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*The Craft Renaissance,
and the revival of Modern
Mosaic.*

*(Case study on The
Tileworks and Laura
O'Hagan Architectural
ceramics.)*

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction.

The Twentieth century has, barr the industrial revolution of the 19th century, seen more rapid and fundamental changes than any other period in history

Economic constraints and requirements, politics, social advance, new materials and methods of construction, technological achievement, the laser and computer, and scale have altered the human condition. Many cherished traditions are now gone and the architect, builder, crafts person and artist have been effected.

There has been a great emphasis on the Arts and Crafts, /craft may be defined as hand made individual objects that originate in function, and function often emerges from spiritual or ritual imperatives, they induce the makers respect , even reverence for materials, process and techniques, and they have been created by trained professionals or individuals who are caring on traditions transmitted from generations. We still cling to the idea that crafts man or woman designs, executes and signs the work. Today however there are craftsmen and women who design the work but carefully supervise the work in production. Also there has been an emphasis on the philosophy of hand work and the indivisibility of design and execution. Architecture, art and the various crafts and design are inseparable aspects of the same basic creativity- thus having the architect, designer and crafts person executing their own designs.

In response to industrialisation of the 20th century, Lethaby wrote that the ,

“current situation in which only a few fine crafts men were working was unsatisfactory and that somehow beauty must be brought back to common life”.

(Benton, 1975, p.57)

At this stage he saw the problem as a shortage of crafts men, the solution he argued was for organised labour to train more craftsmen and then handwork could be for all.

The need for individualism and expression of personality has given rise to the increased number of crafts people and the revival in the craft tradition today. Individualism in the home, its appearance is determined by the contemporary standards of taste, and by what is available in the shops. However many people are pursuing an entirely original treatment of their interiors, and the revival has given way to original hand crafted decorated homes. Adrian forty wrote that,

“the value in individualism in home decoration, it comes from a sign of being able and capable of independent thought and emotion, of having a life apart from the mill-wheels of economy. The home is both a factory of private illusions and a catalogue of ready made tastes, values and ideas that makes all design for the home so extraordinarily revealing about the conditions of modern life.”

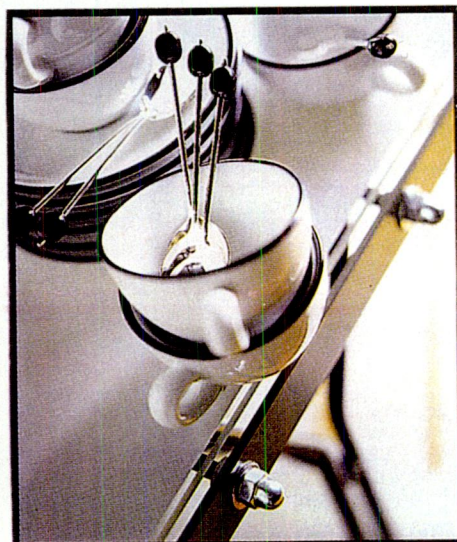
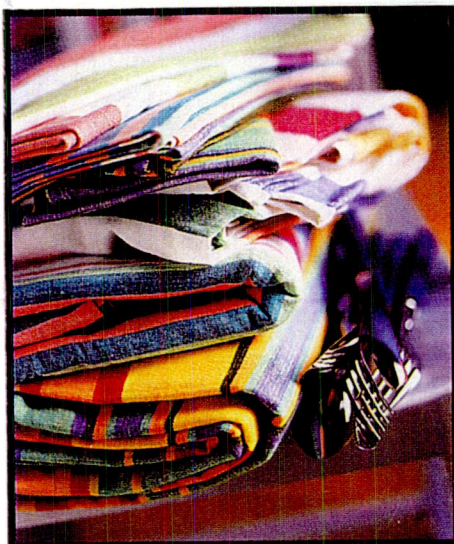
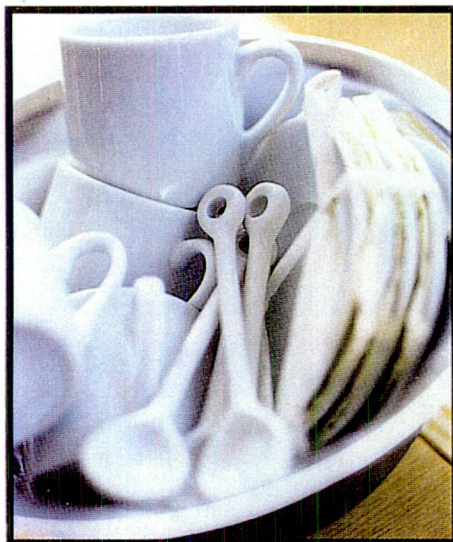
(Forty , 1986, p.119,)

The conflicting desire for individuality with the constraints of the economy and of dominant ideas thrives in the new crafts tradition

In this thesis I am going to investigate the revival of the craft tradition and its ever increasing popularity, with a focus on modern mosaic and the demand for handcrafted work in the light of changes and new developments that have taken place, I shall also look at the demand for industrial mosaic as well. I shall focus the central investigation on the work of Laura O' Hagan and the Tile works (mosaic and ceramic artists) .I want to show that the technique and desire to use mosaic has not completely disappeared but has been revived in an explosion of colour and new methods of construction and decoration not only walls and floors, but furniture, sculpture, vessels and various other forms of decoration.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Craft Renaissance.



The Craft Renaissance

25 yrs ago it was fashionable to believe that the crafts were, if not dead, then dying.

It was not just the mass production enthusiasts that argued this way, David Pye wood turner and carver, theorist, designer and teacher was an influential craftsman of the 20th century, he wrote that

“In the course of the next two or four generations, craftsmanship would probably have become economically negligible as a source of useful products”/he went on to say that the crafts ought to be a compliment to industry, “The crafts should provide the salt and pepper to make the visible environment more palatable”

(Pye, 1993, p.40)

However in recent years many crafts persons have successfully combined the skills of craft and entrepreneurialship, so that the crafts have not died but now compliment mass industrial production. Peter Dormer said that “Craft is not an object, it is a process, an analysis of any art work that shows its making involves the three processes of craft, design and art.’

(Dormer, 1985, p.40)

All sorts of pursuits are sometimes defined as craft, including the range of minor and major country crafts, like basketry, leather work, and the skills of the Blacksmith. There are also innumerable crafts linked to the industrial processes, from printing to clothes manufacturing and carpet making. But apart from the rural and industrial crafts there is also a more self conscious Craft tradition of the arts and crafts studio based work. This includes pottery, textiles, furniture making , glass and jewellery.

The Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century would of had a considerable influence on this more 'self conscious craft'. The movement was conceived as a protest against the damaging effects of the mid Victorian industrialisation on the decorative or minor arts in England. It had its roots in the late 19th century its leading theorists men such as William Morris, C.R Ashbeer, W.R lethaby and Ruskin had trained as architects and worked towards unity in the Arts. Not only did they want to reform design but give quality once more to the work process itself.

"The industrial revolution devalued the work of the crafts man and turned him into a mere cog on a wheel of machinery"

(Cumming and Kaplan , 1991, p. 25)

The aim of the Arts and Crafts reformers was therefore to re-establish a harmony between architect, designer and craftsper-son and to bring hand craftsmanship to th production of well designed affordable every day objects.

William Morris was among the first to recognize that the only way to guarantee greater accessibility to his products was through commercial co-operation. By the height of the movement at the turn of the century, new links were forged between craft and industry. As a result of radical changes in design education recently introduced by the Arts and Crafts leaders, Manufacturers often turned to these newly trained artists and craftsmen to design textiles, ceramics, metal work and furniture. Ceramics would of possibly been one of the more popular of the crafts, ranging from hand crafted pottery to ceramic tiles.

The Arts and Crafts philosophy of William Morris has had a far reaching effect on ceramic tiles. (see fig 1) He decorated bought in tile and fired them in a glass kiln, the only means available to him. He was restricted therefore to using low temperature firing enamels, this type of decoration was very vulnerable to wear. This lack of understanding of ceramic chemistry has been suggested as being the reason for the tiles' poor survival.

For manufacturers in a lot of cases, the arts and crafts was on more marketable style. The high ideas however could not be reconciled with practice. The movement could only flourish in an age of prosperity created through industrial achievement, in object design, hand work was carried out using the finest materials and so therefore out of the reach of most consumers.

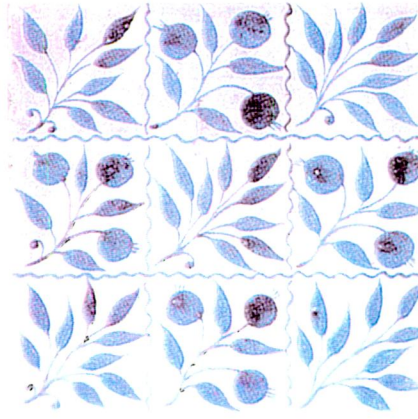
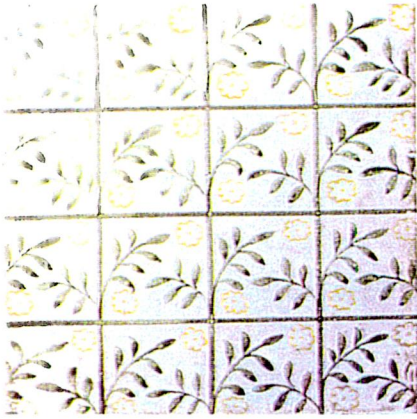
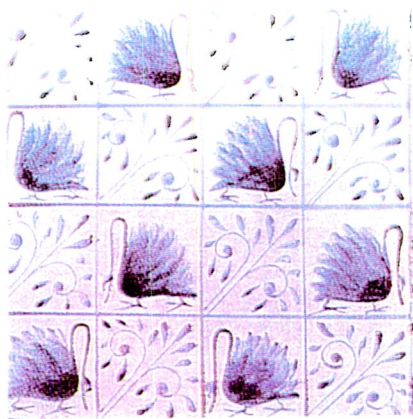
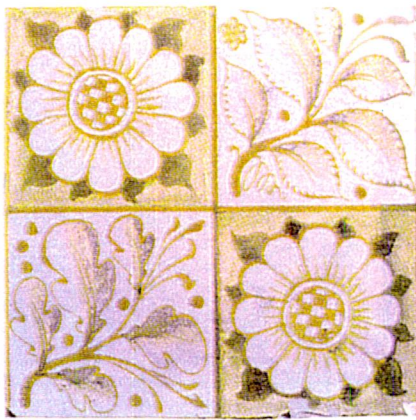
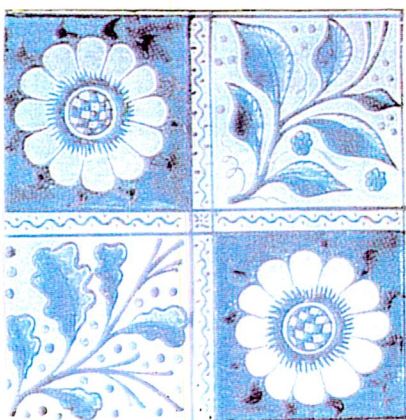
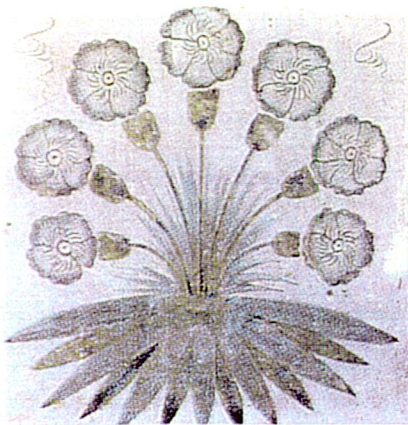
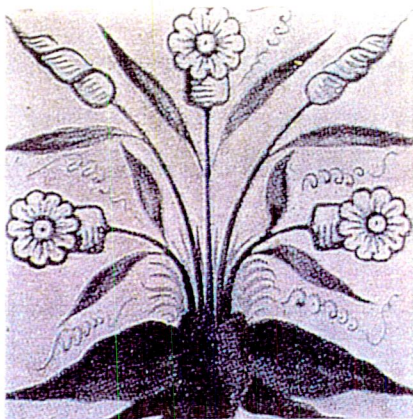


Fig 1. Early patterned tiles, William Morris.

Like today the arts and crafts movement encouraged individualism and the creation of handmade goods in the place of machine uniformity and a re appraisal of design materials.

“The modern industrial age in which we live and which design has come to play such an important role is still relatively new. Two hundred years ago the industrial revolution laid the foundations for the new industrial age and ushered in the first of many sweeping changes. Mass production and mass consumption were made possible by the development of new technologies, the pattern of urban living and 200 yrs later the impact of those changes remains a vital area for discussion and debate”

(Mc Dermott , 1994, p.1)

The arts and crafts movement may not have succeeded in its aim of cultural regeneration, but it provided a framework for recognizing the contribution of the individual in an increasing mass society.

Today the arts and crafts studio based work with its roots in the arts and crafts movement, is responsible for the development of the non-utilitarian artist -crafts person, which upon the crafts council and various craft magazines such as crafts magazine, Ceramics monthly, Glass art, Ceramics review, and Form magazine have lavished an unequal amount of attention and resources. David Pye wrote that ,

“the crafts are in no way comparable to the finecrafts”

(Pye , 1993, p.40.)

He sees the crafts rather as a border ground of manufacturing industry, this definition of the crafts person is that it simply means workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus in which the quality of the result is not pre-determined, but depends on the judgement and care which the maker exercises as he works. He goes on to say that in craftsmanship the quality of the results is continually at risk during the process of making and that workmanship of risk can be contrasted with the characteristics of many manufacturing processes. Pye suggests that the term ‘crafts’ can usefully be applied to the part of the productive workmanship of risk, whose justification is aesthetic not economic. Most modern manufacturing processes, of course do not leave any space for subject. Judgement and imagination are still excluded. In the crafts however it is evidence of risk, expression and judgement which are the qualities we most value.

The factory worker producing craft simulated objects has a very different relationship to the objects. They often work on production lines repeating the same simple actions, not actually getting to make finished pieces, and in some cases not even getting to view the finished piece.

On the other hand, the crafts person is closely involved with the piece, in most cases from start to finish, but it is hard to see

hoe the future of the crafts person can be assured, working within such a specialised skill and craft, after all the majority of people neither have the income nor perhaps the need for handmade objects.

Modern industrial processes eliminate diversity, impose stereotypes and standardisation and chase the latest trends and fashions demanded by the market. The 1990s have shown an increase in new growth in the influence of the craft tradition, with the demand for individualism and a break from standardisation, this drive for individualism may have come from the technological revolution or perhaps the roots of the revival lie in the strong environmentalist movement of the 1980's, with the growing concern to use recycled materials and revolt against technology as a threat to the human condition.

An example of the environmental attitude in the crafts in Ireland is that of the art and craft element incorporated in the 'Green building' Temple Bar, Dublin (see fig 2). While the use of recycled and environmentally friendly materials was fundamental to this project, the Architects Murry and O'Laoire were concerned to go beyond tokenism in the integration of arts and crafts elements in the building. The Temple Bar entrance by artist Maud Cotter, is a multitude of twisted metal and found objects trapped behind glass that rises up to the first floor. Balustrades designed by Irish designer James Garner at the Crow st, entrance.



Fig 2. The Green Building, Temple Bar.

The building is a show case of Irish design with its Kitchens designed by Tagh O'Driscoll and kitchen tiles designed by Laura o'Hagan, (The Tileworks) built around the sink.(See fig 3)

“This was a successful integration of the craft and art element into the Green building”

(Panpeck, 1985, p.28)

In the future we can expect a radical shift away from industrial policies which neither benefits craftsmanship nor society, and in turn the crafts as above will grow and play a part in these emerging alternatives, the practice and patronage will also have to change.

The revival of the craft tradition today is also expressed by the advertising and marketing techniques. This shows the growing value of the crafts in economic life.

“we must resume responsibility for the standards of the environment”

(Fuller , 1991, p.46)

We are still reluctant, he maintained, to accept the social and political arrangements, notably the planning which would allow harmony between craftsperson and the environment.

Are we tolerant of the destruction of beauty if it sells goods ? we are surrounded by people who distract our senses and disfig-



Fig 3. Hand painted tiles, Laura O'Hagan.

ure the landscapes for commercial purposes, are they serving the goal of society?

The Crafts Council today in Ireland has the task of directing Crafts policy about the growing concentration of craft, rather than fine art or design. The very fact that the Crafts Council was established shows the importance of craft and the revival.

The Crafts Council was formed in 1971 as a result of the world craft council jamboree in 1970. It began as a voluntary organisation until 1976, when the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Justin Keating, made the Crafts council a statutory, government sponsored body with two paid staff. The main offices were situated in Prior House, Ballsbridge Dublin. In 1988 the crafts council moved to the Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, with shop space and a private gallery.

The aim of the council from the beginning was to improve the lively hood of the craftsperson and continually raise the standards of craft work in Ireland.

The major areas of manufacturing in the Irish craft industry are potter, glass, jewellery, textiles, furniture and quality giftware. Irish craft businesses are characteristically small in scale and are geographically wide spread, but taken nationally the industry is a significant employer. The Crafts council takes particular interest in those small manufacturers who use traditional labour intensive production techniques requiring high levels of skill.

Of 820 small manufacturers directly registered with the Crafts council, the average number employed is 3. The council estimates that this sector added to design, volume manufacturing sustains over 10,000 jobs in Ireland.

The Crafts council's contribution to the revival of the crafts is highly significant, and can be seen in such ways as Showcase Ireland; The Crafts council national trade fair is now Irelands largest manufacturers fair and exports to the E.U countries are rising faster than to the more traditional markets, such as America. Sean O'Farrell business adviser to the crafts council commented that "the cottage crafts have taken a step back and Irish crafts men and women are now being recognized as not only professional and highly skilled crafts people, but also professional business people and this is the reasoning for their success"

(interview with Sean O'Farrell, business adviser, Crafts council.)

The Crafts council have a programme of Irish and international exhibitions that focuses in innovation in design and production. The retail gallery in Powerscourt Townhouse Centre of Dublin provides a permanent showcase for Irelands leading Craftsmen and women. Visual database of designers who work to commission is now available from the crafts council. The council view this exciting technology as an invaluable tool in the promotion and development of their on-going service connecting specifiers with designers. Perhaps we are witnessing the re-

vival of the early 20th century, when craft merged with industry in the Arts and Crafts movement, only this time craft merges with technology. It is obviously a successful combination of both in the promotion and marketing techniques.

Business advise is readily available to crafts people today, through the Crafts council, for craftspersons setting up their own business or the already established businesses. This includes such areas as grant applications and liaising with grant aiding agencies, market research, business plans, company structure, finance, packaging and so on. The Crafts council also provides business advisory programmes for training and help for design enterprise through short courses, in conjunction with the business advise the council provides a training programme that is motivated by three principles;

- that the future of craft is secured by commitment to excellent design and quality of raw materials and technique.

- that even traditional manufacturing must protect their future by innovating in product and market development .

- and that skilling new generations in design and production techniques is vital to maintain the viability of the industry, enabling it to protect existing markets and develop new ones.

Business adviser Sean O' Farrell referred to a good crafts person as someone who is receptive to ideas from the market.

So we can establish from the above that the crafts council not only provides advise and programmes for crafts people, but it also maintains the craft revival and popularity by insisting on

top quality professional craftsmanship and professional attitude.

So in conclusion to this chapter, we can establish that craft can be defined as unique handmade objects, in an age when we strive to obtain originality from the constant standardisation.

I have found that this jolt from standardisation can be traced back to the Arts and Crafts movement in the late 19th century, it became one of the more marketable styles and provided the framework for recognizing the contribution of the craftworker.

Today the craft worker is best promoted through the various home decoration magazines with popular interest in the crafts, we are bombarded with these reminders that the crafts and its workers are very much part of today's living and their contribution is significant to the craft revival. These magazines range from the cheap publication such as 'Take a break' or womans weekly, with cheap and useful hints for original home decoration to the more prestigious magazines such as Select magazine, The world of interiors, Elle decoration etc. **fig 4**, illustrates the comparison between the two categories.

David Pye best described today's craft by saying that we would find that the crafts would eventually compliment industry and indeed they have done just that. The success of many craftspeople today is determined by their motivation to business, industry and the merge with technology. Perhaps we are witnessing a revival of the Arts and Crafts movement with industry, hence the Arts and Crafts today with technology. We can draw on examples from various craftspeople practicing the



'Pascal' (above) is a soft design in pastel shades which is ideal for lounge and dining areas. It comes in two colourways - pink and peach - and costs £6.95 per yard from Hickeys stores around the country.

These fun cat mugs (left) in bright yellow and blue cost £7.50 each from Meadows & Byrnes, Academy Street, Cork; Castle Street, Galway; and Bunratty. They are made in Cork and the mug tree which costs £12.95 comes from Cronin's Forge.



hand crafts and business. I shall discuss these on more depth in chapters 2 and 3.

However the contrast between craft and mass production is still great. We can distinguish the difference by job satisfaction and quality of work.

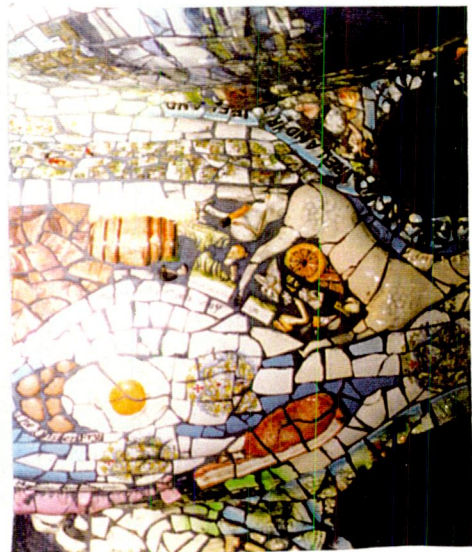
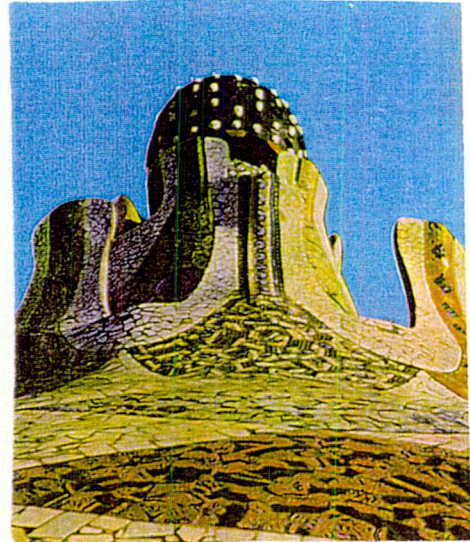
The environmentalist movement of the 80's and 90's has had a great influence on the crafts as I have discovered. The Green Building is a 'step in the right direction' as far as the arts and crafts element is concerned, perhaps we shall see more of this enthusiasm in the future, as many artists and crafts people are geared in this direction, and with the crafts council and various other government initiatives towards the crafts, I am sure we can expect to see more encouragement for the crafts and a continuation of the renaissance.

One particular professional crafts person that I shall discuss in greater depth later is Laura O'Hagan and her company, Tileworks 1989-1996, and Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics 1997. The field in which she specialises in is that of mosaic art and architectural ceramics. It is from here that I have decided to take the art of mosaic and study it in further detail, tracing the path of its revival in relation to the craft revival. I shall also investigate other mosaic artists working in this way.

It is now important to pin-point the stages in the progression of mosaic.

CHAPTER TWO:

The three phases in mosaic history.



Background on Mosaic

Mosaic can be broadly defined as a unified composition created by assembling separate pieces of material.

Seen from close to, a mosaic seems to be a random collection of units of material, but when it is viewed from the correct distance the eye of the beholder transforms the arranged parts into a whole (see **fig 5**).

Mosaic making is a creative activity as ancient as art itself, mosaics can be dated back as far as the fourth millennium b.c and can also be defined as the **First phase**. Both the Babylonians and the Egyptians decorated the walls of columns of their buildings with mosaics. Early Greek mosaics were made from pebbles and Roman villas had mosaic as a usual floor covering. To have a mosaic indicated great wealth, Caesar had a large square slabs of mosaic that were transported on his journeys, it acted as reminder of his great wealth and surroundings and was certainly more hygienic than the usual animal skins used to cover the tent floors.

The skill and patience involved in these elaborate mosaics is astonishing, in **fig 6** the mosaic Alexander of Pompeii, is composed of an estimated one million tiny tesserae.

Materials used by Greek and Roman mosaicists were usually stone or marble, glass cubes were also used occasionally. The tesserae were set into mortar of lime and pounded brick which



Fig 5. An unified composition.



Fig 6. Alexander of pompeii.

was mixed with water. The design was scratched into the mortar and when the tesserae had been laid the crevices between them were filled (grouted) with a mixture of lime and pounded white marble. Finally the whole piece was polished until the surface became smooth.

By the 4th century Christianity had spread throughout the whole of the Roman Empire. During this time, two important technical developments emerged: Glass making and gold tesserae were imported from Egypt. Glass tesserae brought along brilliance and variety in colour and almost completely replaced marble and stone tesserae. A development of light but strong mortar enabled the Christian craftsmen to decorate not only the floors but the ceilings and walls. This became a strong characteristic of Byzantine mosaic art.

Along with the development of glass mosaic, came the development of architecture, which made mosaic making interesting, arches, domes, vaults, apses and churches cried out for this form of decoration.

The essence of Byzantine Art lies in the fusion of western and eastern concepts. Today the greatest number of early period mosaic is seen at Salonika and Ravenna in lavish churches and palaces (see fig.7) Byzantine crafts men gave perfect expression of the immense spiritualism of the church. The 15th century saw immense political and cultural upheavals, the Moslem Turks had exerted pressure for over a century, and in 1453 their conquest of constantinople brought to an end the



Fig 7. Head of Mary, Church of St Sophia, Salonkia

rule of Byzantine over eastern Christendom which had lasted over 1000 yrs. Italy then became once more the religious and cultural centre of the Christian world.

From the intense Byzantine period (noted for admirable pictorial expression) came the humanistic study of man and nature. Artists rediscovered perspective and aimed at a faithful realism or ideal representation of man.

For over 2000yrs, from classical Greece to the Byzantine empire, the mosaicists were all mostly Greek craftsmen, local craftsmen worked along with Greek experts picking up mosaic techniques, and by the end of the Byzantine Empire the centre of mosaic making moved to Italy. Italian crafts men opened their own work shops in Venice and Rome. Italian Craftsmen concentrated on mainly copying paintings in mosaic, working very much in an industrial fashion. Practically no original mosaics were produced after the 15th century, until in the 20th century mosaic gained its place as a medium in its own right.

The 19th century can be established as the second phase in the progression of mosaic art.

The style of painting in the mid 19th century was entirely representational, Classical, sentimental, or heroic, the mosaicists copied these painting at the same time the interest in the Greek and Roman architecture was developing. Italian workshops opened branches all over Europe executing work in Paris, Berlin and London. The 19th century was a busy time for mo-

saic making. In most cases mosaics were ornaments added to the finished building. Instead of being part of the general architecture. The main technique remained traditional and glass tesserae was still the predominant material, enabling mosaics to capture the exact range of colours and image being copied.

The 20th century brought about revolutionary ideas, these ideas were laying the foundations for the revival of mosaic as a creative art.

The Art Nouveau movement, the Fauves, Expressionists, the Cubists and abstract painters all have visible influence all around us today. Each movement had different aims and influenced each other, and these movements all expressed something in common; the rejection of the relentless realism that went before them. Art Nouveau, strongly decorative in character and originated in the 19th century influenced architecture and the visible arts. Around this time the Arts and Crafts movement was beginning and it also had significant effects on architecture and the arts.

One of the most original representatives of the Art Nouveau movement was Antoni Gaudi, Catalan Architect. With his great imagination, he created mosaics as an integral part of his often fantastic buildings, he has been a great source of inspiration to many mosaic artists today in the third phase of mosaic progression. **Figure 8** shows Park Guell 1900-14, it was originally intended as a garden suburb on a hill on the outskirts of Barcelona, but it was finally converted into a municipal park

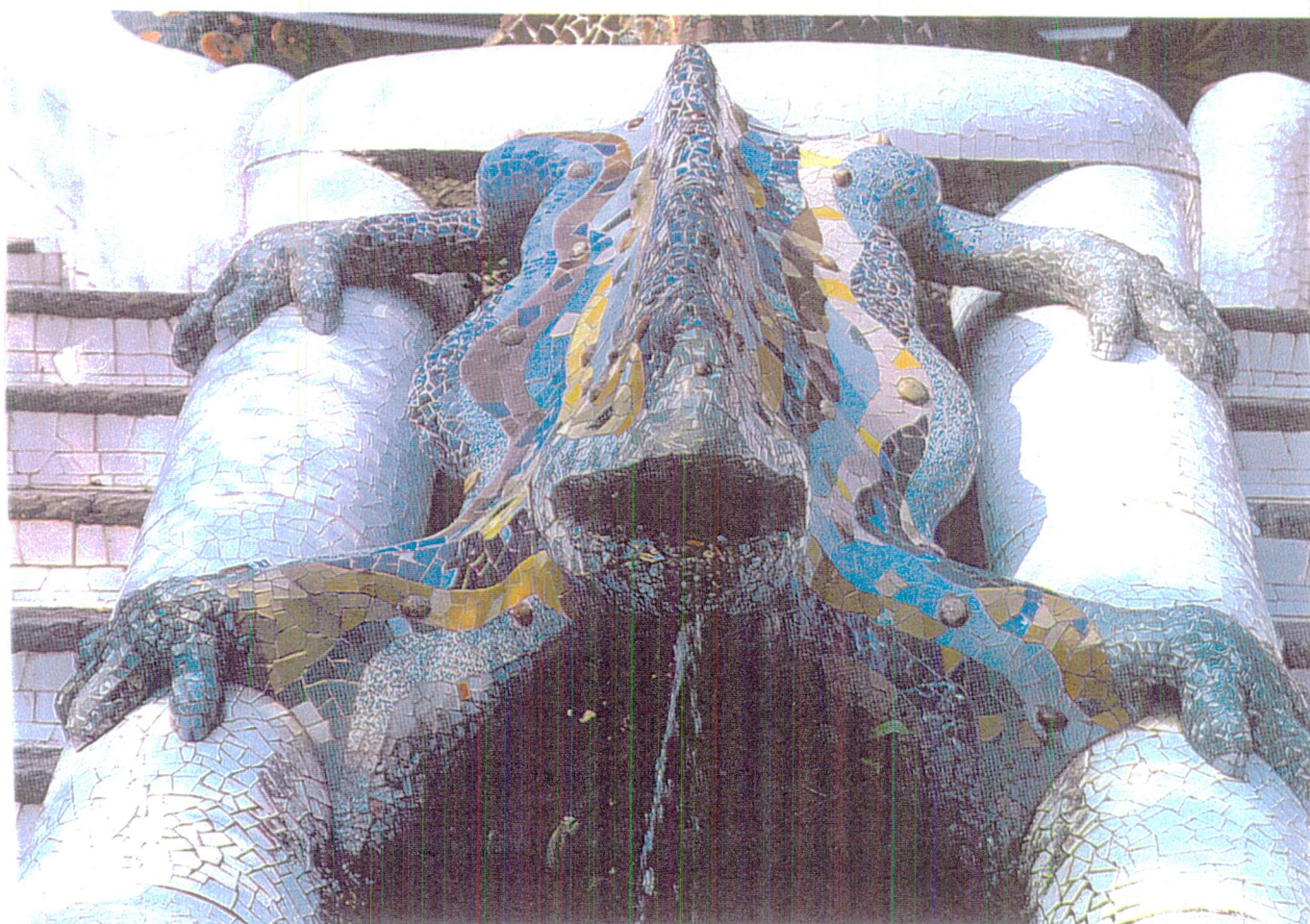
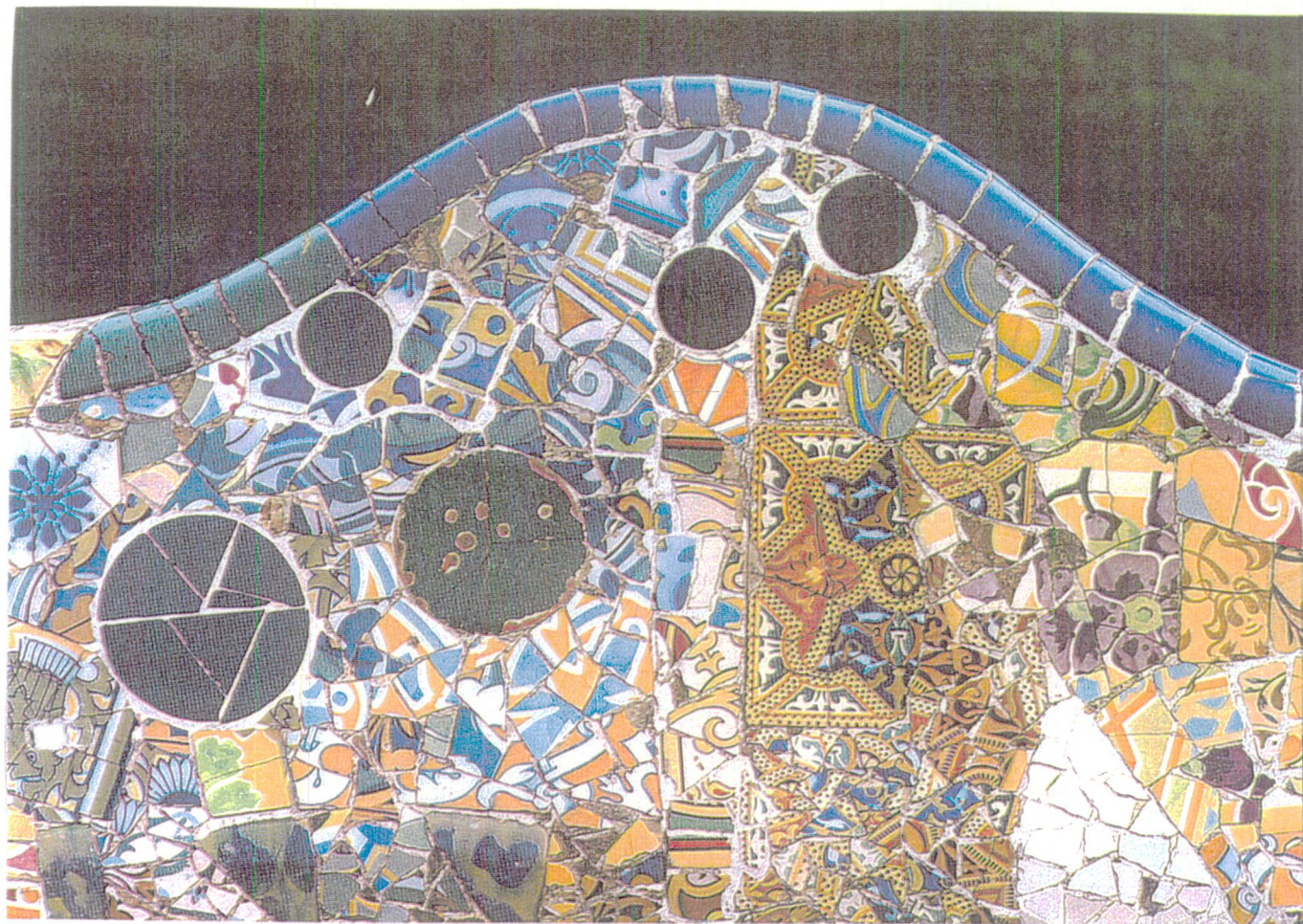


Fig 8. Park guell, Barcelona, Antoni Gaudi.

and is the finest example of Gaudi's sensitive expression of natural form. The park was named after Count Euse bi Guell, an important wealthy textile manufacturer and constant patron.

Gaudi was a constant visitor to the Guell household, and through Guell, through the conversation of those he gathered around him interested in the different arts, and particularly through Guells rich library of foreign books, Gaudi became acquainted with the theories of Ruskin and Morris, particularly Ruskin. Ruskin wrote that

"the value of architecture depends on two distinct characters: one, the impression it receives from human power; the other, the image it bears of natural creation"
(Ruskin, 1849, p.105)

It is interesting to note that the roots of Gaudis work was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century, it was indeed a move from the stiff standardisation of the time.

The use of bright coloured ceramic tiles came with the revival of colour in architecture, it is only reasonable that this revival should happen in Barcelona with a tradition grounded explorer of Gaudi's character. The fashion for coloured ceramics tiles at this time came from the east with the Arabs, they developed tile factories in many cities. The colour and structure used by the Greeks was another influence in the work of Gaudi. His fragments of broken tiles, practically reduced to a skin of

colour stretched over the abstract sculptural forms of his architecture. The mosaic/broken tiles was not decoration but essentially part of the structure. Gaudi made a break through in history by treating the material in this way, up until this time mosaic was used for decorative use only.

Artists of the Art Nouveau movement had been greatly influenced by Japanese woodcuts, the blocks of colour divisions within the pieces have thick lines and gaps typical of the characteristics of mosaics. (see fig 9) This brought about a new approach to colour, like in the Byzantine period when mosaicists arranged their compositions to form strong colours and shapes.



Fig 9. Japanese wood carvings.

At the beginning of the 20th century painters again explored the emotional and decorative effect of colour. A complete break with tradition was made when colour, shapes and lines were no longer portrayed recognizably. Colour could now be used to express emotion and experience or to create decorative patterns, hence abstract art.

The general acceptance of abstract art by the public, could be one of the most important reasons as to a revitalisation of mosaic in this century.

Mexico is one of the few countries which in modern times has evolved a national style of mosaic, one of its most predominant artists is Juan O'Gorman. Like Gaudi, Juan took mosaic as an architectural theme, and made it a feature of his buildings, rather than just decorating them.

In the 1940s, Jeanne Reynal used mosaic tesserae very much as the 'dribblers' used paint, by painting on in large quantities to canvas and then scattering the tesserae on certain areas. an example of this is shown in **fig 10**, again we find that the arts and crafts studio based individualistic style appears, artists at this time strived to achieve different styles of mosaic, it was very much a time of experimentation. Changes in architectural thinking also effected mosaic at this time and many architects began to use mosaic to add character to their buildings.

Irish architect Michael Scott had an immense influence on architecture in Ireland in the early 20th century, his work was of



Fig 10. Jeanne Reynals, mosaic dribbling technique.

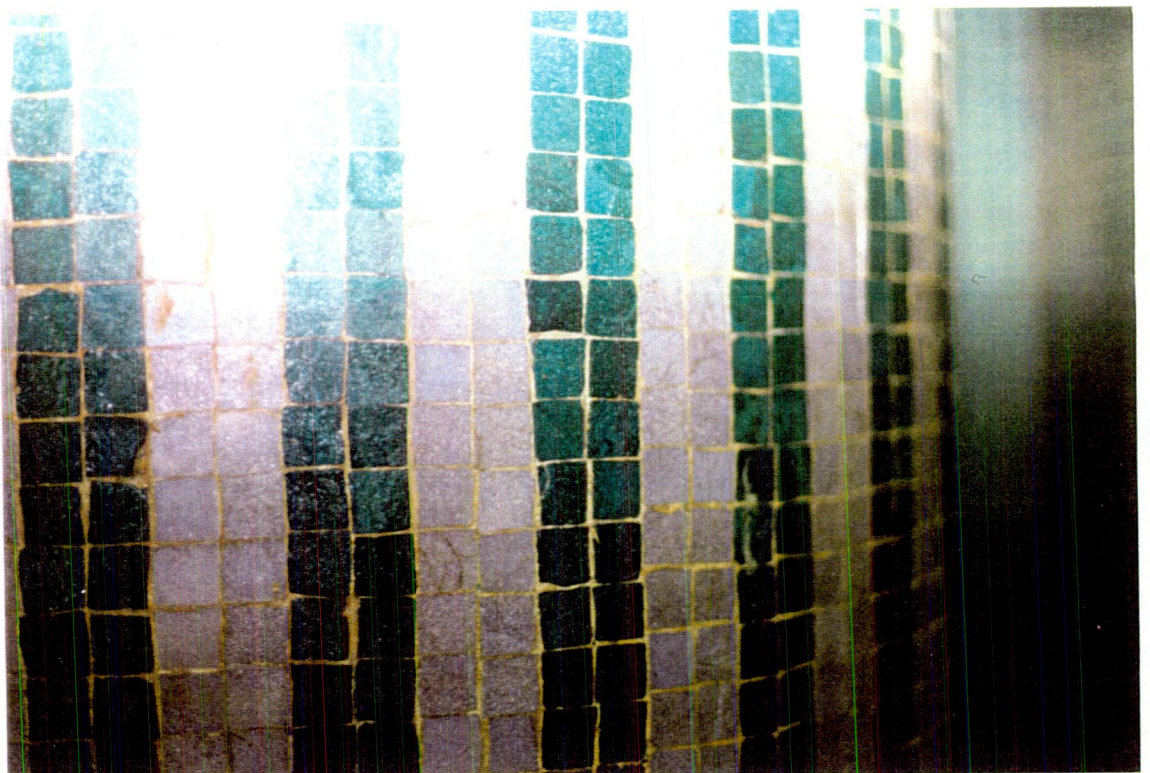
advanced modern design and is still to be seen today, examples of his work.. The Abbey Theatre, Dublin, His own house..Geragh, Donnybrook Garage, Chassis factory Inchicore, and Busaras. He was appointed architect to Busaras in 1946-53. After his visit to an industrial mosaic company 'Sarim' in Venice he decided that he would cover all the columns in Busaras with mosaics, he also covered the canopies on the exterior of the building, an example of the inside columns covered in mosaic can be seen in **fig 11**. Michael Scott noted at this time that the mosaic distributors in Venice seemed to operate exactly in the same way they had done for hundreds of years, and so today industrial mosaic methods have not changed alot. ?

It is important to note that this was a progression of mosaic in Ireland, Michael Scott used the mosaic material to achieve marvellous colours and textures rather than a painted surface, plus with the mosaic the columns would not need re-painting as they would suffer from the heavy traffic flow of the bus station. Perhaps we can establish that Michael Scotts pre-occupation with the appearance of his buildings can be traced back to the arts and crafts movement, he was taking architecture one step forward by introducing new materials such as mosaic. ?

By the 1970s the pendulum had swung in earnest and buildings from 100yrs before were beginning to attract widespread admiration for their colour and complexity. Mosaic played a part in this revival and were seen worthy of study and preservation. The 1980s saw the start in the renaissance of the craft tradition and modern mosaic today, with low overheads and



Fig 11. Mosaics in
Busaras, Michael Scott.



flexibility which could meet the specific needs of customers and architects. In 1939 Arthur Lane of the Victoria and Albert museum's department of ceramics wrote..

"The turgid revitalisim of the 19th century conflating the styles of all previous epoches, made great use of tiles. Today sickened by our excesses we have practically disgarded ornament"

(Herbert & Huggins, 1995, p.220)

This is true of mosaic today, practicing mosaic artists have taken mosaic and brought it a step further, creating a new style and perhaps **The Third Phase in Mosaic Development.**

There are many factors that have influenced the revival in mosaics. By the 1980s tiles were back in 'full swing', this drive of energy was not from within established industrial firms, but from individuals and small companies anxious to express their art on uniform slabs of clay. Coupled with this a renewed awareness and desire for colour and decoration in buildings, provided just the right climate for craftspeople to respond with creativity and entrepreneurial flair. As I discussed earlier, the crafts councils advice and schemes had a major impact on small craft based businesses and resulted in a proliferation of craft workers specialising in mosaic art.

There are at least six practicing mosaic artists in Dublin today, John Kindness, Glass Hammer designs, John O Connor, John Briton, Orla Kaminska and Laura O Hagan Architectural ceramics. It is the latter that I shall discuss in more detail in the next

chapter. It is obvious that there is a growing popularity in modern mosaic, but there is still a demand for industrial mosaic and this is evident in the existence of Mosaic Assemblers, the Dublin based industrial mosaic company.

Since 1969 Mosaic assemblers have designed and assembled mosaic patterns and creations for architects and interior designers throughout the world (see fig 12). Mosaic Assemblers are situated on 38 Sandwith St, Dublin, with show room and large storage premises. They have an extensive range of unglazed, glazed and glass mosaics. The designs for mosaic assemblers cost around £16 per sq metre. Peter Morrison of Mosaic Assemblers commented that...

“As well as being decorative, mosaic is a hard wearing, long lasting material which is suitable for both wall and floor application and is particularly suitable for use in public traffic areas, along with bathrooms and kitchens”.

(Thorpe , 1996, p.120.)

Mosaic Assemblers differ from the new departures of mosaic art. The patterns appear more formally arranged than the work of the Tile works or Glass hammer designs. In keeping with the traditional methods of mosaic, mosaic assemblers have aimed their mosaic at a different market than the craft based studio mosaic artist. Industrial mosaic is more likely to be seen in public areas, such as swimming pools, public toilets, train stations, bus stations and bars etc. Perhaps we can draw on a



Fig 12. Mosaic assemblers.

comparisons here to the writings of craftsman and theorist David Pye. He wrote that some day the crafts would complement industry, perhaps this is what is happening today, Industrial mosaic company, Mosaic Assemblers are working with a craft based material and using it in an industrial setting, with the use of factory machines and numerous workers. Companies like Mosaic Assemblers can produce mosaic at a cheaper rate and most likely alot quicker as well. However they do lack the individual and creative unique touch that the craft based mosaic artist is in demand for, and the reason that we are witnessing a revival in the modern mosaic today.

So in relation to the industrial based mosaic, we can establish that Mosaic Assemblers very existence is proof that the industrial based mosaic is still in demand, however the industrial mosaic may be alot cheaper to purchase but the demand for unique handcrafted mosaic is still very strong. I shall now discuss the various crafts people practicing modern mosaic.

John Kindness was born in Belfast in 1951. He studied painting and sculpture in the early 1970s, he did not begin his career until 1986 and he then began working as a full time artist. **Figures 13, 14 and 15** are examples of the mosaic in Belfast Bus Depot, this piece of mosaic art is far removed from the uniform tessarae mosaic from the uniform tessarae mosaics from the two previous phases in mosaic development, however we can establish similarities to the work of Gaudi, perhaps John Kindness has taken inspiration from the work of Gaudi, and pushed the concept further, using not only smashed and



Fig 13. John Kindness, Belfast Bus Station.

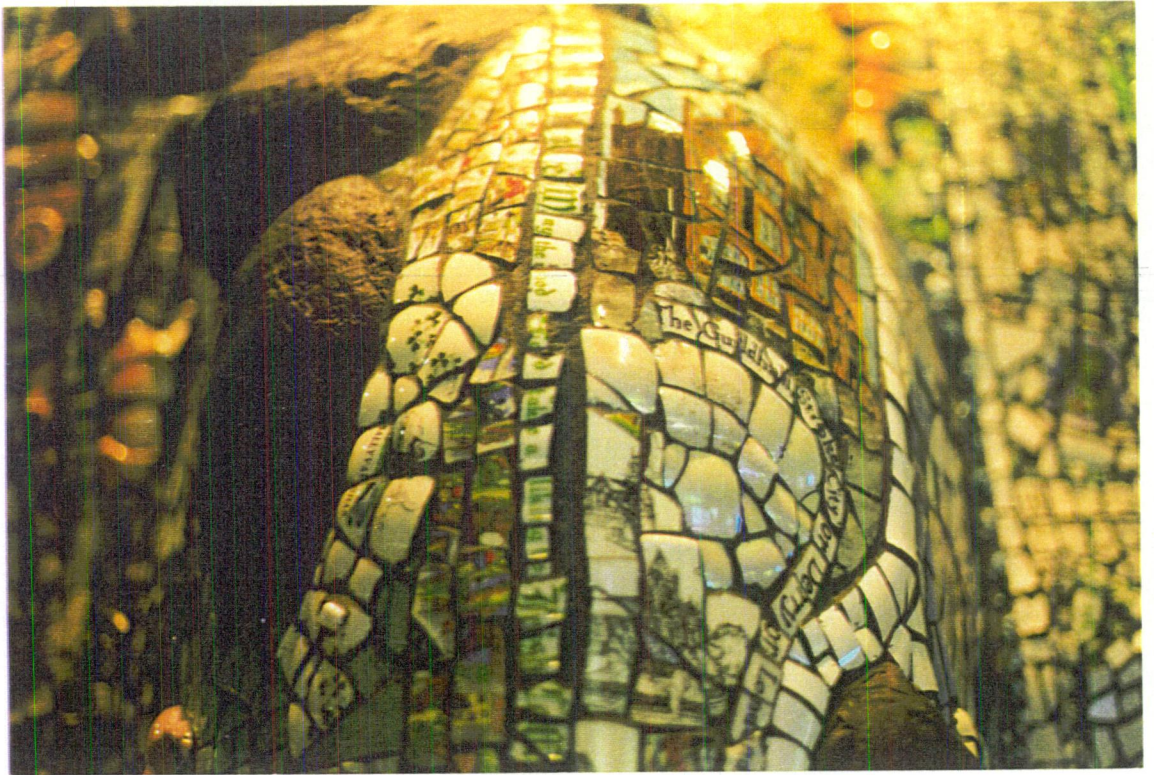


Fig 14. John Kindness, Belfast Bus Station.

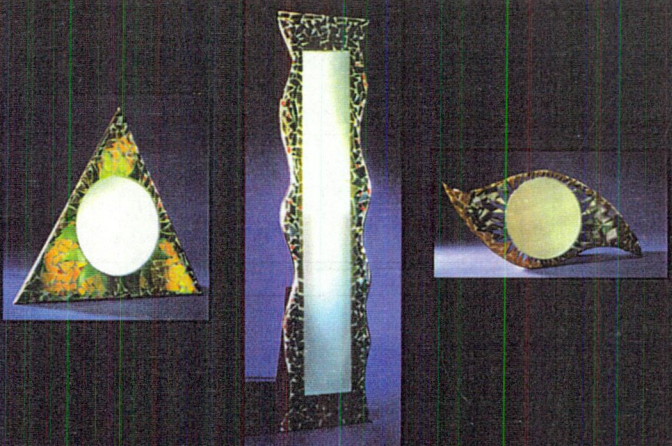


Fig 15 John Kindness, Belfast Bus Station.

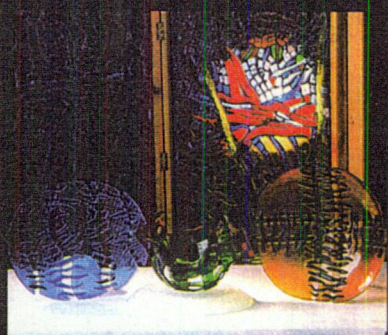
cracked tiles but broken crockery, cup handles and ceramic ornaments. This is good example of the innovation in mosaic art today and because it is placed in such a public place ie.. the Bus station, hundreds of people are exposed to this very different kind of medium and this has led to the new acceptance of modern mosaic.

It is interesting to note that from Thomas St to O'Connell St (including the Temple bar area and Grafton St area), there is at least Twelve examples of modern mosaic art, here are some of the examples on route, Thomas Reads Bar, Dame St, The Turks head Bar, Parliament St, Dublin castle reception desk, Hogans Bar Georges st, The Globe Georges St, Cooks restaurant south William st, Hairdressing Salon opposite Hogans Bar, Little Caesars Restaurant Balfe St, Apache shoe shop South Anne St, Gurteen Country interiors Dame St, The Design Yard Essex St, Keatings pub Mary St. With the growing building development in the Temple bar area, more architects are collaborating with capable craftspeople to create original and highly individual buildings.


Another mosaic artist working in Dublin is Michelle O'Donnell, Glass hammer designs. **Fig 16** shows the range of work carried out by Glass hammer designs. Glass hammer designs is a young company based in Dublin, which specialises in contemporary handmade glass mosaics. Michelle O ' Donnell began working for Cavan Crystal before embarking on her own business venture.



M I R R O R S



B O W L S & W I N D O W S



S C R E E N S

For more information on Glasshammer products, please contact:
 Michelle O'Donnell
 Unit 3, Liffey Trust,
 117-126 Upper Sheriff Street,
 Dublin 1, Ireland.
 Tel: (353) 1 836 4645 ext:19 Fax: (353) 1 855 6798

GLASSHAMMER DESIGNS

Fig 16. Glass hammer designs.

“Working for a large manufacturing company like Cavan Crystal, gave me the first hand experience of working in a business situation.”

(Boyle, Jan 1997.)

Glass hammer designs has mosaiked bar counters, floors, windows, light fittings and screens, all made to commission and suitable for commercial or domestic use.

The possibilities for mosaic interiors is limitless according to Michelle O'Donnell, for example, Glass mosaic can be applied straight onto a window to obliterate an ugly view.

Glass hammer designs cost approximately £150 per sq metre to commission and the work is available in Copper Moon Spires Belfast, The Design Yard Dublin, Gurteen Country Interiors Dublin, The Crafts council Dublin and Which Craft Dublin.

The workshop is situated on Upper Sheriff St Dublin.

This particular kind of mosaic works differs greatly to that of Laura O'Hagan/ Tileworks . I find it particularly interesting that of the four mosaic companies that I am researching, each artist/craftspersons work is completely different. Perhaps this is why each one of the mosaic artists are doing so well in their own right.

The company that I shall discuss in more lengthy detail is The Tileworks/Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics. The work of Laura O'Hagan is a prime example of the collaboration of business and craft and is the topic of discussion in Chapter 3.

The Tileworks and the work of Laura O'Hagan is an important example of the new revival of modern mosaic within the Craft renaissance.

So in conclusion to this chapter, I have defined mosaic and discovered that it lends itself to both industry and the craft based worker.

I have also traced the progression of mosaic in 3 phases:

1. **The “ancient” phase**, this was almost industrially based, with the extreme wealth of the church and ruling class mosaic was seen as a sign of great wealth.

2. **The 19th century phase**, Mosaic at this time still remained as an industrial based craft. However the consumers at this point were architects and this was heavily influenced by the arts and crafts movement . Within these first two phases, technology and the consumers changed dramatically, however mosaic itself had changed very little in technique and appearance.

3. **The third phase**: Today the industrial mosaic continues, evidence of this in Ireland is Mosaic Assemblers. The third phase establishes that experience and input from the mosaicist are now vitally important and with the revival in the crafts in general, I have found that this desire for individuality is extremely important.

I have established that in Ireland the growing demand for original mosaics have expressed this new revival. In **figures 17-25** I have collected a selection of modern mosaics in Dublin from various mosaic artists.

Some of these relatively new mosaics have begun to appear dated already. The harsh bold colours in **fig 17 and 18**, The Turks head, bring to mind the same harshness and excessive colour of the eighties. This could be another factor for the growing success of Laura O'Hagan and her ability to keep an eye on contemporary fashions. As W.J Furnival wrote,

“ Making a profit from international trends, without losing the sense of identity and independence”

(Herbert and Huggins, 1990, p23)

The Tileworks is perceived as being one of the most successful companies according to Sean O'Farrell, business adviser of the Crafts Council Dublin, So it is from here that I shall discuss the Tile works and Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics.



Fig 17. Turks Head, Parliament St.



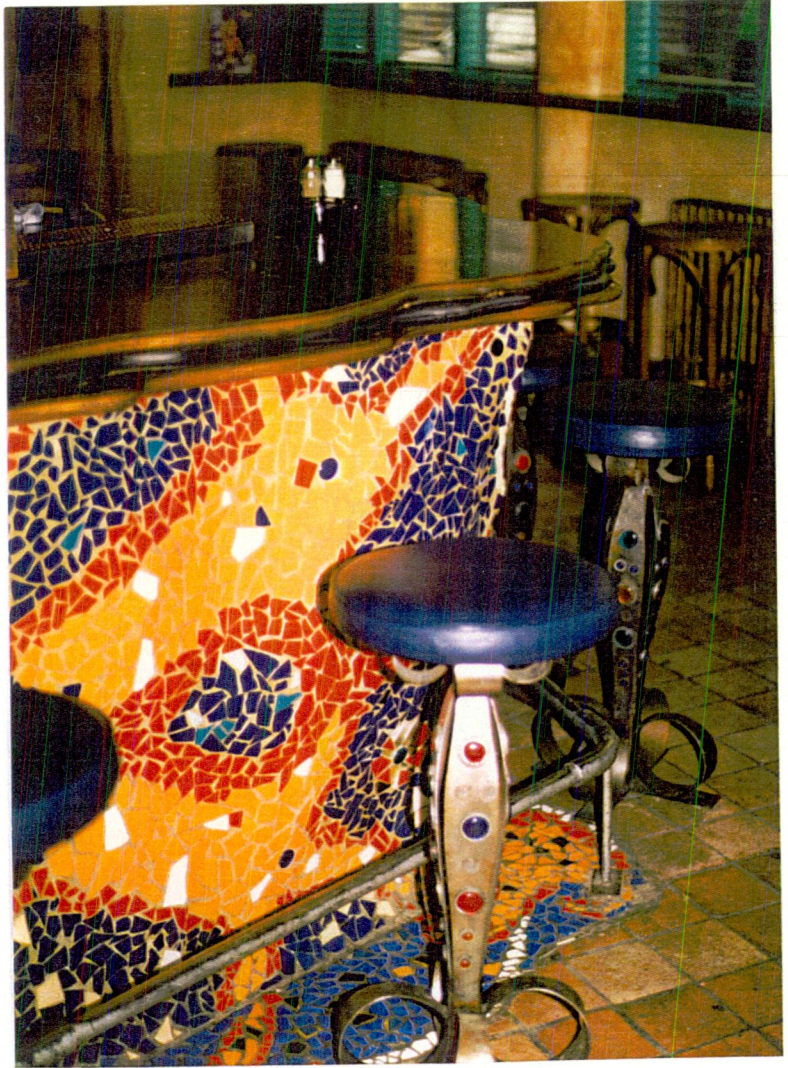
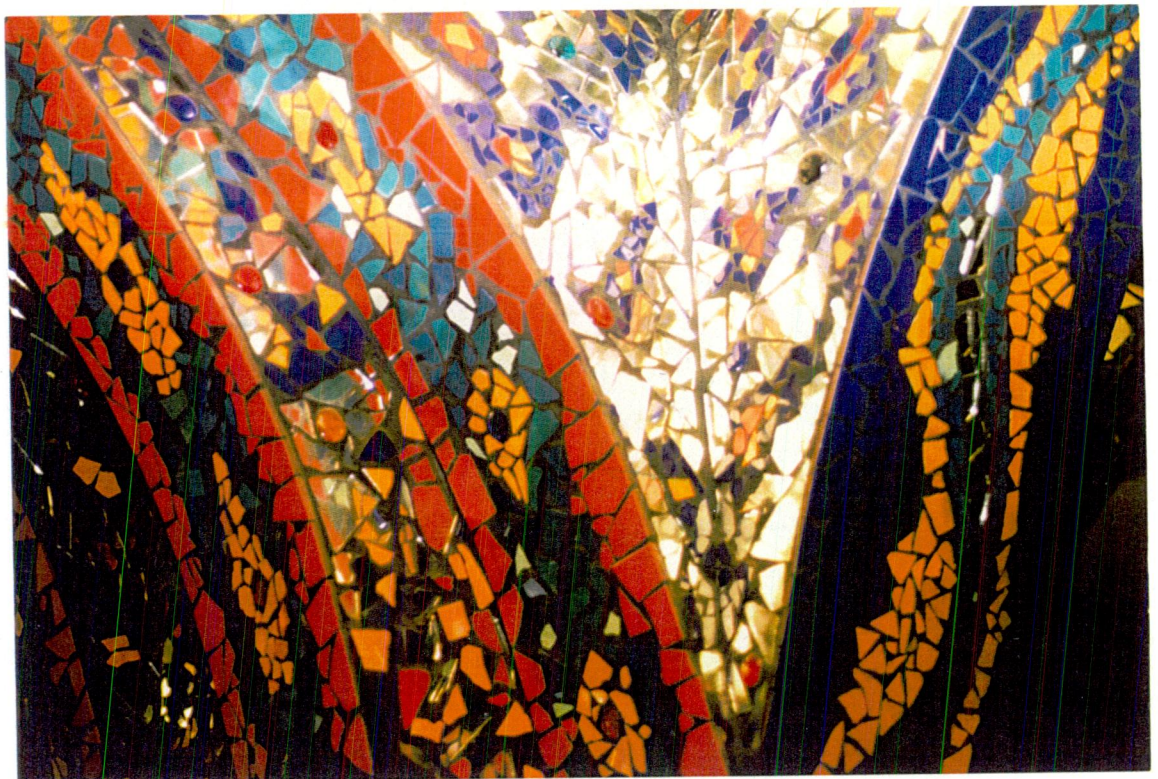


Fig 18. Turks Head, Parliament St.



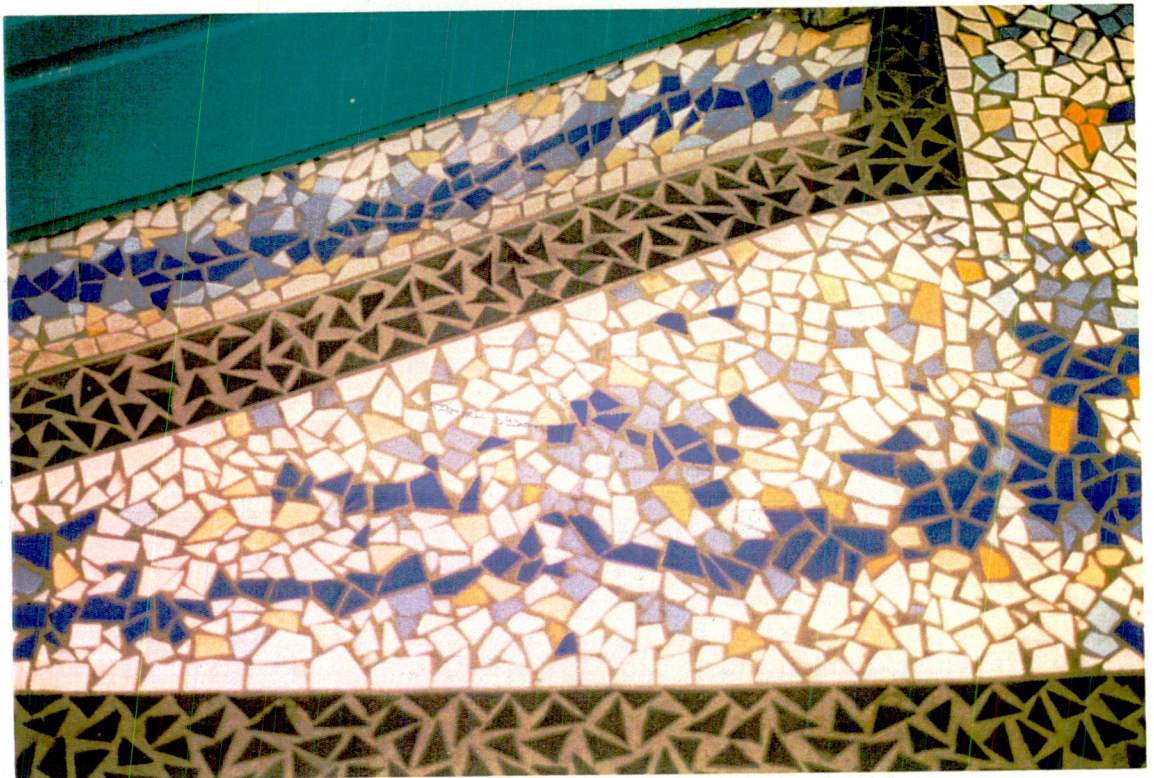


Fig 19. Turks Head, Parliament St.



Fig 20. Apache shoe shop, Sth Anne St, Dublin.

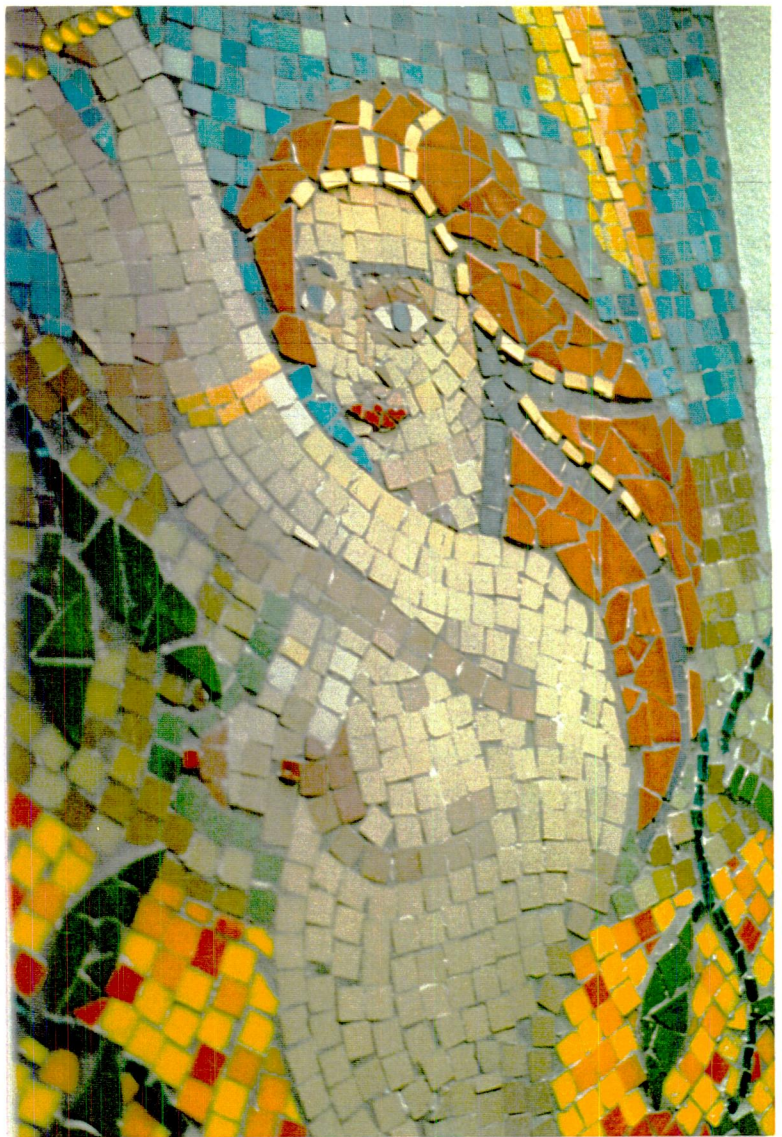


Fig 21. Little Caesars Resturant, Balfe st, Dublin.

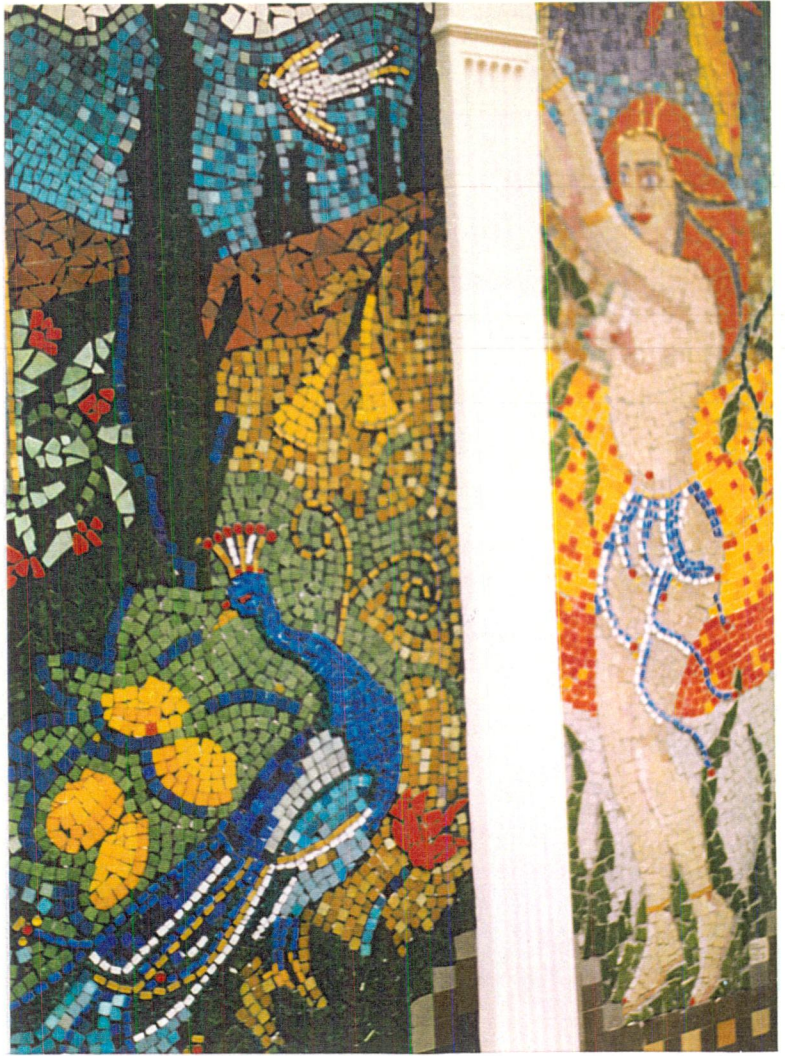


Fig 22. Little Caesars Resturant, Balfe st, Dublin





Fig 23. Little Caesars Resturant, Balfe st, Dublin.





Fig 24. Entrance to the design yard, Sarah Daly.

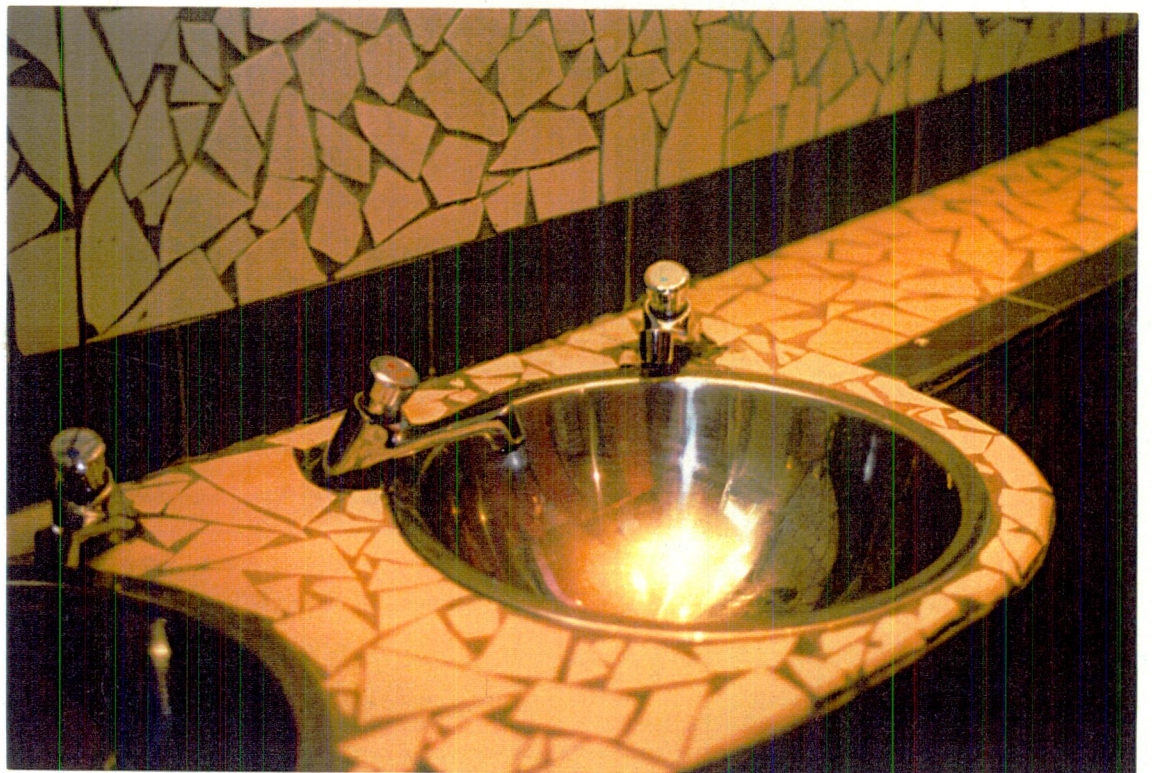
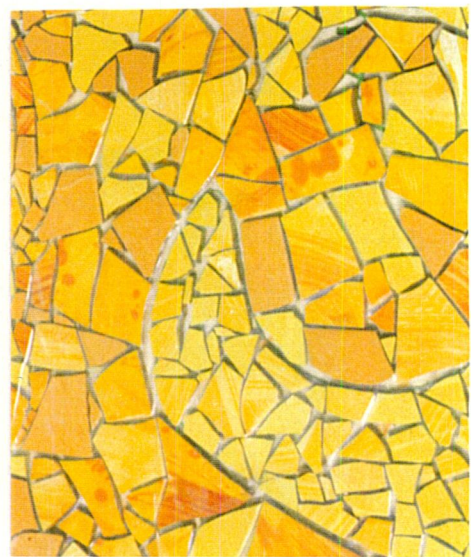


Fig 25. Hogans Bar, Georges St, Dublin.

CHAPTER THREE:

Case study of the Tileworks/Laura O'Hagan Architectural Ceramics.



Case study on Laura O'Hagan/The Tile works.

The purpose of this chapter is to take the successful mosaic artist Laura O'Hagan and her company and place it in the Craft Renaissance.

In the previous two chapters I have established that there is presently a craft revival and that mosaic is growing more popular. The number of mosaic artists is proof of the continual interest in modern mosaic, and the various changes discussed in mosaic and craft history has confirmed the position of modern mosaic in the third phase.

I have chosen Laura O'Hagan/Tileworks for this case study as I feel she is a good example of a professional crafts woman working in a business orientated fashion, and because of her professional business attitude Laura O'Hagan fits perfectly into the new craft revival. As discussed earlier in chapter one, Sean O'Farrell, business adviser in the Crafts council said,

“ the success of the craftsperson today can only be achieved with good business knowledge and the willingness to be receptive to market trends and ideas.”

(Boyle, Jan 1997.)

Since working with the Tileworks (June-Aug 1996) I developed a better appreciation of the time, work and energy dedicated to mosaic, unlike the production line worker in a factory I was able to work on the mosaic work from start to finish and view the end product as a whole.

Apart from the fact that the Tileworks mosaic fits into the craft revival so well , I have also chose the Tileworks in particular because I find their hand painted mosaics quite amazing and worthy of discussion.

This chapter is divided into 7 headings:

1. The history of the Tileworks.
2. Scope of work.
3. The break from industrial mosaic.
4. Material and technique.
5. Existing as a business.
- 6 Gaudi's influence.
- 7.Tileworks as part of the Craft renaissance.

Background history on the Tileworks / Laura O'Hagan.

The Tileworks, established in 1989, was set up by Orla Kaminska and Laura O'Hagan. It is now renamed Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics and is solely owned by her.

Laura O'Hagan previously worked in an architects office but felt restricted by small scale model making whereby she was rarely able to view the finished product, she said,

**"Perhaps this is why I was drawn to working
on a larger scale and hands on work"**

(Boyle, October, 1996)

In 1987 she graduated from N.C.A.D, Dublin, in ceramics and post graduation she studied jewellery design for one year. However Laura O'Hagan's true ability did not lie in this area, she left Ireland for Spain and worked along side a ceramic artist practising architectural ceramics. During these three months she worked with larger tiles, old Arabic tiles, roof tiles and was introduced to symbology.

It was here that the work of Antoni Gaudi (1852-1926) who was responsible for some of the most memorable structural images in the history of architecture, had a major impact on Laura O'Hagan. She was greatly influenced by his unique ability to fuse his own personal sense of Spanishness with the incredible organic forms. It is possible to establish a strong

correlation between Laura O'Hagans work and Gaudi's work, this shall be compared in greater detail and depth when analysing aspects of her work later.

On return to Ireland Laura O'Hagan met Orla Kaminska, whom she admired for her work and spontaneity (Orla had also graduated from N.C.A.D in ceramics). Together they went to Cork on a Business guidance course, run by the crafts council, to provide small companies like The Tileworks, with the initial funding and advise needed in establishing their business.

On their return to Dublin they set up the Tileworks, which was based on Ave' Rd, off South Circular Rd, Dublin, which consisted of a small workshop with working space for two kilns and a large table, some storage space was available. They applied for a Government grant and were found to be eligible for it as a small manufacturing production based company.

Scope of work

Like many successful businesses the Tileworks began with small scale production. Some of their earlier works included, mosaic mirrors, frames, tables tops, and various other smaller pieces, which were sold to individual customers and displayed in various craftshops, for example in the Design Yard, Essex st and the crafts council shop, Powerscourt Townhouse.

As the business became more popular, the demand for the product increased and so did the size of the product.

Laura O'Hagan and Orla kaminska's first major commission together was the restoration of a Victorian ceramic exterior on the E.B.S on Baggot st, Dublin. This involved repairing broken tiles and repairing the existing ones. (see fig 26)

Still under the partnership of the Tileworks, Laura O'Hagan and Orla Kaminska began to undertake separate commissions. Some of Orla kaminska's work includes, an installation on Dunlaoire Port and the Gents Lavatories in Thomas Reads, bar on Parlament street Dublin. (see fig 27)

Laura O'Hagan has especially been drawn to large scale work and developed the initial idea of small home decoration to large scale panels and murals. An example of this is the two part series of the murals in Donamede shopping centre, Dublin, and Glasnevin Crematorium. This piece is based on waves and



Fig 26. E.B.S Baggot St, Victorian ceramic tiles.



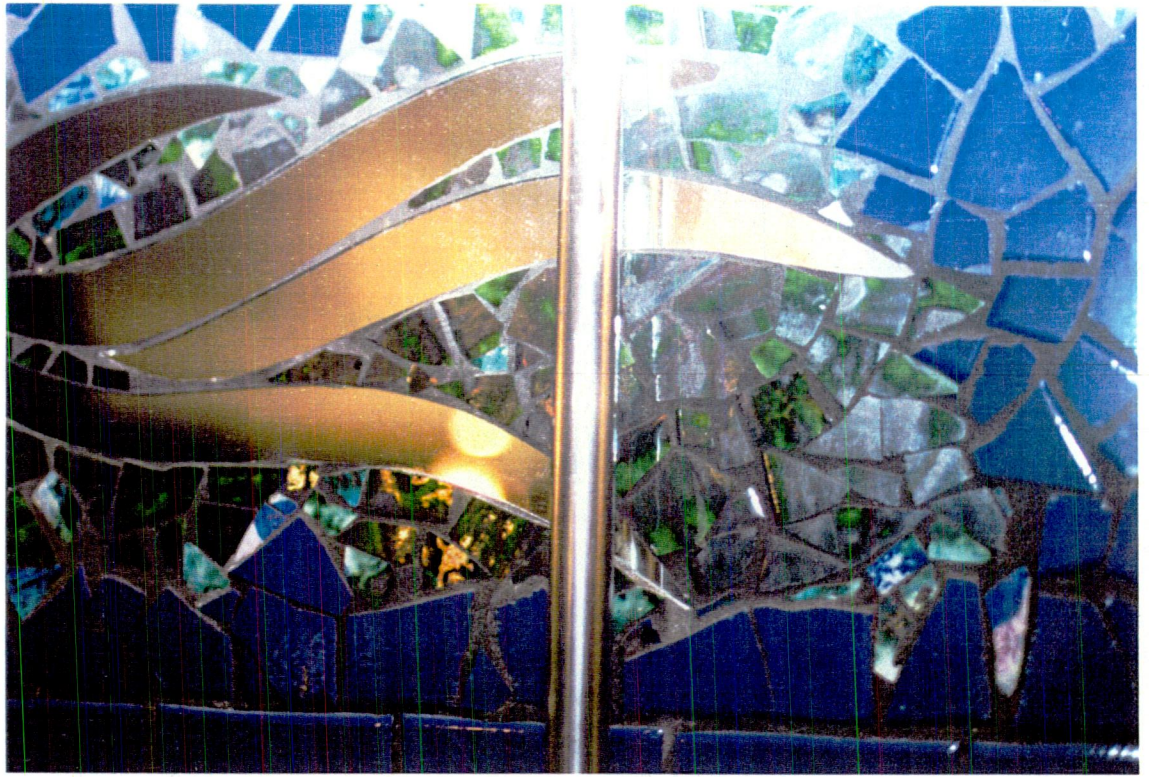


Fig 27. Thomas Reads, Dublin, Orla Kaminska.

flowing tidal patterns. The mural in Glasnevin is mosaic and of the same design.(see fig 28)

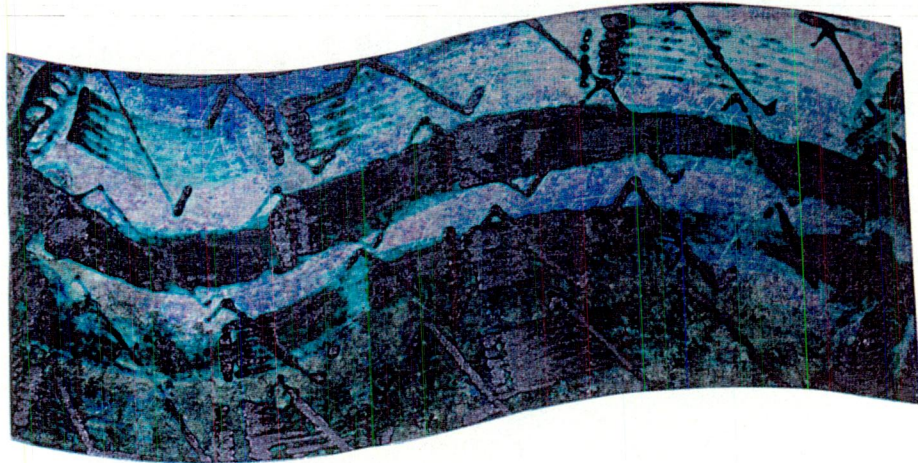


Fig 28. Ceramic mural, Glasnevin, Laura O'Hagan.

Other work carried out by Laura O'Hagan includes, Dublin Castle reception desk and reception area floor, she designed the structure of the desk and metal fabrication, as shown in fig 29. The desk is curved with stainless steel edging to the tiled mosaic on the surface area, the top is also stainless steel. Hidden from the visitors view is the leather green interior of the desk. This adds to the intrigue of this piece and can only be seen by the receptionist.

The main entrance to the lobby in the castle is also mosaic and reflects the reception desk. Small stainless steel balls are strategically placed upon the floor in the entrance to lead the viewers eyes to the desk. The actual area where the reception desk is placed is very small, so in order to conquer the areas limitations, the abstract shape of the desk gives a deceiving look of spaciousness.

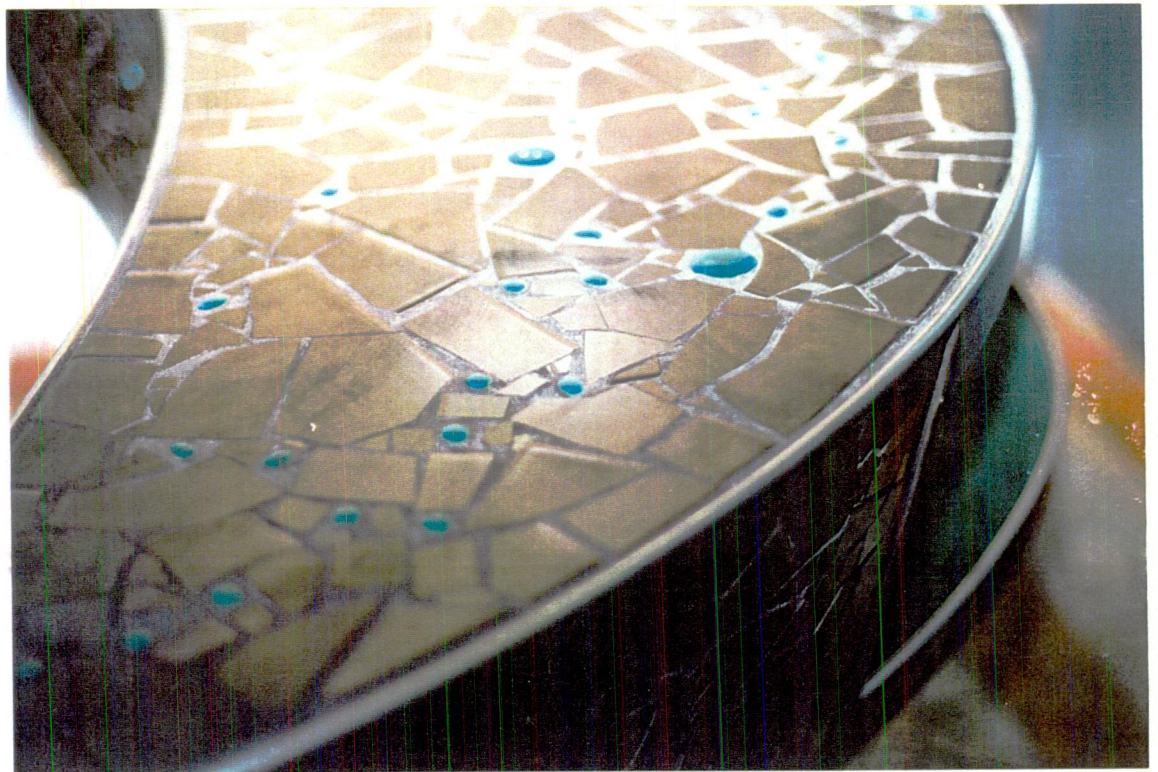
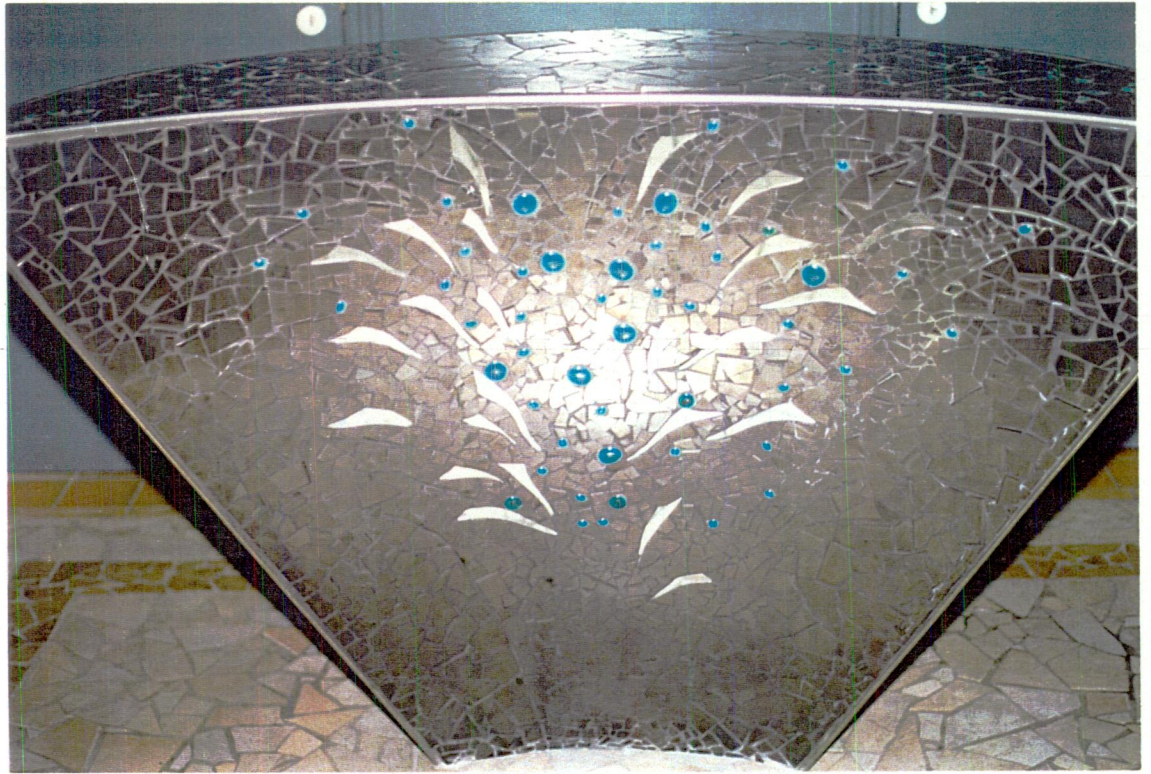


Fig 29. Reception desk, Dublin castle, Tileworks.

More examples of Laura's ever increasing popular works are: The back wall of Thomas Reads bar, Parliament St, (see fig 30) Where she initiated her own original groutline technique (explained in greater detail later, in Materials and techniques) This piece constitute Royal blue tiling, placed in a 'haphazard' fashion. She has also completed mosaic work in Keatings bar on Mary St, Dublin. Also the entrance floor to Cooks restaurant, South William St, Dublin. (see fig 31)

Perhaps the Tileworks largest commission to date has been the large floor called 'Life cycles' For an individual private client. The commission consisted of three floors starting from the basement of the three story house, up. The floors comprise of a series of land formation patterns, Volcanos, rivers, mountains, earth patterns etc. **Fig 32** shows the comparison of an actual volcano to that of the mosaic floor, the similarities are quite striking and the floor has captured the flowing and molten qualities of the erupting Volcano. The hand painted colours are carefully combined at the discretion of the mosaicist and capture a feel of the hot lava. Other images in the 'Life Cycles' floor include, fossils, clouds and water all flowing up through the house. **Figures 33 to 36** shows the floor in the initial stages of making in the old fire station, now Art studio, on Buckingham st Dublin, where Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics is presently situated.

The client involved has five children and each child has been represented within the floor. Whilst assembling the floor Laura



Fig 30. Thomas Read, Bar, Tileworks.



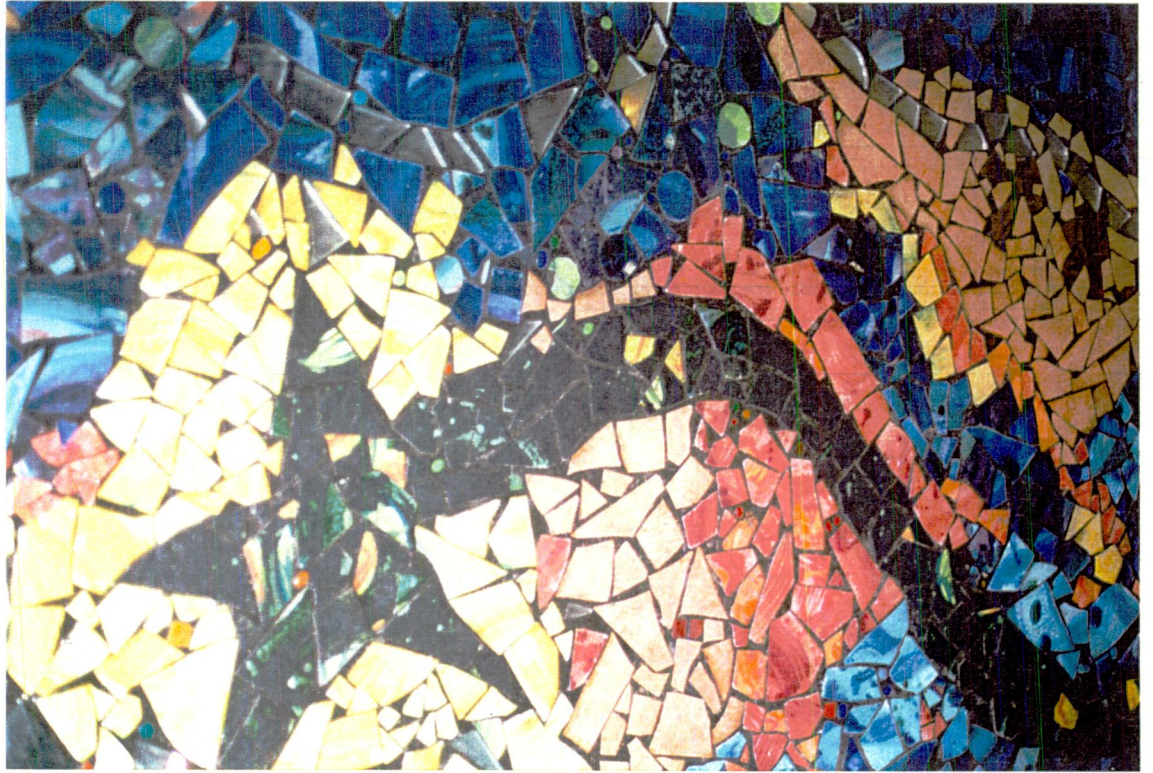


Fig 31. Cooks Restaurant, Dublin.



Fig 32. Land Formations, Volcano and Mosaic.

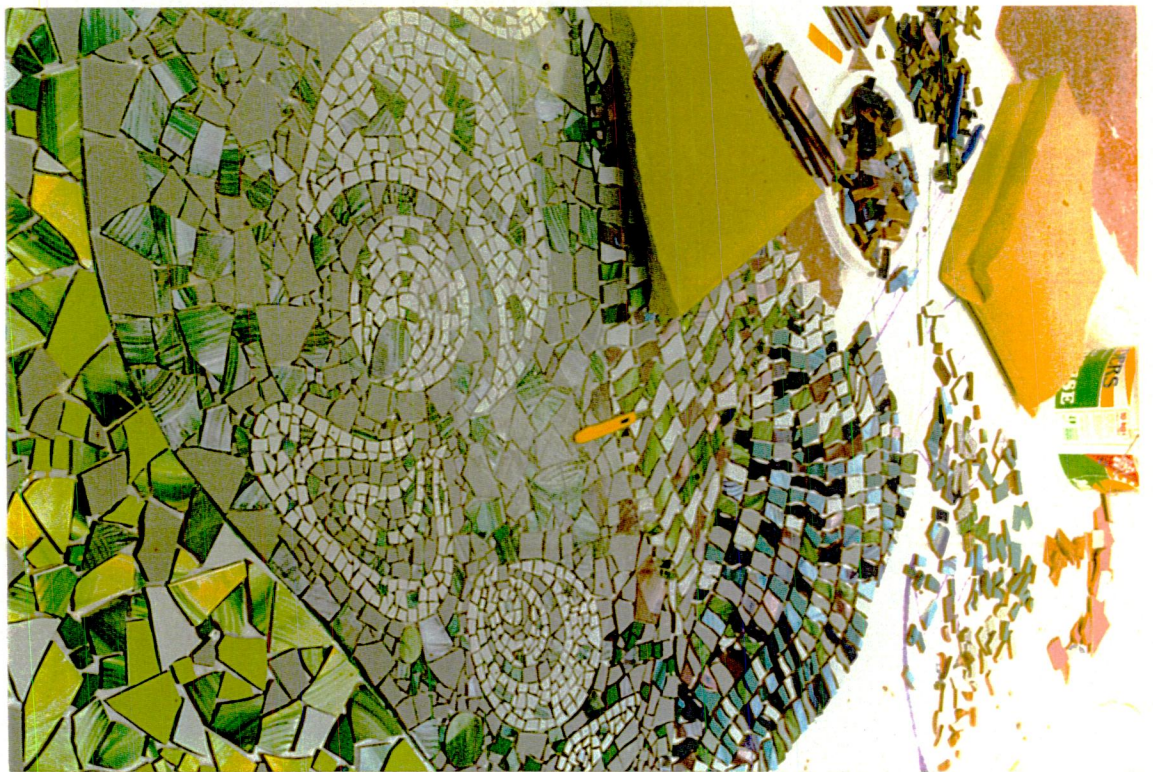


Fig 33 Life Cycles, Tileworks.



Fig 34. Mosaicists completing last stages of 'Lifecycles'.

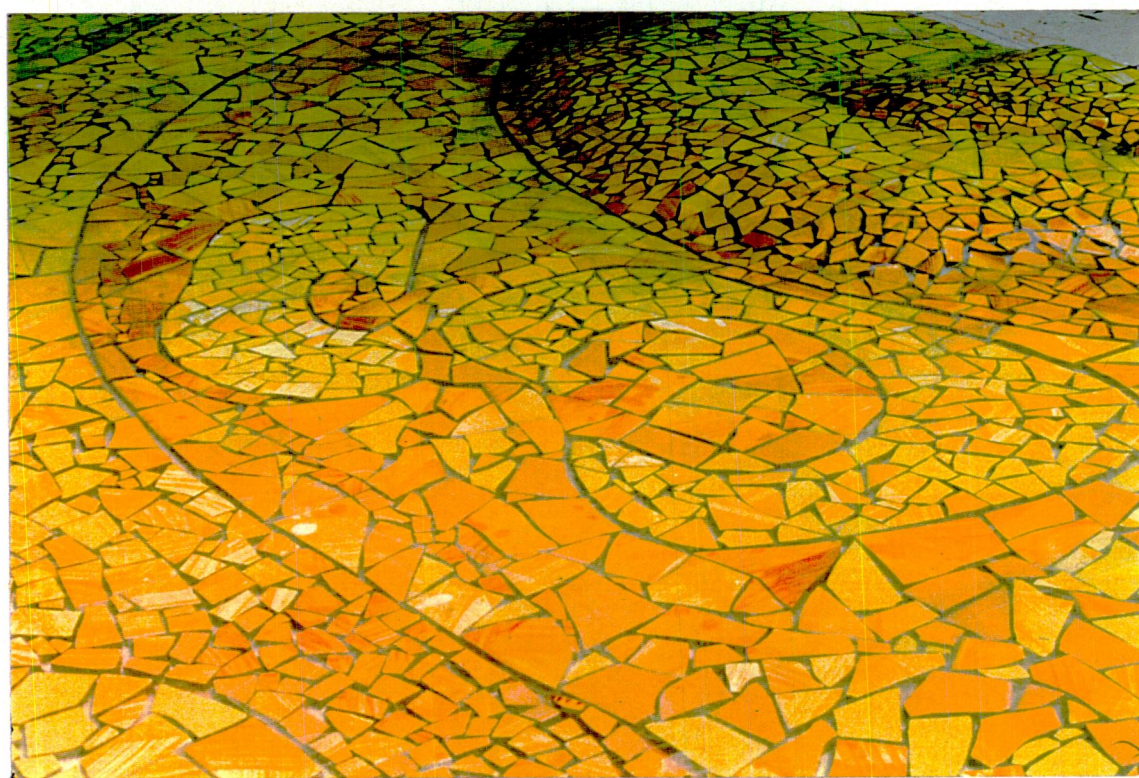


Fig 35. Close up section of 'Lifecycles' floor.

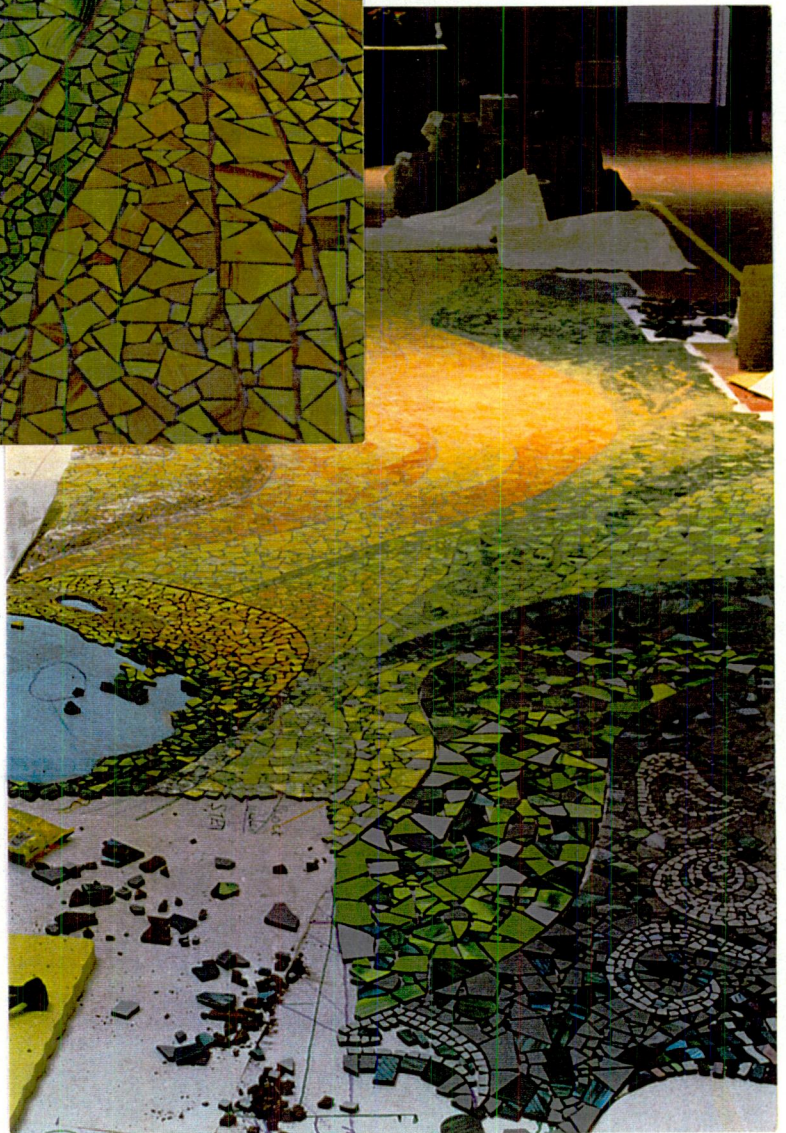
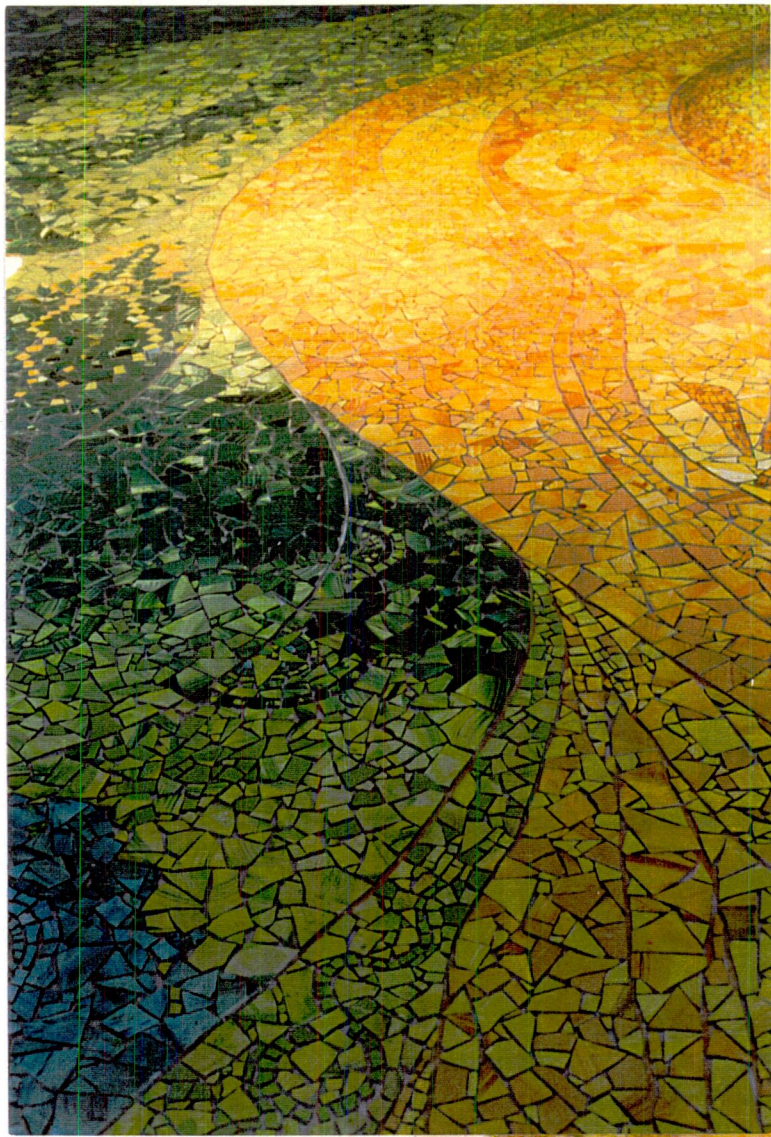


Fig 36. Second floor in 'Lifecycles' theme. Tileworks.

O'Hagan took foot prints on to full tiles with tile glaze, of each of the childrens feet, then fired the impressions and smashed them up to be re- assembled as mosaic foot prints. This is just one of the characteristics in the 'Lifecycles' floor that is typical of the personal touches added by the Tileworks.

The floor was titled Lifecycles because the floors symbolize the life sources within the clients family. Along with the ideas of form and utility, there is an overwhelming human presence in the floors. This speaks of human existence and experience regardless of time and space.

It is like an 'invisible gesture' (Rozman,1996, p33)

because it is not manifested in a physical way but speaks directly to our subconscious, regardless of cultural barriers. The challenge for Laura O'Hagan is to develop criteria not necessarily universal but unique and relevant to her own experiences and that of the client.

Laura O'Hagan allows the user to experience craft in an intimate way, as they step on a Tileworks floor or look at their reflection in a mosaic mirror, the mundane becomes a sensual engagement protecting the user against indifference, this is exactly what Morris, Machintosh, Ruskin, Letaby wanted and Laura O'Hagans work is evidence that the ethics and influences of the 19th century Arts and Crafts movement are still carried out today. The interaction between user and mosaic, through sensual awareness, constitutes but one aspect of mosaic art.

The Break from industrial mosaic.

Mosaic produced by The Tileworks differs from that of conventional mosaic. The patterns appear more hap-hazard and are not formally structured, they do however follow an over all plan, the beauty of the informal arrangements is that the mosaicists can develop their own personal touch. W.J Furnival wrote that,

“each civilisation has been able to add their own touch of genius, with the result that the art of tiling gathers utility, variety and attractiveness.”

(Herbert & Huggins, 1995, p.9)

Tileworks cater for the individual needs of their customers, the work produced is often a combination of the personality of the customer and the artist. An example of an industrial mosaic carried out by Mosaic Assemblers can be seen in **fig 37**. It shows the toilet walls in the Globe Bar, Georges St Dublin. It is interesting to compare this example of mosaic to that of the floor in Cooks Restaurant, carried out by the Tileworks.

The first noticeable difference is the colour, the Tileworks floor is an arrangement of bright , cheerful colours, there is a distinct pattern that leeds your eyes to follow the floor. Unlike the industrially produced floor in the Globe, the Tileworks floor has character. The floor in the Globe is Obviously of good quality

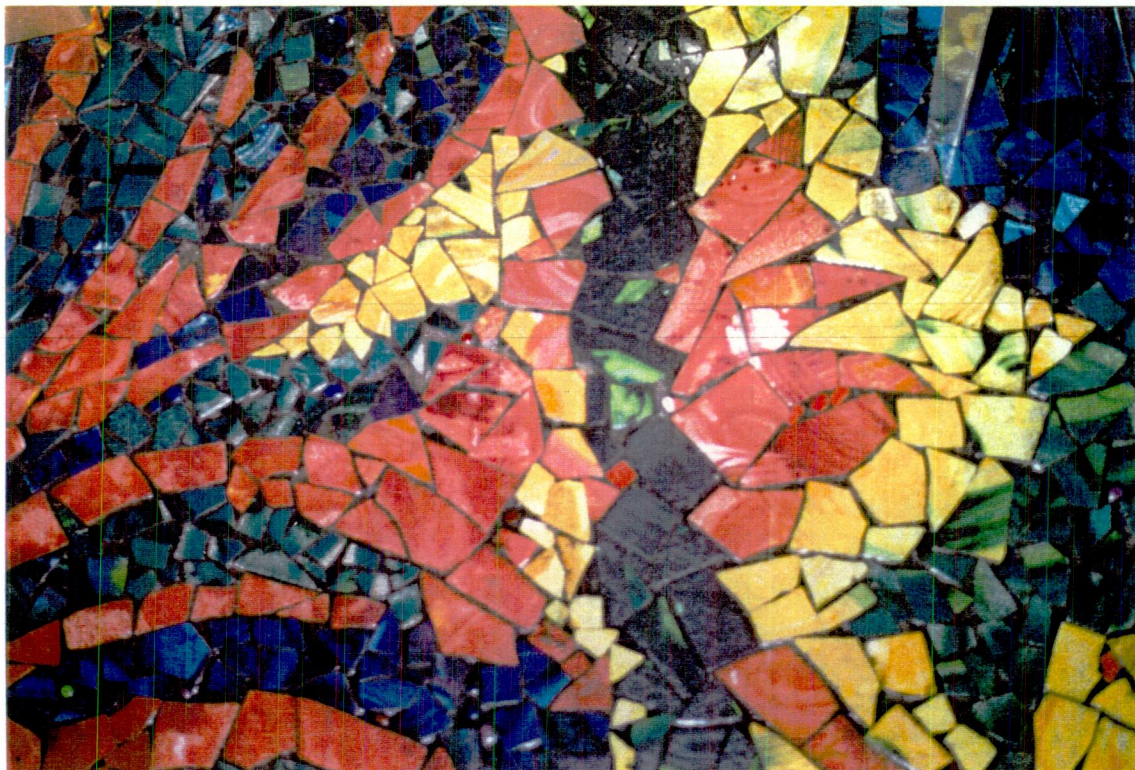


Fig 37. Comparing the Tileworks and Mosaic assemblers.

and is extremely durable to the constant wear and tare, but lacks the vibrance and character that a hand crafted mosaic has.

However the demand for industrially produced mosaic is still quite popular with companies such as Mosaic Assemblers, and this could be attributed to the difference in price. Laura O'Hagan charges from £200 per sq metre to £1000 per sq metre. There is a considerable difference. Who exactly has this amount of money to dispose in this way, only the extremely well off. This is not unlike the times when only the Roman Emperors and Hierarchy of the Church where the only people fortunate to have beautiful mosaics. The only one difference today is that alot more Architects are willing to combine their knowledge, and co-operate with crafts people such as the Tileworks, to enable every one to enjoy the beauty of handmade mosaic.

The client who commissioned the 'Lifecycles' floor is just one of the patrons responsible for the modern mosaic revival, without these patrons we would certainly be witnessing a major revival of industrial mosaic. These clients who are willing and able to pay for a Tileworks mosaic, are actually enabling Laura O'Hagan to produce such ambitious and unique pieces of work.

Material and Technique.

Tiles are a very expensive mosaic material and ordinary household tiles can be effective to create effect. For economic reasons most of the large murals executed by the Tileworks are made from ceramic tiles, bought in and re-glazed, perhaps enlivened by small areas of vitreous glass, as seen in **fig 30** of the reception desk in Dublin castle.

The ceramic tiles used by the Tileworks are usually 4in sq or 6in sq of fired clay, covered with matt finish, and suitable to reglaze for the extra colour effects, this is a technique used by the Tile works and continued to be used by Laura O'Hagan, which distinguish them from other mosaic artists in Ireland. This is a time consuming and expensive technique but a 'noted trade mark' of their work to date.

The standard commercial ceramic tile is usually adequate for outdoor use. Apart from the fact that tiles themselves are so much cheaper than traditional tesserae, a further economic advantage is their greater size which enables one to cover a much larger area at a given time. The large floor (Life cycles) carried out in the Summer 1996, was created with large ceramic tiles reglazed and then smashed to be re-arranged in a mix of allocated colours according to the initial design.

The initial sketches of a design for the mosaic are preparatory sketches and in most cases the mosaic does not result in the perfect match to the initial design. This can be due to the various amount of problems. These include architectural limitations, working to a budget and colour glaze effects. A great deal of the creative process takes place during the actual setting of the mosaics, and sometimes set designs can be a hindrance rather than achieving a lively and vigorous mosaic.

**“Spontaneity is a considerable factor in
creating an exciting and lively work “
(Unger, 1968, p.24)**

Setting:

There is a fundamental method of setting tiles on to the base, used only by the Tileworks, called the reverse method, but using sticky back plastic to coat the mosaic.

A mirror image is traced on to a piece of strong paper; on this the broken tiles are placed, when each section is finished the mosaic is covered with a sticky clear plastic, then a layer of stronger clear plastic. The thicker layer is to prevent the tiles from being scratched in transit. This is a new method, used only by the Tileworks and now Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics, is an innovation that it enables the mosaicist to see exactly where the mosaic joins after it is gridded.

In Italian workshops decoration of whole Churches are manufactured in this manner. However the traditional way of covering the mosaic is brown paper pasted with water soluble paste or gum. This method of covering is still used today by most mosaic companies, with the exception of the Tileworks using the clear sticky plastic.

The plastic does have its draw backs as well, it requires longer drying time for the adhesive that sticks the mosaic to the ground, wall or what ever the object in question, as the plastic covering does not allow any air to move between the mosaic and adhesive.(However this does not impact on the quality of the work). Were as the brown paper allows the air to seep through to the glueing process.

Another technique used by the Tileworks and Laura O'Hagan, is the groutline technique. **In Fig 38**, we can compare an older piece of Laura O'Hagans work, Cookes restaurant, sth, William St, to that of a newer piece 'Life cycles' floor 1996. In the first picture, Cookes restaurant, the mosaic is very much a composition of broken tiles similarly spaced, the only divide between the sections is the interuption of different colours. In the second picture, the 'Lifecycles' floor, close up section, there is a distinct break in the line that divides each section, and forms a bold structure. There is an obvious progression between the two pieces and the groutline technique is another 'Trade mark' of the Tileworks and Laura O'Hagan.

When the mosaic is completed and the plastic adhesive is laid, the whole piece is lined out in a grid. Each square is numbered

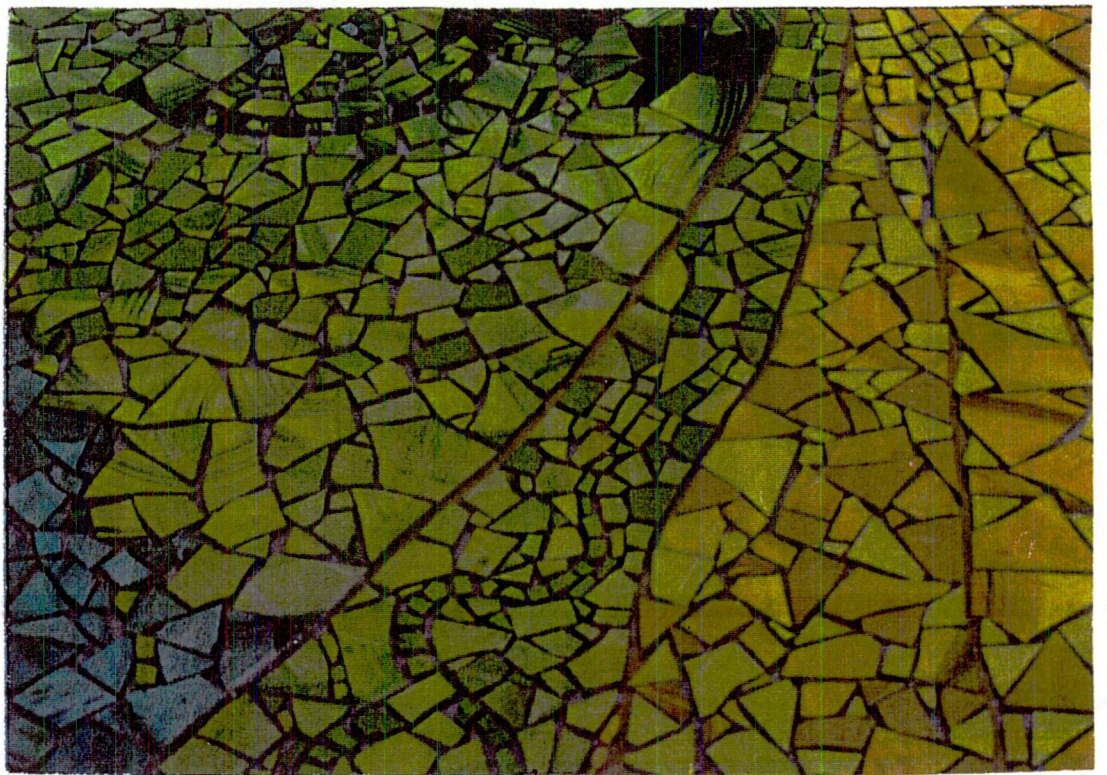


Fig 38. Comparing the groutline technique.

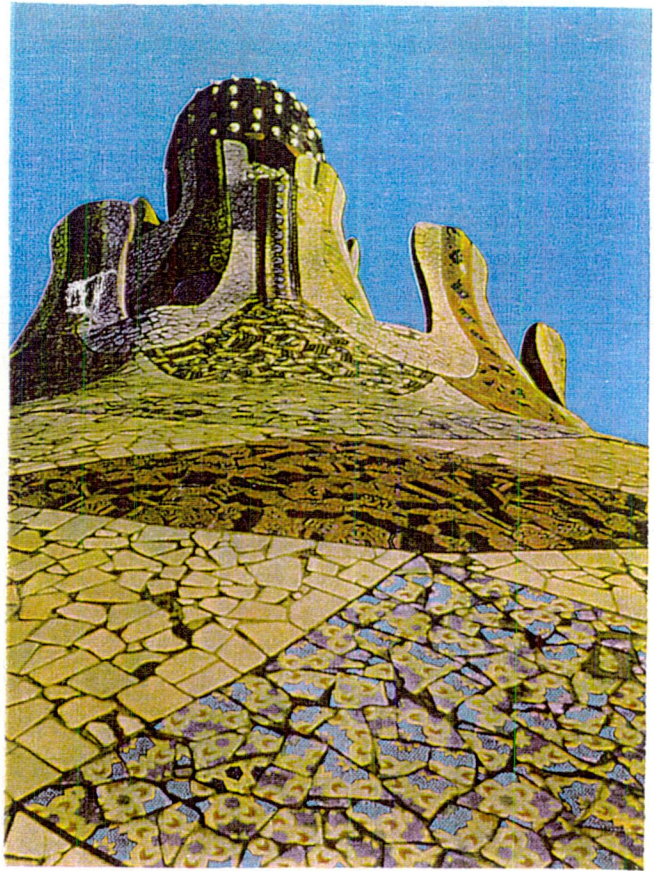


Fig 39. Comparing Guell Park Guell, Gaudi, and 'Lifecycles, Tileworks .

and cut so that it is merely a matter of matching the squares and numbers in correspondence . Each square is then lifted and transported to the destination , then pressed in a bed of wet adhesive, when the adhesive is set hard the plastic is removed.

Larger work such as the 'Life cycles ' floor was carried out in the studio and it meant that there was as little disruption as possible to the client. This is a good business tactic as well as ensuring top quality work.

Laura O' Hagan is now based in the The fire station Art Studio on Buckingham St, Dublin, and employs three part time staff, in the case of larger work, more crafts people are called in to help. Professional tilers are employed on the commissions for laying the final work and grouting.

Existing as a business.

Laura O'Hagan is essentially a business woman working within the crafts.

Unlike the 19th century Arts and Crafts movement where by quality craftsman ship was the most vital factor, I have found from my research that the craft renaissance' success and continuation is a combination of both the levels of skill and thought put into the work and the initiative and keen response to the current market demands and the requirements of the customer wanting handcrafted unique work.

Laura O'Hagan fits into this new revival because she operates in a highly professional manner, 'producing the goods' similar to any other manufacturing body.

We can establish from the Tileworks and Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics that in each case both companies have been receptive to the ideas of the market, and perhaps this is what makes the Tileworks and Laura O'Hagans work differ from other mosaic artist working in Ireland, and continual commissions is evidence of this. Three years ago The Tileworks was awarded Small enterprise² of the year, the fact that the Tileworks was chose for this award, is an acknowledgment of their professional business attitude.

Sean O'Farrell of the Crafts council commented that,

“Crafts people are no longer small studio based artists making one off pieces on their own, they have developed into business minded professionals in order to survive in the competitive market.”

(Boyle, Jan, 1997)

Laura O'Hagans work to date is a mixture of private commissions, shops, pubs and outside installations.

Gaudi's influence.

The influence of Antoni Gaudi is quite apparent in the works of Laura O'Hagan. Her interest in layers, clouds, spirals and land formations are similar to the ideas and concepts of the Catalan architect.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the similarities between the work of both artists.

I have decided to take an example of Gaudi's work, Guell Park, and Laura O'Hagans work, the 'Life cycles' floor, and discuss the similar qualities in each of the works.

Gaudi's work stands out as unique in its scope and originality, his work in Guell Park in Barcelona, involves structures that are fluid and organic and it is here that his characteristic use of broken tiles comes alive. Tiles for Gaudi were an artistic tool.

Fig 39 shows an example of detail from Guell Park and a close section from 'The Lifecycles' floor, there is a strong influence in Laura O'Hagans mosaic in comparison to that of Antoni Gaudi.

Gaudi initiated the new development in modern mosaic and Laura O'Hagan has interpreted his work, and moved forward developing new techniques such as the wider groutlines to high-light specific areas of the mosaic designs.

The colours that Gaudi used and the colours that the Tileworks use are quite different. Gaudi was more inclined to use broken

painted crockery to distinguish colour, Laura O'Hagan uses enamels to achieve any colour that she may require this is indeed a progression, none of Gaudi's tiles in Guell Park were hand painted, however this did not hinder him from achieving the quality that he required.

Gaudi was first and foremost an architect and he used mosaic as part of his structures rather than just merely decorating them. The impression that one receives from the 'Lifecycles' Floor is that it is not just a decorative floor but an integral part of the house and the client's family, the life sources and experiences within the floor speak to the user, perhaps this is an extension to the concept that Gaudi was trying to achieve, and Laura O'Hagan has taken the initial concepts of Gaudi and pushed them a step further.

Overall the influences of Gaudi are unavoidable, and not just in the work of Laura O'Hagan, but in the work of most artists using mosaic as a creative material.

The Tileworks as part of the craft renaissance.

From the information gathered on the Tileworks and the work of Laura O'Hagan Architectural ceramics, it is evident that the work of Laura O'Hagan is highly significant in the period of the craft renaissance.

Laura O'Hagan believes that the craft revival is almost fashionable because of the unique qualities that it has and the time consuming production. Laura O'Hagan commented that

"There will never be an influx of mosaic art as there was in the Greek and Roman era, because of the time and expense"

(Boyle, Dec, 1996.)

Although working in a competitive market, Laura O'Hagan has created a virtual monopoly in her own right. There is a growing demand for 'Laura O'Hagan Architectural Ceramics' as apposed to Architectural ceramics.

Karl Hils wrote that,

"Today almost the whole of civilisation is dominated by machine thinking, so that any expression of personality, any truly creative activity in the days work is almost out of the question in the process of mechanisation,

the individual stands in danger of losing his soul, becoming part of a mass"

(Hil, 1960,p.63)

It is this fear of non-creativity that makes unique craftsmanship more appealing. The mosaics that Laura O'Hagan designs and executes, strongly communicate this creative expression.

When 7 months ago I worked for Laura O'Hagan, Tileworks, I came to realise just how important the space for creative expression in work really was. The workers pleasure in their work came from the positive contribution they made to the manufacture of an end product. Laura O'Hagan was able to tell which of her mosaicists had produced different sections of the mosaic floor, by simply looking at it she could differentiate between each mosaicists 'style' and technique. This individual character, forms the material basis for pleasure and satisfaction which the users have from handmade mosaic.

I can conclude this in terms of saying that Laura O'Hagans work has become successful because of the unique handcrafted qualities and expression in the work, and her ability to compete through proper use of business skills and identification of the market with the industrial mosaics companies.

So in conclusion to this chapter I have established that Laura O'Hagans work is a positive contribution to the revival of modern mosaic and also is part of the Craft renaissance.

From dividing her work into seven sections I was able to clearly break down the development of her work and the influences that has inspired many of her works to date, and also from doing this I was able to distinguish what sets the Tileworks apart from the rest of the crafts people practicing mosaic.

Laura O'Hagan commented that in the future she would like to carry out more large scale private commissions for the government sponsored bodies, as this would enable her work to be viewed by more people and would allow her company to be better recognized.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

In conclusion to this thesis, I have established that there is a Craft Renaissance and that the ancient art of mosaic has made a major come back within this renaissance.

From researching the revival in modern mosaic art I have found that we are presently witnessing the **Third Phase** in Mosaic, this is evident from the number of practicing mosaic artists working in Dublin today and the numerous mosaics around the city. This revival has been successful and is continually growing, yet it is unlikely that we will ever really be bombarded with it because of its time consuming nature, Unlike trends and fashions that come and go, because we are sickened by the excess.

The success of the modern mosaic is very relevant to the Crafts Renaissance and has made a major contribution to its popularity, Catherine Mc Dermott wrote that ,

"More recently, traditional craft values that never went away, have reappeared as a new force. The crafts for too long considered peripheral and marginal activities, have taken up a leading role in directing ideas in the 1990's."

(Mc Dermott, 1992, p.74)

From the research gathered I have discovered that the crafts play a major role in our society, not just

aesthetically but creating jobs in an era where the crafts now complement industry, crafts people are now being recognized as professional business people working within the 'business field' and still producing craft work to the same highly skilled levels. I have found this from researching companies such as the Tileworks and Glasshammer designs.

In the 19th century the Arts and Crafts movement urged crafts people to break free from the standardisation of the industrial revolution, perhaps today we are witnessing almost a revival of this, only today industry has been replaced with technology. Theorist and crafts man David Pye believed that the crafts would eventually complement industry and indeed it done just that. This possibly came about with the need to survive within a machine dominated society. Today we find that the Crafts people are working in competition with industry and technology and perhaps the importance of working long side industry has resulted in 'The Professionally Business minded Crafts person'.

Laura O'Hagan is an example of the successful 'Business woman' working within the crafts. I particularly chose her and her company for my case study, to illustrate the need for the crafts person to be receptive to the market and its changing ways, this is most important for the survival of the crafts companies and craft workers and in turn the Crafts Renaissance.

The changes that are constantly happening around us, such as environmental issues and industry, technology, all effect the crafts.

The most important thing that I have established from researching for this thesis is that Crafts renaissance is continually progressing and mosaic art is a fundamental part of this renaissance. The growing popularity of Laura O'Hagan and her company is proof that the revival of mosaic will continue.

APPENDICES

Interviews

BOYLE, Paula, Interview with Laura O'Hagan, The Artists Studio, Buckingham St, Dublin, October 1996.

BOYLE, Paula, Interview with Laura O'Hagan, The Artists Studio, Buckingham St, Dublin, January 1997.

BOYLE, Paula, Interview with Michelle O'Donnell, Glasshammer designs, The craft trade fair, R.D.S, Dublin, January 1997.

BOYLE, Paula, Interview with Sean O'Farrell, Business adviser for the Crafts Council, The Crafts Council, , Powerscourt Townhouse centre, January 1997.

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