class public art to spaces across the nation.



Aerial view of *The MAP* at Kellogg Park in La Jolla. Photo: Peter Gotfredson

THE MAP

In February 2020 one of Brailsford's largest projects was installed in Kellogg Park, along the La Jolla Shores overlooking the Pacific Ocean. For installation, there were construction equipment and fencing everywhere with two dozen workers busily milling around getting ready for the thousands of pounds of concrete that were used to install the 2800-square-foot mosaic. The mosaic is an homage to the vibrant, diverse ocean life and displays 119 different species, all life-sized, in the sea just beyond the sandy shores. Robin and her team spent three years and used 1/2 million tiles to painstakingly pre-assembling the mosaic in a studio with the LithoMosaic process. Artists on the project included lead artists Robin Brailsford and Wick Alexander, with additional assistance from artists Kelsy Hartley and Mariah Armstrong Conner. Named *The MAP*, this unique mosaic leads the visitor on an underwater journey among various life-sized marine creatures, from the Spiny Lobster, to the Harbor Seal to the Great White Shark. Designed as an plaza that promotes conservation, not only does this art piece highlight the best of what nature has to offer, but it is also an educational tool for the public.

The Walter Munk Foundation funded *The MAP* and reflects Mr. Munk's deep passion for the ocean. Munk began working as a scientist at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in 1939 and is considered a pioneer in ocean science. He focused his early studies on understanding waves; their patterns, sizes and factors affecting them. In the mid-1940's he the U.S. military consulted with him to determine the optimum time (based on wave patterns) to land military troops safely on shore for the attack on Normandy during World War II. He is considered a legend in his field and has significantly contributed to the field of oceanography.

The Walter Munk foundation continues his love of the sea by focusing on ocean awareness, education, and conservation. Unfortunately, Walter passed away in February 2019, and although he did not see the mosaic installed, he was, able to be a part of the planning process and see the piece almost entirely completed. His wife, Mary, continues his hard work protecting local ocean habitats through his foundation.

"We began the project after Walter turned 100," said LithoMosaic artist Wick Alexander. "I had never met a more vibrant and aware individual. Walter has been referred to as the Einstein of the oceans, and without a doubt, the term genius applies to him. He inspired







Top left: Creation of the juvenile gray whale for *The MAP* LithoMosaic. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

Top right: Brailsford working in the La Jolla studio on *The MAP* mosaic. Photo: Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett

Bottom: Specially trained concrete masons installing *The MAP* in Kellogg Park. Photo: Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett



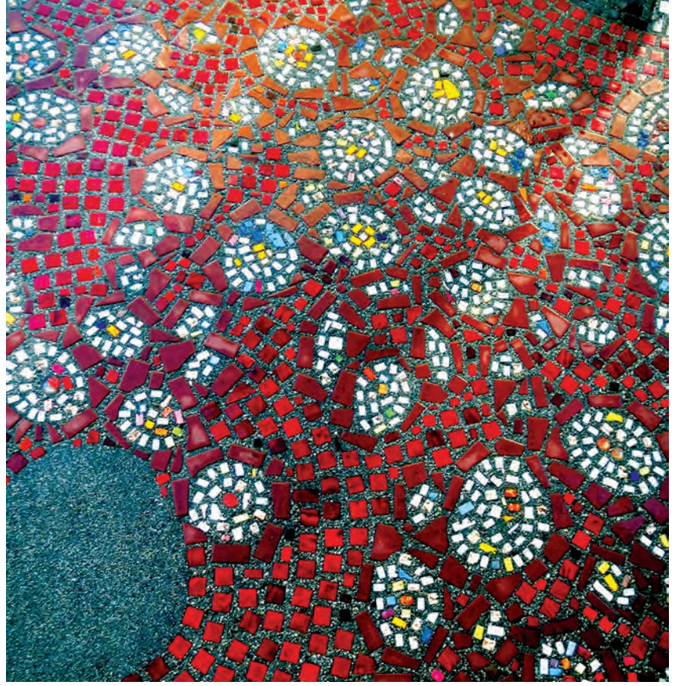


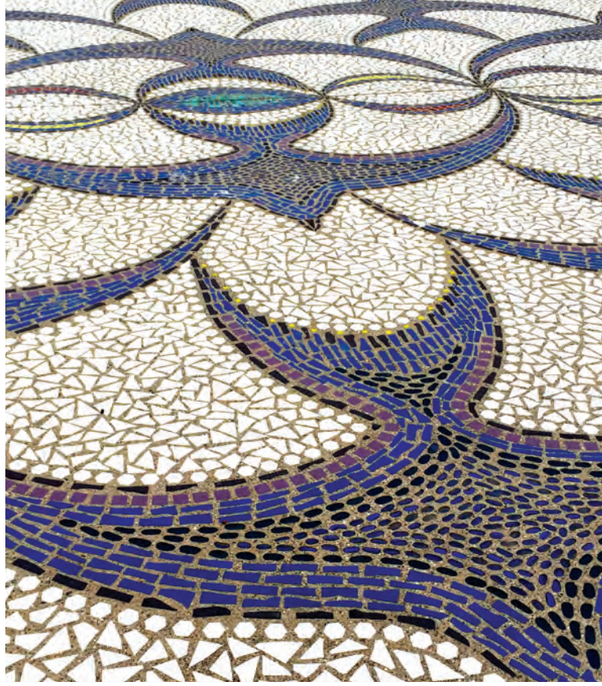
Top: The life-sized snorkeler in *The MAP*. Photo: Peter Gotfredson

Bottom: The completed juvenile gray whale in *The MAP* LithoMosaic. Photo: Peter Gotfredson



AhHa Shoreline LithoMosaic at the Long Beach Transit bus terminal. Photo: Brailsford Public Art





Left: Detail of AhHa Shoreline at the Long Beach Transit bus terminal. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

Right: Detail of the LithoMosaic *Murmuration* at the Long Beach AquaLink station. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

See For Yourself

The Walter Munk Foundation has created a free cell phone app to extend the educational experience beyond physical on-site learning. Users can click on each species from the mosaic to learn more about them via photos and information about their physical description, range, habitat, reproduction, diet, and predators. This extension of the mosaic transforms it from a public art piece into an educational resource for all ages.

Visit *waltermunkway.com* to access the app experience yourself!

excellence in everyone around him by living by his mantra of "keep it simple and make it fun."

"We have completed many mosaics over the last 15 years," stated Alexander of their work. "The medium is generally used as way-finding, artistic accents, and plaza designs. With *The MAP*, we finally achieved the maximum effect of what the process can do like no other medium. With over 100 marine creatures, from a 30′ grey whale to a 4″ nudibranch—each rendered to life scale—one can experience the sensation of a one-on-one encounter with each sea creature, like a diving experience. It is no exaggeration to say that the public response to the mosaic has been overwhelmingly positive. Everyone seeing it for the first time say, 'it is amazing' and 'it's so beautiful!' I believe that when someone is moved by beauty, they fall in love with beauty, and when someone loves something, they want to know more about it. And they want to protect it. This is the ideal function of *The MAP*—to create an awareness of our place among all living things."

LONG BEACH TRANSIT

Long Beach, California, is home to roughly half a million people in an eighty square mile area. As in most large metropolitan areas, traffic congestion is significant, and the city strives to encourage their residents to use public transportation when possible.

Long Beach Transit makes a point of providing a welcoming environment for customers and is known for its clean buses and bus stops. To better understand the needs of the public, Long Beach Transit periodically surveys the public to understand the needs of their customers better so they can address those needs. Some include basic necessities like comfort and ways to stay out of the elements, but they also include public art elements that make their facilities feel like a part of the neighborhood and connect communities.

The first collaboration of Long Beach Transit and Brailsford Public Art occurred in 2011 with the installation of *Shoreline Stroll*. Robin Brailsford was brought into the project for her patented LithoMosaic system along with artists Wick Alexander and Bhavna Mehta. The project took the bus stops along the transit mall, lettered from A through G, and incorporated sea creature mosaics from the Long Beach shores or at the Long Beach Aquarium. For example, Station C is adorned with crabs, Station D with diatoms, and Station E with echinoderms. This stunning series of mosaics provides not only a public art piece at each station but an educational tie to the local ocean environment.

For their next project, Long Beach Transit wanted to continue the theme and incorporate a LithoMosaic at the Aqualink station at Alamitos Bay. For this station, artist Wick Alexander took the lead and looked to birds for his inspiration. The design, called *Murmuration*, looks at the flocking patterns that large groups of birds make in the sky, where they move and change direction in flowing patterns. For Alexander, the movement of the birds mimics what the Aqualink does through "travel, migration, speed, excitement, and wonder."

Alexander and Brailsford again joined forces for the Long Beach public art piece called *Deep Sea Tontos*, installed in 2017 at the Long Beach Convention Center. The result was four eight-foot LithoMosaic circles, each depicting a unique story about life in the deep sea. The goal was to educate the public about the fantastic deep sea creatures found at the Aquarium of the Pacific or in the deep Pacific Ocean. Alexander and Brailsford were also tasked with designing a series of screens around battery charging stations for the Long Beach Transit's all-electric, zero-emission buses. The team created screens that depict a scientific model of an electromagnetic field that tells the story of using electricity to power the buses.

CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

In 2017, *Star Streams* was installed at the California Center of the Arts—Escondido Museum. The first ever LithoMosaic installed at a museum was created by artists Robin Brailsford, Wick Alexander, and Doris







Top: The LithoMosaic *Star Streams* during its assembly at the Dulzura Studio. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

Middle: The plaza at Pioneer Modernism Park in Lemon Grove, CA. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

Bottom: The reflective anamorphic fulcrum in the center of the plaza in Lemon Grove. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

Bittar. This piece incorporates designs and colors from the cultural and regional influences of the Mezzo-American, Spanish-Moorish, and Chinese aesthetics. This vibrant, one-of-a-kind artwork not only greets the over 300,000 annual visitors but serves as a waypoint for the museum entrance and "exemplifies broad possibilities for the diverse communities the area has attracted for over a hundred years."

PIONEER MODERNISM PARK, LEMON GROVE

Lemon Grove, California, is known for having the best climate on earth and is home to the Big Lemon, a parade float from the 1930s and a famous roadside attraction. Artists Brailsford and Alexander teamed up with fellow artist Anne Mudge to create a series of public art pieces to celebrate this historic farm community, turned suburbia's roots. The highlight of the work is a colorful LithoMosaic plaza with a reflective anamorphic fulcrum that houses a vertical wind turbine on top.

LOS PIONEROS DE LA RIVERA TRANSIT

This Los Angeles METRO system stop in Irwindale pays tribute to the area's community, history, and culture. The city was founded by two men from Sonora, Mexico, Gregorio Fraijo and Facundo Ayon, and many of today's Irwindale residents are descendants from these two men. When the men came to the area, it was very rocky and not considered a desirable area to live. With the development of Los Angeles, the Irwindale was utilized as a quarry for building roads. Business grew and flourished over time creating a successful city. Brailsford was moved by the story of the founders and sought to find a way to incorporate public art into the transit station. She created the *Song of Irwindale*, which tells the area's rich history. The words to the song are cut into the platform railings in English, Spanish and Aztec as a nod to the rich history of the city's residents. Along the platform 200 handmade LithoMosaic pavers were installed depicting the alluvial fan that the city sits upon and also a tree of life depicting the long family lineage of the area.

DESERT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE CORN CREEK—VISITORS CENTER

Located in southern Nevada, the Desert National Wildlife Refuge is the largest national wildlife refuge outside Alaska. In 2013, the site opened its visitors center to the public. As part of that project, LithoMosaic mosaics using Native American designs were incorporated throughout the outside plazas. A large Lithocrete river leads the visitor from the parking area to the visitors center, LithoMosaics and beyond to the trail system.

COLENE HOOSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The *Colene Hoose Elementary School Playground* was installed in fall of 2022 in Normal, Illinois. The site covers sixteen acres and the construction of the playground was designed by world-renowned Danish landscape architect Helle Nebelog. Nebelog is world-renowned for her natural playground designs. Included in the build is the LithoMosaic *Rainbow River* by Robin Brailsford. The river consists 642 feet of LithoMosaics comprised of renditions of 400 illustrations of fish as by students.

BEYOND MOSAICS

Brailsford's use of glass also ventures beyond mosaics. Throughout the years, she has used glass as a medium for her expression of personal and political thought. In 2021, she created *Gorgon—Faces of the Riot*, 714 hand-enameled, four-inch square glass panels. Each was a portrait of an individual wanted on the FBI's website for participation in the Capitol building riots. Her piece *Vision Set* about the Regan Assassination attempt is current at the Tacoma Museum of Glass.

FUTURE OF GLASS IN PUBLIC ART

Public art can be used to build community and identity as well as create a sense of pride and culture. It can also invite more engagement through education or contemplation on challenging subjects. "Public art humanizes the built environment and invigorates public spaces. It provides an intersection between past, present, and future, between disciplines, and between ideas. Public art is freely accessible" (American for the Arts Public Art Network Council Green Paper).

Glass has, since its inception, been an essential functional medium as well as a one used for artistic value. Stained glass in particular is an important public art feature and has been since the 11th century. Cathedrals and churches using this material brought both beauty and transformation to spaces. Using glass in sizeable public art, such *The MAP* in La Jolla contributes and expands the use of glass in new ways but also enables the artists to further stretch their creative and artistic abilities.





Top: Artist Robin Brailsford working on the Native American-inspired basket designed LithoMosaic for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge visitor center. Photo: Brailsford Public Art

Bottom: Partial image of the artwork *Gorgon* by Brailsford. In this piece, Brailsford created 714 hand-enameled four-inch square glass panel portraits of individuals from the FBI's list of suspects in the Capitol Riots. Photo: Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett

> *Glass is strong yet fragile;*
> *transparent, yet it acts as a barrier.*
> *It offers endless possibilities to artists.*

—Denis Longchamps
Executive Director at the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery

Paula M. Jacoby-Garrett is a freelance writer living in Las Vegas, Nevada. ■