



E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE

September 2007



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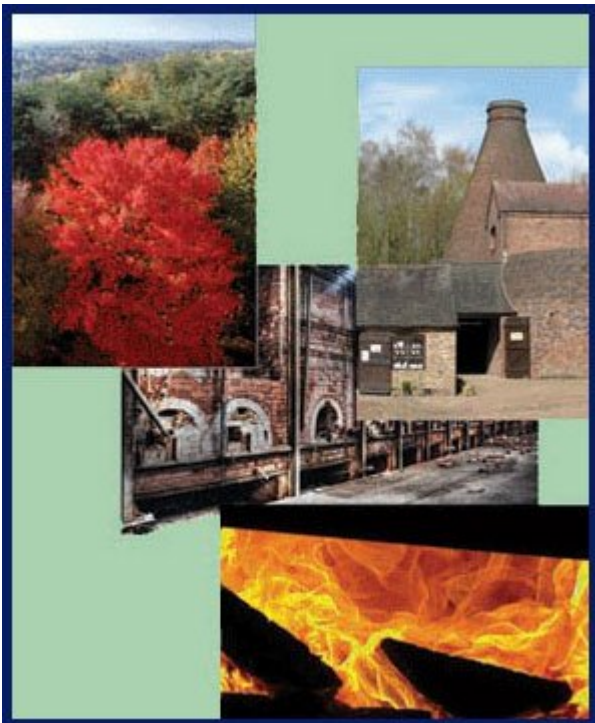
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Can you identify these mystery tiles?
They are at Lincoln Park Gateway in Los Angeles,
n.d. sent to us by tile sleuth Brian Kaiser.
Click on the image and let us know!



Last Chance to Get on the Bus!

At this moment there are **two seats left** on the bus! If you would like to join us in Ohio, October 15-19, email foundation@tileheritage.org. Travel with us to the studios of **Artfind Tile** and through the factories at **Beldon Brick, Epro, Kepecor, the Meredith Collection** and **Metropolitan Ceramics, Seneca Tiles, Summitville Tiles, and Superior Clay**, witnessing the production of a vast variety of clay products: from decorative and quarry tiles, to bricks of every description, culminating with architectural terra cotta and ornate chimney pots! This is a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** to get inside and see firsthand how clay products are actually made. You will come away enriched by the breadth of your knowledge and charged with an enhanced appreciation for those who work in the world of clay every day.

Clay in the Classroom

The Tile Heritage Foundation has developed **a link to resources for teachers** who are already involved with clay in the classroom and for those who wish to bring a clay program to their classroom. This includes teachers of 'kids' of all ages: preschool, K-12, college and adult education. **It will activate soon!**



The Tile Project, dedicated June 3, 2006 at Wallace Emerson Park, 1260 Dufferin Street, Toronto. Photo courtesy walkhere.org.

The Tile Project

The Tile Project: Destination, the World, a creation of **TransCultural Exchange** in Boston, currently involves 22 sites + 40 countries + the tiles of 100 artists and 1000 students all with a goal: **to unite the world through innovative art**. Begun in 2004, the program selected the diverse, international artists, each of whom created 22 tiles, one for each of the 22 selected sites. An educational program involving school children and university students making tiles on paper paralleled the ceramic installation project.



Tile by Cazim Hadzimejlic and Alma Suljevic in Bosnia.



Tile by Malvina Sammarone, Brazil.

Reaching out to and beyond the art world's hot spots, the project touches nearly every corner of the globe, from Berlin to New York, Sarajevo to Seoul and 18 other points throughout the world, allowing local artists to design unique installations that incorporate the donated tiles and are sensitive to their site's context, resulting in remarkably strong symbols of global cooperation and artistic innovation.

Cultural understanding, tolerance and respect of others' differences are promoted through email "pen pals" and parallel collaborative projects between K-12 schools and university students around the globe, turning strangers into neighbors.



Tile by Xiao Ruixin.
Faculty Luxun Academy of
Fine Arts, Shenyang City, China.



Tile by Doris Kloster (New York and Paris), part of a series of pictures entitled "Women in Stone."

As the cultural historian Mira Bartok noted, "The great modern architect Stanley Tigerman once said that to him, **tiles are both democratic and accessible. They are the essence of what public art has the potential to be—an art form that can be found anywhere in the world by anyone, no matter one's class, race, age or gender; with a purpose and beauty transcending all differences between all people... a tile is a measurable unit of our humanity; it is one of many.** Since their origin... tiles have served not only a practical function but they have also been one of the most enduring markers of cultural history."



Tile by Nina Sabnabo from India.

TransCultural Exchange is an award-winning, 501(c)3, nonprofit dedicated to fostering a greater understanding of world cultures through high quality exhibitions, artists exchanges and related educational programming. Visit www.transculturalexchange.org. To view the tiles selected for **The Tile Project**, click www.transculturalexchange.org

Jazzing Up Richmond!

Bob Wilson of **Wilson Custom Design Tile** in Omaha: "I wanted to send you some photos of the project we are currently working on. It's a project we will be installing for a Sept 8 opening in **Richmond, Indiana**. The medallions are 3 feet across, half bronze half ceramic. Louis Armstrong is finished the rest are now cooling in the kiln."

Unknown by many people, the town of Richmond, located on the states' border halfway between Columbus and Indianapolis, played a **significant role in the history of American jazz**. It was the headquarters of **Gennett Records**, credited with the birth of recorded jazz. Its parent company was the **Starr Piano Company**. Louis Armstrong was an early jazz singer to record at the studios. Sadly, there are little physical remains of the original studios, but



Sydney Bechet (1897-1959) with his famous clarinet. Tile mosaic in progress at Wilson Custom Design Tile in Omaha.



Louis Armstrong (1900-1971), jazz trumpeter/singer. Completed tile mosaic and bronze, 3 feet in diameter, ready for installation in Richmond, Indiana. Courtesy Wilson Custom Design Tile.

the **Starr-Gennett Foundation** is dedicated to preserving and

promoting the legacy of the two companies, their contributions and place in the music world.

On September 8, 2007, the foundation plans to install ten commemorative medallions in the sidewalk across from the old studios. This could be likened to the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The first ten medallions will include: Louis Armstrong, Gene Autry, Bix Beiderbecke, "Big Bill" Broonzy, Hoagy Carmichael, Vernon Dalhart, Georgia Tom (Thomas A.

Dorsey), "Jelly Roll" Morton, Joe "King" Oliver, and Lawrence Welk, who made his first recordings at the Gennett Studio.

Ellis Wins Tile Heritage Prize

Melody Ellis of Edwardsville, Illinois won the **Tile Heritage Prize** at Feats of Clay XX, the annual exhibition presented by **Lincoln Arts** in Lincoln, California. The juror, **Sherman Hall**, editor of *Ceramics Monthly*, chose the Ellis tile, “**Mr. Punch and His Dog**,” as the work that best reflects the ceramic traditions in America.

According to the artist: “**I create figurative earthenware “toys” and tile mosaics with richly colored and patterned surfaces.** Posture, expression and the potential for movement in my sculptures are used to convey the humor and sadness of the human condition. These pieces are inspired in part by 19th century dolls, automata, and wheeled or balancing toys. I have adopted the movements and intricacies of these objects and, I hope, their innate sense of joy, mystery, or menace. “**My tilework reflects a study of historical narrative art forms such as Italian majolica and medieval stained glass.** I would like to lure the viewer into a curious world of spectacle. An abiding interest in puppet theater, sideshow, and morality tales feeds this endeavor. The unchanging state of humanity through the ages, and our complex relationship with the world around us, inspires my work in the primal and tactile material of clay.”



"Mr. Punch and His Dog" by Melody Ellis, winner of the Tile Heritage Prize at Feats of Clay XX, presented by Lincoln Arts. Courtesy of the artist.

*Now on a certain day it so fell out
Punch gave Toby such a fearful clout
that Toby in a rage seized Punch's nose
Punch was not pleased, we may suppose*

“This text is taken from one of many different written versions of the old, old puppet show ‘Punch and Judy.’ I just love the story and have been collecting material on it for a couple of years.”

See www.melodyellisceramics.com



Sam Rodia clings to the top of his Watts Tower.

“I Build the Tower”

Here’s something new! A feature-length documentary about the life and work of **Simon (Sam) Rodia** and the **Watts Towers** of South Central Los Angeles has recently become available on DVD produced by filmmaker Ed Landler and Brad Byer, Rodia’s great-nephew.

A jewel of a film, “**I Build the Tower,**” is magnificent to watch! This is the true story of **Sam Rodia**, the Italian immigrant who built the world-famous **Watts Towers** on a small residential lot in South Central Los Angeles over roughly 30 years beginning in the 1920s. **Watts Towers**, designated as a

National Historic Landmark in 1990, are now a component site of the California State Parks, managed by the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department.





It is quite wonderful that the filmmakers were able to procure so much **old film footage portraying Sam at work on his grand enterprise** and to have conducted so many meaningful interviews with people who knew him in the neighborhoods where Sam spent most of his life in both northern and southern California.

As an added bonus the DVD features a complete **40-minute interview of R. Buckminster Fuller**, excerpts of which appear in “**I Build the Tower.**” In this his last interview filmed three months before his death in July 1983, Mr. Fuller provides an analysis of **Rodia’s artistic and engineering genius** and its significance in art history and the world.

Owning this film is a ‘must’ for all who appreciate the significance of preserving the engineering feat represented by the Watts Towers as well as those who love and cherish the art, tile, mosaic and the whimsy found there. Kudos to the filmmakers!

To purchase a copy of the DVD visit: www.ibuildthetower.com

Historic Tiles In Print

Van Briggle tiles from Colorado Springs have been featured in two recent issues of the **Journal of the American Art Pottery Association**. Richard D. Mohr, a noted tile historian, author, and Professor of Philosophy and of the Classics at the University of Illinois – Urbana, has carried on his research of the famous Van Briggle Pottery for many years, culminating in an extensive presentation focusing exclusively on the pottery’s tile production. Almost entirely in full color with exhaustive endnotes, the two articles, “**Van Briggle Tiles: Their Art, Craft, and Commerce,**” Parts I and II, trace the history of production from 1907 to 1918, offering provocative design comparisons and rarely seen examples.



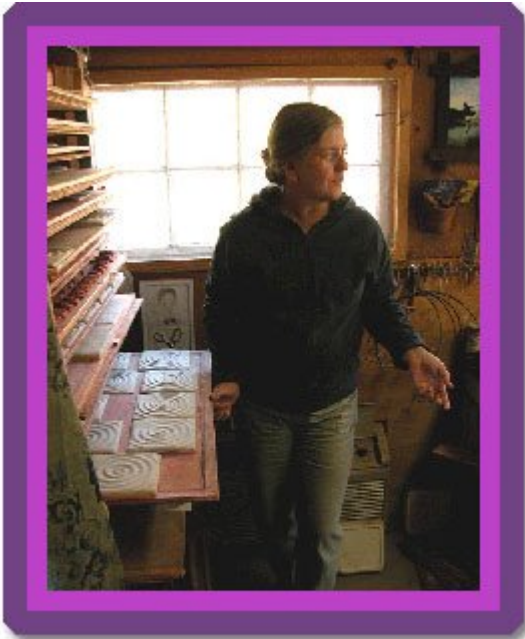
The Journal issues, Vol. 23, No. 2 (March/April 2007) and Vol. 23, No. 3 (May/June 2007), are available for \$8.50 each plus \$2.75 for shipping and handling or \$19.75 total. Make checks payable to **AAPA** and send to: American Art Pottery Association, 1004 18th Street West, Bradenton, FL 34205.

Coincidentally, the **Van Briggle Pottery is now producing a line of decorative tiles** inspired by the originals along with field and trim tiles to accompany them. Visit www.vanbriggles.com for details.

Friends of Terra Cotta has recently included in its quarterly mailings an article, “**Hartford Faience Company,**” by Susan Montgomery. The company was founded in 1894 by **Eugene Atwood**, the former partner of **William H. Grueby**, as Atwood Faience, changing its name in 1900 as part of a reorganization. Faience tiles became a major focus of product in 1908 when **Francis Plant** arrived from England, resulting in a renewed aesthetic and a broader distribution of its products. Author Susan Montgomery, an independent scholar of decorative arts, wrote **The Ceramics of William H. Grueby: The Spirit of the New Idea in Artistic Handicraft** (1993). Extensively illustrated with black and white images and complemented by endnotes, the Hartford Faience article is available by sending \$5 to Friends of Terra Cotta, c/o Tunick, 771 West End Ave. #10E, New York, NY 10025.



Hartford Faience tiles in a private residence in Rochester, New York. 1911.



**"Did you say you wanted cookies or tiles?"
Joan Gardiner in her studio,
Unison Pottery & Tile Works.**

Anise Lemon Biscotti

From Joan Gardiner, Unison Pottery & Tile Works

2 cups white flour
1 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
1 cup sugar
2 whole eggs
1 egg white
2 tbs fresh grated lemon peel
1 tbs ground anise seeds

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Oil or cooking spray a baking sheet. Sift first four ingredients together. Beat together the eggs and egg white, then add to flour mixture. Stir in lemon peel and anise seeds. Mix until just smooth. The dough will be quite wet. Use a rubber spatula and floured hands to scoop half the dough onto one side of the baking sheet. Shape into a fifteen inch log. Do the same with the other half, making sure that there are about six inches between the logs. Bake 25 to 30 minutes making sure that the top of the log is firm. Remove logs

from the sheet onto a cooling rack for 10 to 15 minutes. Cut on a sharp diagonal across the log into ½ inch slices. Place the cut sides onto the baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes at 325 degrees. Remove to cooling rack. The cookies will harden as they cool.