

# Tesserae

Dotti Stone, Mosaic Artist - Smith Mountain Lake Mosaics

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## Tesserae - - What is it?

Welcome to the premier issue of my newsletter, **Tesserae**. It will be published quarterly in 2010 and every other month in 2011.

Tesserae derives from Latin and Greek meaning four-sided or cube and implies a cube of stone, terra cotta or glass. It is the word most frequently used to refer to the individual parts of the mosaic and may be any size or shape, not just cubes/squares, and of many different materials. Stone, marble, glass are commonly found in old classical mosaics, but today those and many other materials are used.

Why did I choose **Tesserae** as the name for my newsletter? Because it, too, is a mosaic, comprised of different bits of information related to the world of mosaics.

What can be expected in future issues? There will be items on contemporary mosaics; history of mosaics; places to see mosaics in Virginia, elsewhere around the country, and abroad; where I am exhibiting and recognitions received. Materials and techniques, applications for mosaics, and class schedules will be covered — yes, take a class with me in

Roanoke or Bedford and learn to make functional, decorative and fine art mosaics for your home, or office, or for gift giving.

Please contact me to be included on the **Tesserae** mailing list, and indicate your preference to receive it free via email or through the US Postal Service for only \$5. a year. Please include comments about this first issue and what you would like to see in future ones. Your input will help make this more informative.



Remnant  
11" x 11"  
Orsoni smalti, marble

## How old are mosaics?

The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC contains over 75,000 square feet of mosaics. They were created using techniques that have changed little for thousands of years. Although completed in 1959, embellishments continue to this day, including mosaics, many being shipped from Italy.

Archeologists have dated mosaic work to the 8th century BC in Turkey. Pebbles that were used in the earliest mosaics are used today in terraces and walkways. The cubic shapes in mosaics developed later as levels of

craftsmanship increased in the 4th century BC.

The Greek, Roman and Byzantine empires are a rich source of early mosaics that typically covered floors, walls and ceilings in the homes of the wealthy and in churches, mosques and public buildings. Animals and decorative patterns were the most frequent subject matter of early mosaics made with pebbles, stone and marble. Once glass was incorporated into mosaics, its extensive color palette allowed the creation of elaborate and lifelike religious and

mythological figures as found on walls and ceilings. They look like paintings from a distance. Today's mosaic artists still use stone, marble and glass, as well as porcelain and ceramic tile and many other materials.

Future issues of **Tesserae** will explore ancient as well as contemporary mosaics. Enjoy seeing and learning more about this durable and lasting art form, and if you would like to learn more about a mosaic you have seen, let me know.



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## Mosaics classes/workshops

I teach mosaics classes in Roanoke through the County Parks and Recreation Dept and in Bedford at Bower Center for the Arts. See the next issue of **Tesserae** for more winter and spring classes and workshops.

### Roanoke

<http://www.roanokecountyva.gov/Departments/ParksRecreationAndTourism/Default.htm>

Green Ridge Center  
NEW-opening Jan 1, 2010  
Introduction to Mosaics Class  
Eight 2-1/2 hr sessions

Tues 9:30AM-12noon  
Begins January 19  
Wed 6:30PM-9  
Begins January 20

Brambleton Center  
Introduction to Mosaics Class  
Eight 2-1/2 hr sessions  
Mondays 6PM-8:30  
Begins January 25

### Bedford

<http://www.bowercenter.org/>

Bower Center for the Arts  
Introduction to Mosaics Class  
Eight 2-1/2 hr sessions  
Fridays 10AM-12:30  
Begins Jan 15 - NEW start date  
Tuesdays 6PM-8:30  
Begins Jan 12

Intro to Mosaics Workshop  
Four 2-1/2 hr sessions  
Thursdays 6PM-8:30  
Begins Jan 14 - NEW start date

Mosaic Mirror Workshop  
Three 2-1/2 hr sessions  
Thursdays 12:30PM-3  
Begins Jan 14 - NEW start date  
Saturdays 10AM-12:30  
Begins Jan 16 - NEW start date

## How can mosaics work in my home?

Mosaics are not just for public buildings, churches, public terraces and parks. Take a look around your home. What about a floor inset in your foyer or hallway? Does your kitchen need a backsplash or a feature panel over a cook-top? Bathrooms are areas where decorative backsplashes add interest and color. How about a mosaic art piece to either hang on a wall or have installed as a wall inset as a special feature? And, don't forget functional or decorative mosaics: tables in all sizes - dining, end, console, coffee, occasional - and they can be made for indoor or outdoor use. Mosaic frames enhance mirrors above foyer console tables, dining room buffets and bedroom dressers. Smaller accessory mosaic mirrors brighten up wall space in need of that little something extra.

Don't forget your garden. Gazing balls aren't just for indoors. They can be made in many sizes and will add a wonderful splash of color. Stepping stones can be an accent or designed for use in heavy foot traffic areas - consider a walkway with designs to compliment the architecture, design and color of your home.

You may have thought of other areas where mosaics could brighten up your home or garden. Let's work together to come up with the perfect mosaic for your home or office. Call now for an appointment to explore the many options available.



## Mosaic Public Art in Roanoke



"Rainbow Children" and "Astroterra" are mosaic works that are part of the AIR, Arts in Roanoke, temporary exhibition of public art.

"Rainbow Children," created by Roanoke artist, Polly Branch, is located by the Jackson Library at 1101 Morningside Ave SE, in Roanoke.

Students and adults helped to put tiles on these discs depicting children joined together and unified by that timeless feature of nature—the rainbow. As printed in the Roanoke Times, "Taking it to the Street" feature on October 26, 2008, "the mosaic discs balance on the earth,

presenting rainbow designs that endure the test of time."

Chicago artist, Nicole Beck, created "Astroterra" installed outside the Williamson Road Library at 3837 Williamson Road NW in Roanoke. Quoting from the Roanoke times, "the outer panels of "Astroterra" depict the cosmos: stars, nebulae, comets, supernovae and spiral galaxies. The interior panels show a cross-section of the earth's core, mantle and crust. The flame-cut holes let the light pass and create elliptical shadows during the day and mark the passage of hours like a sundial."



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## Where can I see mosaics by Dotti on exhibit?

Ciel Gallery  
1519 Camden Road  
Charlotte NC 28203

"Remnant," the mosaic on page one was accepted for the "Winter Whites" exhibit that opened November 6 and ends January 9.

Upcoming local exhibits thru The League of Roanoke Artists:

Dotti will be one of four artists exhibiting at the

United Methodist Home  
1009 Old Country Club Road  
Roanoke VA 24179  
March 10 thru May 11, 2010

And again as one of four artists exhibiting in the

Vinton Municipal Building  
311 South Pollard Street  
Vinton VA 24179  
April 7 thru June 8, 2010

## What's coming up in the next issue of T esserae?

Here are a couple of the topics to look for in the Jan-Feb-Mar issue of **T esserae**.

Interested in the "Remnant" series? Or just some tips about making 3-D mosaics? I will include pictures of some of the WIP (works in progress) views and the preparatory steps.

The variety of materials used in making mosaics



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## Where can I purchase Dotti's mosaics ?

Recently, I opened an Etsy shop - an online marketplace for handmade work. Currently, wine bottle stoppers, mirrors and a few fine art mosaics are available. I will be periodically adding more items to Etsy. The process to purchase is simple. Like Ebay, an account is required to buy or sell, but there is no charge to establish one. Invoices are processed through PayPal.

If you see something you like; but, would prefer different colors, email or call me. The design won't be exactly the same, but similar items can be made. Here are a few images of what you can expect to see in my Etsy store - unless they've have been sold! [www.smlmosaics.etsy.com](http://www.smlmosaics.etsy.com). And, you can always contact me directly for something you would like to commission.



## Why should I take a class to learn about mosaics?

Are there self-taught artists and artisans? Certainly. Most at some point learned something from another person and certainly from books, magazines and the Internet. If you are fortunate enough to live in an area where there are classes offered in something of interest to you, your journey to learn whatever that is will be more enjoyable and paved with fewer trials and errors.

I am frequently asked by young school students if I smash the tiles that I work with. That is one way to break up tiles, but the ones I use are quite small, 3/8", 5/8" and 3/4" square for the most part, too small to smash! And, even if they were larger, smashing them would give me little control over the outcome. This isn't to say there aren't some instances that placing larger tiles under a towel and hammering won't provide tile shards that will work for some projects.

Training in cutting ceramic, porcelain, and glass tiles with tile and glass cutters, how to design and create mosaics using different methods of construction, considerations for interior vs exterior mosaics, and what adhesives and other materials should be used will provide a foundation and knowledge helpful for whatever type mosaic projects you might consider.

Mosaics are time consuming, even when using small tiles, jewels and other materials that don't require cutting. In most mosaics it is necessary to cut shapes to fit. The time commitment can be considerable. No one wants to discover after completion that the substrate (base) used or the

adhesive wasn't the right type for the application intended.

Learning in a classroom environment where questions can be addressed will be helpful in avoiding problems. And, an important benefit is learning from others in the class. Students come up with some very creative ideas and seeing what types of projects others are doing and how different issues will be resolved provides additional information and will help avoid disasters.

There are many books on mosaics. As with all topics, some are better than others. In a classroom any contradictions can be discussed.

The classroom is a good place to see some of the many different types of materials available - glass, porcelain, ceramic, marble, smalti, jewels, pebbles . . . and try different tools and other materials.

What I often hear in adult classes . . . "I had no idea how much time this takes!" A new appreciation for mosaics is born! Fine mosaics takes craftsmanship; it is also fine art.

Learn from as many sources as you can and have a wonderful time enjoying this art that began thousands of years ago as flooring and to tell religious and mythological stories.