



How to become an informed mosaic commissioner

An information packed guide for architects, specifiers, designers and landscape professionals

How to become an informed mosaic commissioner...



**feel confident that your mosaic
project is in reliable hands...
and have everyone applauding
at the grand unveiling**

**An information packed guide
for architects, specifiers,
designers and landscape pro-
fessionals**

By Gary Drostle

Revised edition 2021



Surely the Romans didn't have this much trouble?

It can seem like a daunting task to find someone who can reliably design, fabricate and install a mosaic for your project.

But don't worry, I am here to help.

It probably sounds obvious but the first and most essential step you can take, as someone new to commissioning a mosaic, is to understand mosaic art a little more and discover just how a great mosaic artwork can really add the finishing spark to your project.

This way you will reap the benefits of a beautifully designed, expertly crafted and professionally installed mosaic artwork.



This short introductory guide aims to put you firmly in the driving seat when it comes to commissioning your own mosaic artwork. Here you will discover the essence of mosaic art:-

- Learn how to spot a well made mosaic, and therefore how to select a good mosaic maker.
- Understand the potential for mosaic within your building or landscape project, and the beautiful benefits commissioning a mosaic can bring to your project.
- Discover how best to select a site for your mosaic and which materials will work best.
- Know what to expect from the mosaic commissioning process.

After more than 30 years designing, making and installing award winning mosaic artworks across the UK and abroad I have experienced and resolved all the problems procuring a unique piece of mosaic art can bring.

By reading this simple 4 step guide you can avoid the pitfalls and plan a smooth commissioning process to a successful and stunning unique mosaic artwork.



The 4 key steps to mosaic artwork commission success

■ ■ ■ ■ Follow the Tesserae and discover the beautiful world of mosaic

1. Understanding the essence of mosaic

- Unearth a little history
- Discover the essential materials and their unique qualities
- Learn about the main making techniques and how they might impact your project

2. Discover the benefits mosaic can bring to your project:

- Designing a mosaic into your scheme
- Harness the possibilities of light, colour, pattern and texture
- Looking at potential sites, developing themes and telling stories
- Ensuring your project is unique and inclusive.

3. Learn how to recognise a well crafted mosaic:

- A brief look at Andamento
- A quick 8 point guide to spotting a well made mosaic

4. What happens in the commissioning process

- Engagement, Costings and Payments
- Arriving at your own unique design
- Monitoring the construction
- Professional Installation

■ Plus the answers to your top 5 questions about engaging a mosaic artist:

STEP 1 Understanding the Essence of Mosaic



■ Detail of 'a Briton' on the Chedworth Roman Mosaic

■ Unearth a little history.

Mosaic art dates back to the earliest civilisations in Mesopotamia some 5000 years ago, if you get the chance to visit the British Museum in London you can see the wonderful 'Standard of Ur' a shell, lapis and coral mosaic box that shows already skilled craftsmanship in 3000 BC.

Mosaic art really took off in the Classical Greek world where the craftsmen of the Greek civilisations developed the skills of cutting and shaping the individual stones or Tessera. The craft reached great heights during the Roman Empire when exquisite floor mosaics adorned palaces, bathhouses, wealthy villas and homes and even shops. Highly skilled Roman craftsmen spread their techniques across the Empire, even to the remotest corners. In Britain alone over a thousand mosaic have been discovered, and more come to light each year. They worked in natural stone and even glass and semi precious stone.

Today mosaic craftsmen still use the Latin terms for describing the various mosaic styles

During the Byzantine era mosaic art moved away from floors and onto the walls of the great Cathedrals and Mosques of the medieval world. Byzantine craftsmen developed new skills in cutting and placing glass enamels and the prized 24 carat gold smalti. With the rejection of figurative imagery in Protestantism and Islam mosaic

became the preserve of the Catholic Church for a long while. At first with the rise of pilgrimage and then the early days of European tourism many of these skilled church mosaic artists turned their craft to creating small portable mosaic. These incredible 'micro-mosaics' mimicked painting of the time and mosaic in Europe found itself for a while as the servant of painting.

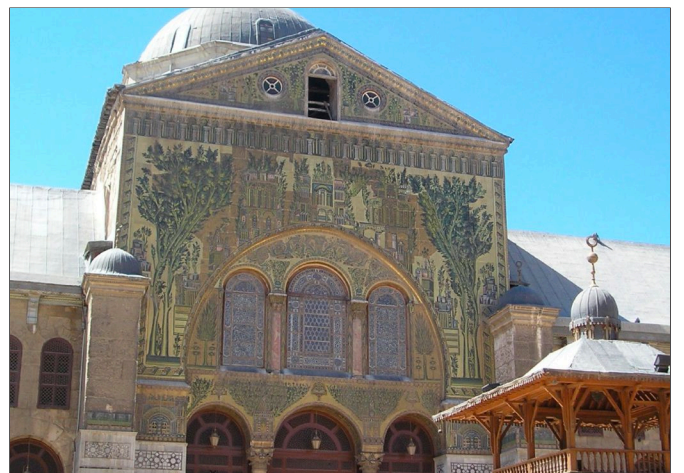
Then in the late nineteenth century Spanish architect, Antoni Gaudí, introduced the world to a new creative use for mosaic in architecture. Gaudi used mosaic in an entirely new way, organic and aware of pattern, free from the restrictions of painting.

Today there is a new resurgence in mosaic art fuelled by our desire to create new, creative and exciting environments and the demand for high quality and high performance finishes.

But if you were thinking Mosaic is all about the Romans and Western European heritage don't forget these beautiful mosaics...



■ Two Headed Serpent, Aztec - The British Museum



■ The Omayyad Mosque, Damascus

■ Discover the essential materials and their unique qualities.

Mosaic at its core is an architectural art, modern mosaics offer us the chance to inject individual character, project style and commitment to quality, and bring our spaces to life.

Mosaic art is a unique art form which combines skilled craftsmanship with creative design and a very physical construction, fixing one block of colour next to another, it is a true architectural art.

Knowing the right material to use is the first thing the mosaic craftsman learns, here are the main materials and their uses and qualities:-



■ Swans, Marble mosaic - Gary Drostle

Natural Stone

Stone was the first mosaic material, evolving from simple pebbles pushed into mud floors to solidify them. Pebble mosaics have a strong tradition in themselves and can be seen in many cultures.

Stone mosaics usually use marble and travertine for their variety of colours. The natural differences in the stones give them a beautiful variety and the colour palette is limited but naturally harmonious.

The surface texture of stone mosaics can be extremely varied ranging from a mirror polish surface to deeply riven and textured finishes.

- Stone mosaic can be used on floors and walls although they are not recommended for exterior floors due to the action of acidic rainfall.



■ Restoration of Tottenham Court Road Paolozzi Mosaics – Drostle Public Arts

Handmade Glass Smalti

Hand made opaque glass enamels are perhaps the Rolls Royce of mosaic materials. Known traditionally as Smalti this handmade glass is hard but not brittle, each hand made glass plate is formed from the furnace and then annealed. This material comes in an amazing and exquisite range of thousands of colours. This is the material you may have seen adorning the Cathedrals of Europe. The glass is traditionally cut with a hammer and the riven side is placed face up, giving a unique and rich texture to the mosaic.

Variants on Smalti include the 24 carat Gold Smalti, produced by layering pure gold leaf between glass layers and large flat plate glass enamel known as Piastrina which can be used to great effect in modern designs.

- Glass Smalti is ideal for mosaic wall murals and for ceilings.



■ Selecting mosaic glass Smalti at the foundry



■ Sunburst Mosaic, Vitreous Glass – Gary Drostle

Machine made Vitreous Glass

You may already be familiar with the machine made vitreous fired glass tesserae, often used in swimming pools. They are mostly found in the 20 x 20mm format and are cut down from this for mosaic artworks. The colour range is bright and fairly good and the material is strong and durable. Unlike the handmade glass the finished surface is completely flat and when put next to the handmade glass can seem hard but in the right hands the material can work well.

- Best suited to wall murals where the size can make Smalti too costly, and particularly where a flat surface is required.

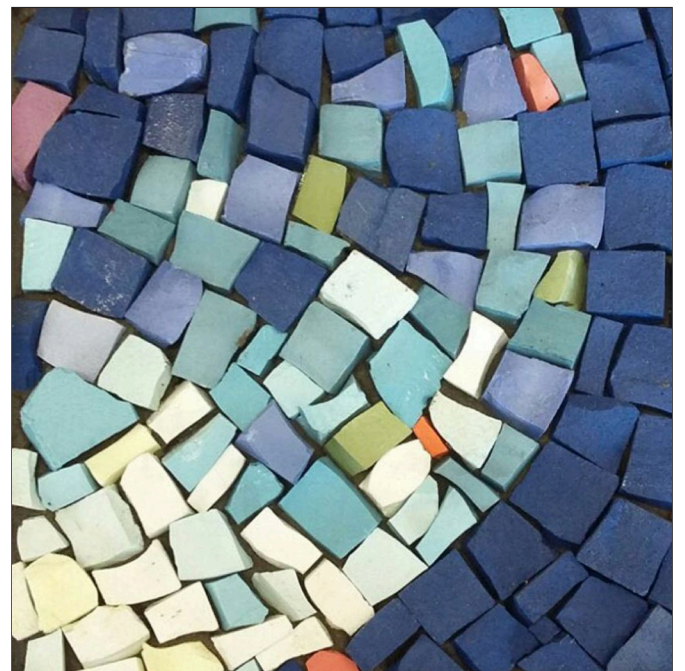


■ Movement & Vitality Mosaic, Unglazed Porcelain – Gary Drostle

Machine made Ceramic

Ceramic mosaic divides into two separate groups, the standard ceramics and the high fired porcelains. Standard fired ceramics are not often used in mosaic due to their relative fragility however porcelain has many uses particularly due to their great strength.

- Glazed Porcelains can be used on interior and exterior walls and can come in a range of colour options.
- Unglazed Porcelain usually come in a more muted but harmonious colour palette. Unglazed porcelains are particularly tough, heat and frost proof and many are suitable for floors, with good slip and impact resistance it is also a good material for walls, pools and three dimensional forms.



■ Litovi Handmade Vitreous Ceramic – Gary Drostle

Handmade Ceramic

There are a variety of handmade ceramics that can be used in mosaic projects, from bespoke elements to production ceramics. One of the most interesting is a handmade irregular porcelain, called Litovi, this material is made very much in the style of the Smalti. Litovi has a wide colour range and an irregular riven surface.

- Litovi can be used on interior and exterior walls



■ Photo glazed porcelain – Gary Drostle

Other Materials

In the contemporary context there is a whole range of other materials being used in mosaic. Though caution should be used in the application of these materials they can bring their own meaning and relevance to an artwork. Examples of non standard materials used in mosaic art include: sea shells; nails; coins; fired photos; found objects; domestic ceramics; toys; recycled glass; bottle caps... the list goes on.

■ Learn about the main making techniques and how they might impact your project.

There are two basic ways of creating an architectural mosaic; Direct or Indirect.

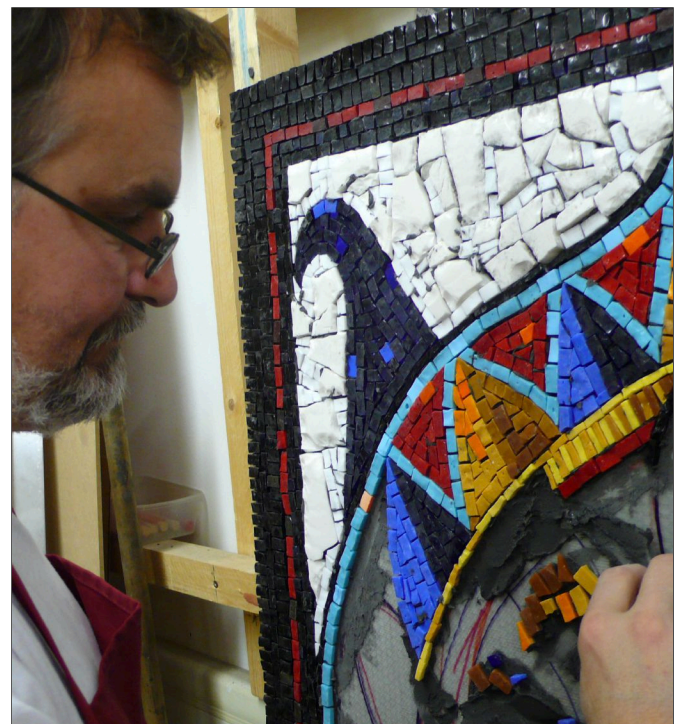
The Direct Mosaic Technique

As the name implies this is the basic original mosaic making technique, simply put, a mortar bed is spread on the surface to receive the mosaic and the tesserae are cut and pressed into the wet mortar. The work progresses in day sections known as giornata, usually top left to right in rows working downward. This technique is still preferred by many mosaic artists as the artist can see the exact finish and is able to control depth and angle of the individual tessera. Mosaic artists working in this way work with the aesthetics of the physical act of pushing into wet cement often working with the differing levels and angles of set tesserae

■ The limitations of the technique are that the work has to be carried out entirely on-site. This can obviously mean extended time on site. The direct technique is necessary for many, but not all, three dimensional works.



■ Mosaic for the St Mary Magdalene Oratory, Fort Wayne, Indiana – Gary Drostle



■ Gary Drostle working on a direct technique panel mosaic in Venetian Smalti.

The In-Direct Mosaic Technique

There are a number of differing indirect techniques of making mosaics. They all enable the mosaic to be constructed off-site and then fixed in a simpler and quicker manner on-site. Enabling off-site construction can have a huge impact on the time-line as work can begin on the mosaic before the site is ready ensuring minimum disruption to the site or any site related works and time-lines.

Many of our mosaics are made in reverse onto a temporary paper cartoon. In this method the full size image of the design is drawn out onto PureKraft paper in mirror image. The mosaic tesserae are then glued face down onto the paper using a starch paste glue. As the mosaic is constructed it is divided into jigsaw like sections. When the mosaic is complete it is transported to the site where the paper-faced sections are laid into a cement based adhesive. The paper surfaces then dampened to release the glue and the paper is removed, leaving the tesserae in place on the floor or wall.

- The Indirect techniques mean that the bulk of the construction work can be carried out away from and independent of the final site. These methods also mean that you are able to see the completed mosaic before it is installed.



■ Working indirect onto glass fibre net with Smalti Piastrina



■ Working indirect onto paper



■ Mosaic above installed at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show – Gary Drostle

STEP 2

Discover the benefits mosaic can bring to your project

■ Designing a mosaic into your scheme

The range of applications for creative mosaics is huge. As well as creating beautiful floors for interior and exterior sites, mosaic can be used on walls, ceilings, free hanging panels and three dimensional sculptures. The organic nature of hand cut mosaic means it can take up any shape and to any scale.

Most people who are asked about mosaic think of Romans and their luxurious villa floors. But when you are working on your building or design scheme it's good to be fully aware of the potential of mosaic and it's myriad uses. This way you can add a powerful tool to your palette of materials.

So where can I use mosaic?

Mosaics can be used in so many different ways. Floors and walls can be transformed, as can ceilings. Mosaic can be used inside or outside, in pools and fountains, wet rooms and kitchens.

Mosaics can conform to all the rigorous standards of modern buildings including slip and impact resistance, as well as thermal stability in the most severe conditions. The organic nature of mosaic can also take up three dimensional forms, sculptures, benches, stairways... The sites are only limited by our imagination.



■ Porcelain mosaic for pedestrianised high street – Gary Drostle & Rob Turner

■ The possibilities of light, colour, pattern and texture

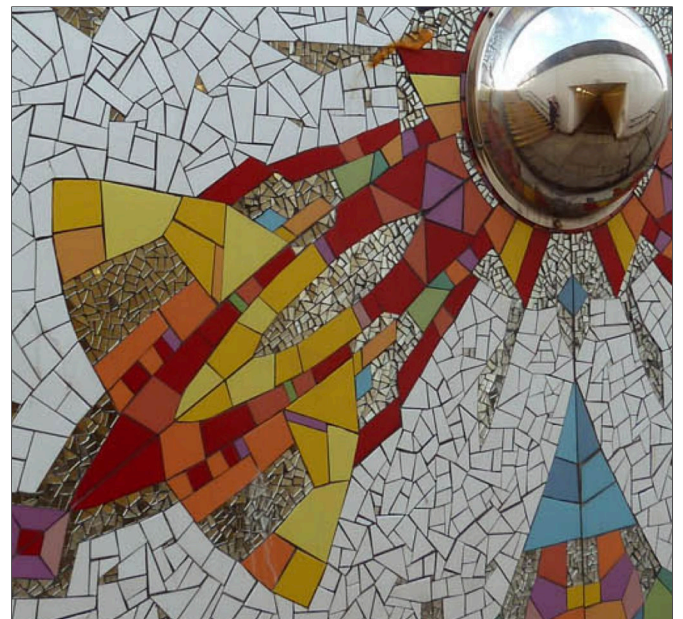
Mosaic can bring four powerful design elements to your project: light, colour, pattern and texture. What's more they can be added without sacrificing durability and toughness.

Add year round colour in your landscape scheme, beautiful patterns and textures to highlight a façade of your building, and light effects that will ping or bring sparkle to your focal zone.

Light

Light plays an important part in mosaic art, particularly with the textured and glass tesserae. No where is this more evident than in the use of Smalti, this beautiful hand made lead glass has a unique quality under light and the tesserae are often placed in the setting cement at different angles to control and add to the play of light across a wall mosaic. Traditionally the gold smalti of Byzantine churches was angled in it's setting bed to achieve greater reflectivity enabling a single candle to light up a vast interior.

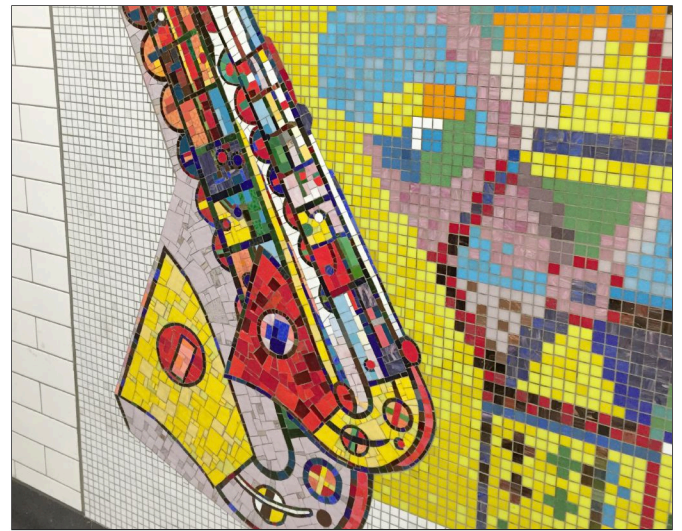
■ Did you know that by angling gold mosaic in the setting bed the mosaic artist can even channel light into your building...



■ Underpass mosaic incorporating safety mirror and mirror mosaic

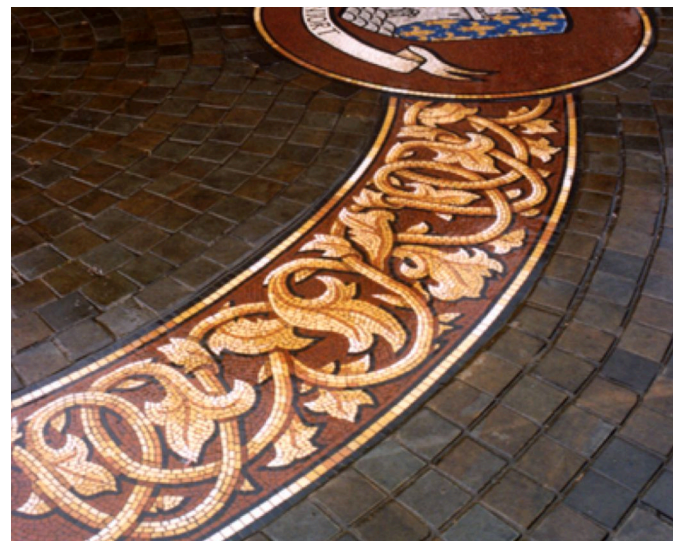
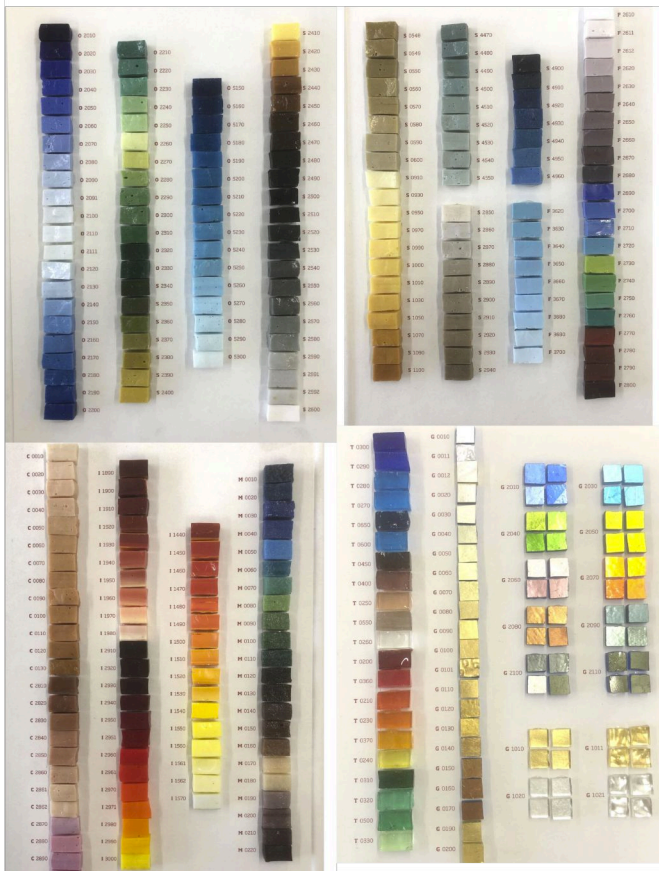
Colour

From bright vivid colours to the most subtle hues and tones the colour palette of the mosaic is beautiful. The marbles and Unglazed Porcelains have a beautiful and harmonious palette that compliment the other natural materials of the built environment. Glass Smalti comes in a huge range of thousands of colours as rich as the painters palette. But colour in mosaic is not simply an interpretation of the painters palette. Mosaic has it's own vital characteristic, that of the placement of blocks of pure colour next to each other. The colour always remains pure but the combinations, through optical mixing and colour compliments creates a colour surface that is alive like paint can never be.



Colourful glass, at Tottenham Court Road Underground station mosaics remade by Drostle Public Arts

Venetian Glass Tesserae

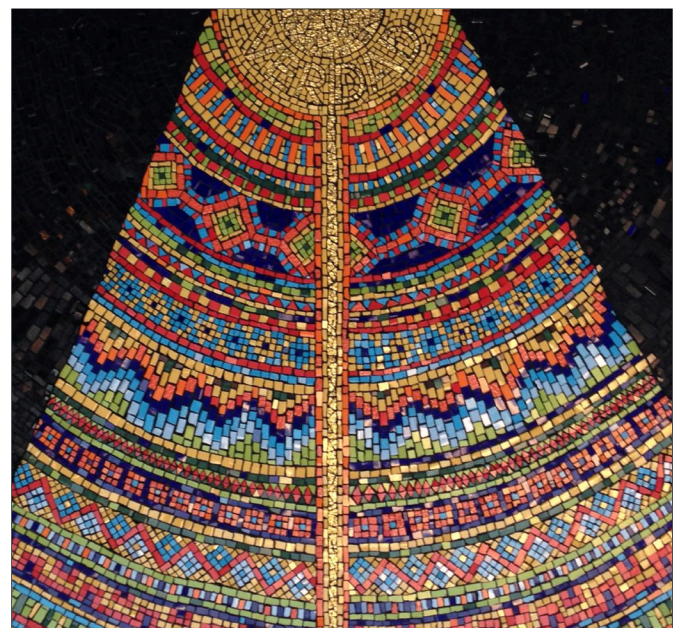


Traditional floral leaf pattern in porcelain by Gary Drostle & Rob Turner

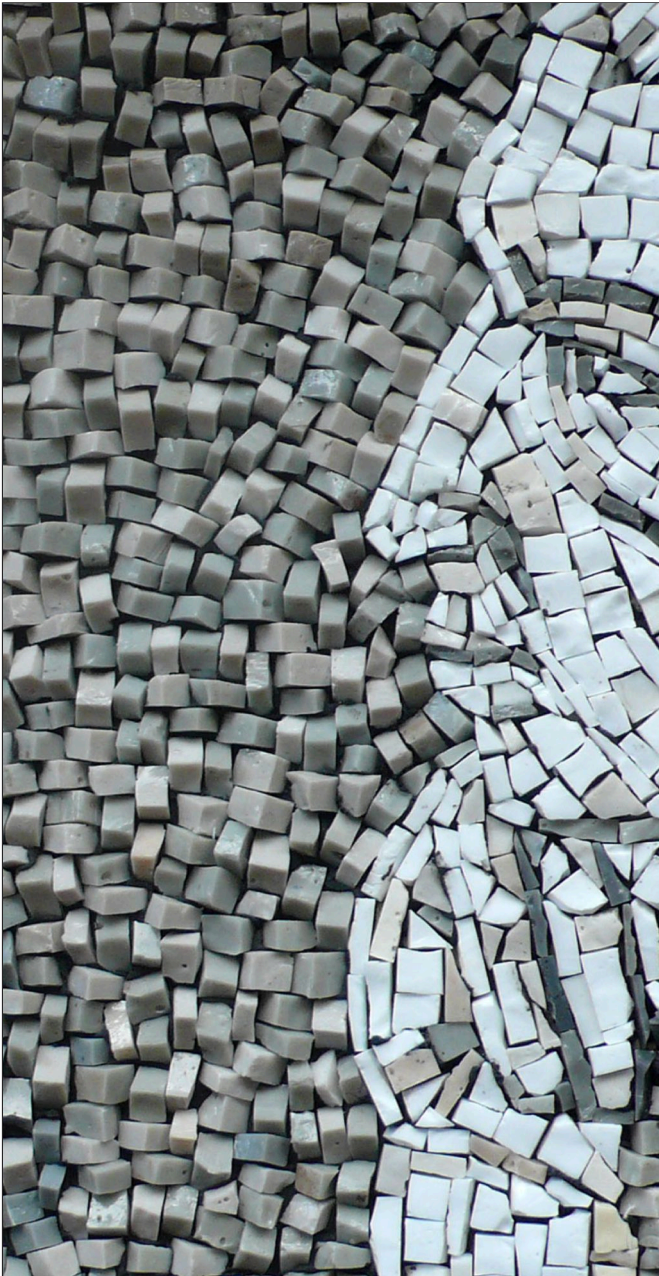
Pattern

Pattern is one of the basic components of mosaic art, from the simple pacing of cubes in a row to complex floral patterns this element of mosaic is often over looked and can be used to great effect.

Patterns can not only enliven the surfaces but can also convey identity and history.



The use of pattern in mosaic for this glazed porcelain mural panel for the main bus terminal in Cali, Colombia by Gary Drostle



■ The tesserae are set at 45 degree angles in this highly textured work by Gary Drostle

Texture

Wall mosaics created with natural materials such as slate, marble and stone often use the textures of the materials giving a rich dimension to wall and panel mosaics. Tesserae can be placed on their side or at different angles and heights to heighten the textures. Hand made tesserae also often have textured surfaces that add their own unique quality. Hand made Glass Smalti has a rich textured and reflective surface.

■ Looking at potential sites, developing themes and telling stories

Commissioning a mosaic artwork is a big investment and it's worth taking time to consider the best placement of the work. If you have a site in mind, before committing just look at other potential areas, is there a better place. Remember your mosaic is going to attract attention and get noticed so make sure it has space to breath and is in the optimal location.

Here are few tips to consider:-

- **Movement Joints** - Although a structural movement joint can be accommodated into a mosaic if necessary sometimes just moving the mosaic a little can avoid having the joint cutting the image.
- **Skirtings** - If you are looking at exterior walls remember the first foot or two (300-600mm) nearest the ground is something of a dead zone and is usually best treated with a skirting of some sort.
- **Focal Features** - Your mosaic could well become a local landmark, gateway zones and pedestrian flow junction areas are often great focal points.
- **Pedestrian Flow** - Remember despite being a focal feature, floor mosaics do not take up any foot fall space so they can make excellent features without obstructing pedestrian areas.

Telling a story to engage people in the nature of your site

As well as light, colour, pattern and texture mosaics can tell a story and by telling a story you can root your mosaic firmly within it's setting.

Modern methods of building and design can often render places with a feeling of 'everywhere looks the same'. Your mosaic can overcome that feeling, it will say you are here, and there is nowhere else similar.

Mosaic artworks can convey identity, whether that is a sense of the particular place, it's community, history, geography or the aims and aspirations of the building or client, a mosaic artwork will make your site unique and particular.



■ A community heritage mosaic created in collaboration with a local primary school for Barratt Homes PLC

“ I like my work to tell a story, it’s amazing how after researching a site a unique story will turn up, one which will put a completely unique identity to a site. Often I feel like an archaeologist un-earthing the hidden stories of a place and making it visible.”

Gary Drostle

Create a brief

If you have specific objectives in commissioning your mosaic then it’s a good idea to create a written brief for your chosen mosaic artist. One side of A4 (letter) paper is usually enough. Your brief can include specific themes, colours or moods, the levels of consultation or participation wanted and any other aspects you would like to include. If you don’t have a specific idea then talk to your mosaic artist and jointly draft a brief.

■ Ensuring your project is unique and inclusive

If your project is for the public realm, or will receive a wider audience, then it’s worth considering the mosaics recipient community and design in ways of engaging that community in the process. This can take many forms, tailored to your specific community and can include:–

- Consultative design exhibitions
- Community design, oral history and even poetry workshops
- Workshops in local schools
- Mosaic making workshops (always popular with local communities)
- Thematically linked arts events
- Artist participation in local fairs and events
- Social media promotion and information collecting, including dedicated website and facebook pages, twitter and instagram feeds
- Other promotional activities, news and radio interviews, ‘making of’ videos and so on.

STEP 3

Learn how to recognise a well-crafted mosaic

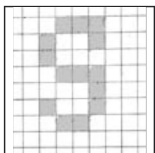
Imagine you had Picasso, Rubens and a first year art student all painting the same still life, the results would be very different, and perhaps not all of them good...

The style that the mosaics pieces, known as tesserae, are laid in is equivalent to the brush strokes of a painting and can be just as distinct and individual, the competence with which this is done sets apart the mosaic masterpiece from the simple craft.

A brief look at Andamento

The brushstrokes of your mosaic

The same design can be made in mosaic in many different ways. Traditionally this is called the Andamento, with each Andamento being given a name or Opus, Latin for work. These styles have very different feels and involve differing degrees of skill to execute. The core of the main Andamento styles are the degree of flow involved in the courses of tesserae. Here are the main styles.

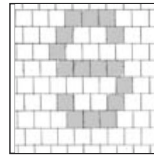


Opus Regulatum

Tesserae laid in a regular grid pattern are called regulatum, a special tray is often used for laying the tesserae out so that the tiles are presented ready for fixing on square sheets of paper. Generally speaking

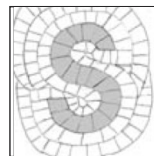
bathroom tiling is about all it's good for as the whole system seems to negate the essential nature of mosaics. However some startling results have been achieved on large scale mosaics, in particular the exchange of computer pixel for tile has produced some amazing photographic mosaics. Regulatum has also been used effectively by Paolozzi at Tottenham Court Road, in London, presumably also to reduced the cost of covering such a large area and because the grid pattern fitted with the artists style.

Opus Tessellatum



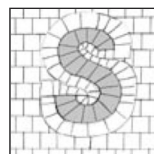
This style involves using the tiles to form a basic regular pattern repeat, usually the regular brick pattern style which immediately introduces an element of direction into the tile laying i.e. do you lay the brick pattern horizontally or vertically? Other more complicated patterns can be produced by introducing cut tiles, perhaps in the manner of carpet design.

Opus Vermiculatum



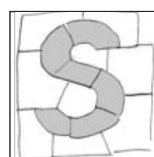
Vermiculatum, from the Latin 'worm-like' is the most expressive traditional form of mosaic tile laying. The tesserae are laid along the contours of the image, describing its form, you should be able to make a rubbing of the mosaic and see the design. The whole image is given a dynamic power that is unique to mosaics but which is extremely labour intensive and takes a high degree of skill to do well. The essence is to begin with a tesserae size and complete the mosaic in flowing courses of tesserae of that size.

Opus Classicum



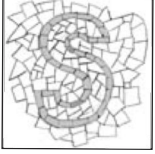
As its name suggests this is the traditional style found in many mosaics from the great mosaics of the Roman Empire to the many trade craft Victorian Classical floors that can be found here in England. The technique combines opus Tessellatum with vermiculatum. The main objects of a design are created in vermiculatum and these are placed on a more regular, tessellated, background. Where the two meet the background takes the form of the object, so each object has a background halo around it. This technique creates a very strong sharp and clear image.

Opus Sectile



This technique is used extensively in Islamic tile design where it is known as 'Zillij'. The tiles, usually larger glazed ceramic tiles or stone are cut into shapes that describe the form, i.e. a leaf shaped tile would be used as a leaf. This usually has a great effect on the tile size to design scale, requiring relatively larger tiles. The technique is closely allied to marquetry.

Opus Palladianum



This technique gives a more modern feel. The tesserae are cut into haphazard shapes and laid like crazy paving. This buzzing texture is also used for backgrounds but is labour intensive if done well.

Modern Mosaic

More and more mosaic is being seen as a true art medium in its own right rather than a more permanent form of painting. This has brought with it an appreciation and emphasis on the qualities that set mosaic apart. These modern style mosaics use tesserae of differing sizes, heightening texture and the dynamic flow of the work, works often have highly textured surfaces. Modern mosaics also use optical colour mixing, and the use of different hues in a field to heighten the mosaic qualities.



■ A Mosaic commemorating the anniversary of the First World War by Gary Drostle

A quick 8 point guide to spotting a well-made mosaic.

Here is a simple eight point list that will reveal to you the secrets of the craft

The Good Points

- **Even grout lines** – The lines formed between the tesserae, called Interstices, are as important as the tesserae themselves, even sized grout lines are a sure sign of a well crafted mosaic. Triangular grout areas are an indication of poorly cut mosaic.
- **Flowing courses** – Back again to the idea of brushstrokes, a mosaic master will use the courses of tesserae to form flowing lines which help describe the design irrespective of the colour of tesserae.
- **Attention to edges** – The edge where a mosaic meets the outside world is a critical structural area. Well made mosaics will usually finish with a border or course of whole tiles to bolster edge stability.
- **Twinkling tesserae** – The use of different shades and hues to heighten an area of plain mosaic adding texture and vibrancy.

The Bad Points

- **Rivers and Ladders** – These are common mistakes by amateur mosaic makers. Ladders are formed when courses of tesserae, say running right to left, start to line up top to bottom, giving a ladder like look. Rivers often occur where courses of tesserae are turning corners and the grout begins to line up at 90 degrees to the flow giving what looks like a crack across the mosaic.
- **Popping Grout** – Small holes appearing in the grout when it is dry, caused by the use of too much water in the grouting stage.
- **Cut tiles at edges** – Small cut tesserae along the outside edge causing ragged edges and weakening the vital border between mosaic and outside world.
- **Lipping** – Particularly important on floor mosaics this is where an edge of a tessera does not sit flush with the surrounding tesserae. This only counts if it's in an isolated patch and should not be confused with the deliberate angling of tesserae to create texture and light effects on wall mosaics.

STEP 4 What happens in the commissioning process?

So you have the knowledge to make an informed decision on commissioning a mosaic. Here we can take a brief look at how your mosaic commission may run. Obviously there may be some variations with different makers but this is how I generally operate.

■ Engagement, Costings and Payments

The first thing most people want to know is how much your mosaic will cost, it's important to clear this right from the start as mosaic artworks are expensive and take many hours to make.

You will usually be providing your chosen mosaic artist some details of what you are looking for: the dimensions; the location; possible themes.

DIMENSIONS

The dimensions of your mosaic are critical to the cost and varying the size is the easiest way to increase or decrease the cost.

LOCATION

You will need to indicate not just whether the mosaic is for a floor or wall but also where in the world it will be located /installed. It's a good idea to provide a few pictures of the location for context.

THEMES

You may already have a good idea of what you are looking for, you may even have a design already. Drawing up a written brief can help but you don't have to have it all sorted before you approach your mosaic artist. Remember you are engaging an artist and their own vision can produce amazing designs that you hadn't even imagined.

My speciality is creating not just an original and beautiful mosaic artwork but also one which is unique to you and your specific location.

COSTING AND PAYMENTS

There are many variations on a mosaic cost including materials, size of tesserae and detail of design, so it is impossible to give a simple cost here. Your mosaic artist will provide you with a quote based on the outline and dimensions you have initially provided.

My quotes include: design work; all materials and labour;

fabrication of your mosaic; packing and shipping to site and installation. They do not include any specific work needed for a foundation for your mosaic (such as concrete floor foundations, wall renders or fixing in situ damp, cracks and so on). These are usually best undertaken by a separate building contractor if needed and are required to be done weeks in advance of the mosaic works.



To give you an idea of costings this 3 metre diameter hand cut porcelain floor mosaic (7m²) would cost GBP £28,800.00

Because mosaics are expensive and take a long time to make, stage payments are usually required to ensure your artist doesn't run out of money before completion. Here at Droste Public Arts we require stage payments as follows:-
20% design fee (this is sometimes included into the next stage);
30% pre construction (on design approval);
30% on completion of fabrication (before shipment); and the final
20% on successful completion of the installation.

■ Arriving at the design you want

I always like to explore and push my creativity so will often produce more than one design to a set design brief. This approach enables you to see the full potential of your own mosaic commission. It's a win win... I get to exercise my creativity and you get a great choice of designs.

Two Design Stages

I usually use a two stage design process. The first set of designs offer you a choice based on your brief. These are usually sketch ideas not fully detailed. From this selection of designs you then have three options:-

1. Choose the one you love
2. Ask for amendments to your favourite or even combine elements of one design into another.
3. If you aren't in love with any then we can discuss adjusting the brief and try again.

Once you are happy with your design we then move to a second stage where the design is drawn up at a larger scale and with all the detail necessary to create the mosaic.

This final design is then brought back to you for final approval before construction begins.

■ Monitoring the construction phase

Once the design is approved the construction of the mosaic will often take many months in the studio. Throughout the construction process you will be kept up to date on the progress with photos of the mosaic taking shape, you are also very welcome to visit the studio to see your mosaic under construction and even add a few tesserae yourself!

■ A professional installation

Once the construction of your mosaic is completed it is laid out and a photo sent for your approval.

PACKING AND SHIPPING

Once approved the mosaic is packed into our tailor-made special boxes, each section in a hand cut housing. If the work is travelling far our professional Art Shipping service partners Ebbss UK then crate it and handle all the shipping and customs paperwork.

My installation team and myself will arrive with your mosaic, or shortly after.

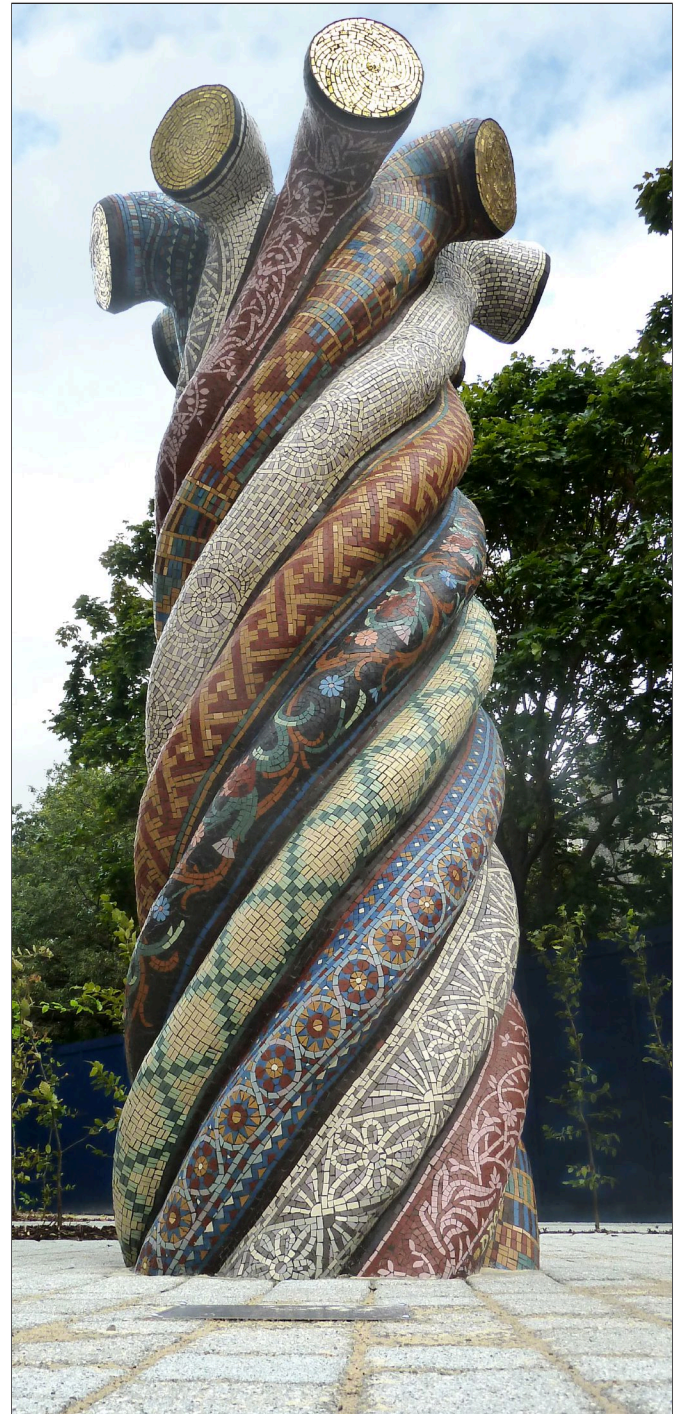
INSTALLATION

We will then set out the site where your mosaic will be fixed. This might include setting up security fencing, access equipment and pedestrian safety measures. Usually your mosaic is then fixed to the prepared site

using cement based adhesives. Finally it is grouted and cleaned and all waste removed.

AFTERCARE

Each mosaic comes with a Maintenance Manual giving full technical details and cleaning options. Mosaic are very durable surfaces and usually require just occasional cleaning depending on the local dirt build up.



■ A mosaic sculpture celebrating the history of migrant communities to Poplar in East London on the site of the former Rope Makers for the London Docks.



The answers to your top 5 questions about engaging a mosaic artist

- **Will I need a designer?**
- **Do I need to find an independent installer?**
- **What can I expect from the mosaic artist?**
- **I am not in the UK, do I need to arrange the export?**

■ Will I need a designer?

You certainly need to check with your chosen mosaic maker...

Some mosaic makers do require a design, usually commissioned separately from an artist/painter by the commissioner. If this is done it is important that the design/painting is done to correct dimensions and at a sufficient scale.

Here at Drostle Public Arts Gary Drostle creates his own unique designs but we can also work to separately commissioned designs if required, these design commissions can be carried out collaboratively or as completely separate commissions. We are very proud to have created mosaics from the designs of inspiring artists such as Eduardo Paolozzi, Tom Philips RA, Caroline Ishgar, Onya MacCausland and 'Ink Crew' Bogota.

Gary firmly believes that getting the right design is crucial to a successful mosaic artwork and his own success in creating compelling designs can be seen in the numerous awards his work has attracted.

■ Do I need to find an independent installer?

Some Mosaic makers also operate on a supply only basis and will either expect you to organise a suitable fixer for the mosaic or will engage a separate mosaic installer themselves.

If you are require to engage a mosaic installer yourself don't make the mistake of thinking any tiler will do. A

mosaic installation requires specialist skills that are different from regular tilers, make sure your prospective installer is confident about installing mosaic specifically.

At Drostle Public Arts we nearly always install our own mosaics.

We do this because we really care about our work. We use the same people to install as making therefore ensuring the same attention to detail throughout the process, guaranteeing a successful outcome.

■ What can I expect from the mosaic artist?

The most important thing you should expect from your chosen mosaic artist is clarity and information. You need a clear costing for your project that includes design (if used) fabrication, installation and all materials, labour, documentation and insurance. This need to be backed up with a clear timetable and regular feedback on your projects progress, this is particularly important as mosaic projects are labour intensive and can take many months to complete.

A good mosaic maker will also talk about the style and materials your mosaic would be best in and be able to offer previous examples of similar works.

Most mosaic studios will ask for staged payments to manage the lengthy construction times.

If your project is part of a wider build project you should also expect:-

- Full insurance including public liability, employers/workers comp liability
- Method statements and Health & Safety policies that inform yourself and any other contractors involved in your project.
- Experience in dealing with contract management, other site contractors and sub-contractors, all aspects of competence in handling access equipment and site conduct.

■ I am not in the UK, do I need to arrange the export?

Check with your chosen mosaic maker if they are able to arrange export or are working ex-works.

Here at Drostle Public Arts we carefully pack our own mosaic and then have our shipping partners who collect, crate and ship to your door.

■ How do I find a mosaic artist?

Of course much as we would like to do all the mosaic projects in the world we know that isn't possible or desirable, the variety and talent of different mosaic artists makes our art form a rich and rewarding place to work.

Apart from searching the internet for a mosaic artist a good idea is to look at the National Mosaic Associations to find a mosaic maker that suits your project.

■ **The British Association for Modern Mosaic (BAMM)**
<www.bamm.org.uk>

■ **The Society of American Mosaic Artists (SAMA)**
<<https://americanmosaics.org>>

■ **Mosaic Association of Australia & New Zealand (MAANZ)**
<<https://www.domo-ev.de>>

■ **Deutsche Organisation für Mosaikkunst (DOMO)**
<<https://maanz.org>>

Get direct advice about your specific project

Simply call or email and we can arrange a free 30 minute consultation.

During the consultation you'll have the chance to discuss the details of your particular project and get valuable, immediate and experienced feedback that should help decide on the feasibility of your project and move it forward..

If you are happy with that, then I can supply further specific details or a quotation for your project with no obligation.

Talk to Gary directly on +44 7719529520
or email gary@drostle.com

Remember site specific mosaic is my lifelong passion and I am here, always happy to help with advice.

...and if you would like to see how this all works in real world practice

Follow this link to see a step by step slide show following a real-world project for the University of Iowa, from the initial consultation through to the award winning conclusion.

<<https://www.drostle.com/a-mosaic-commission-from-start-to-finish>>



About the author

Based in London, artist Gary Drostle has been designing, making and installing award winning site specific mosaic artworks for over thirty years. He is the former President of the British Association for Modern Mosaic and is on the editorial board of ANDAMENTO - the journal of contemporary mosaic.

Gary has been a visiting lecturer at the Chicago Mosaic School for over ten years and has also lectured at the University of East London. He regularly lectures and teaches workshops at the Society of American Mosaic Artists and The British Association for Modern Mosaic.

Your Mosaic Art Glossary

- **Andamento** – The term to describe the style or rhythm of laying tesserae.
- **Cartoon** – Full size drawing produced for the mosaic.
- **Course** – A line of tesserae.
- **Direct method** – Method for making mosaics by fixing directly into cement to the final surface.
- **Emblema** – The fine feature mosaic panel usually set in a geometric border.
- **Field** – An area of tesserae, usually of the same colour.
- **Filati** – Fine glass rods or thread used to create tesserae for micro mosaics.
- **Fully Vitrified Ceramic** – Extremely low porosity material usually fired at high temperatures to produce an impervious, completely resistant to water penetration tile (less than 0.5%) often called porcelain
- **Grout** – Fine cement based mix used to fill the interstices.
- **Guilloche** – Knotwork border pattern typical of Roman Mosaics.
- **Hammer & Hardie** – Traditional tool for cutting tesserae consisting of a sharpened hammer and a chisel set in a wooden block, pictured opposite.
- **Indirect method** – Method for making mosaics by fixing to a temporary surface before transferring and fixing the completed mosaic to the final site.
- **Interstices** – The network of gaps between tesserae.
- **Keystone** – Technique for curving a course of tesserae.
- **Millefiore** – Rods of glass formed into decorative patterns sometimes used in mosaics.
- **Opus** – Pl. Opera To denote work style.
- **Opus Classicum** – The classical Roman style of laying mosaic where a finely cut object is surrounded by a regular background field.
- **Opus Regulatum** – The square grid pattern of standard tiling.
- **Opus Sectile** – The style of cutting and adjoining shapes in mosaic, similar to that in wood marquetry.
- **Opus Tessellatum** – Creating simple patterns in mosaic from the various brick patterns to other geometric patterns usually without any tile cutting.
- **Opus Vermiculatum** – The fine mosaic work using course of tesserae to describe the form, literally 'worm like'.
- **Ostia Style** – Style of black and white mosaic typical of the ancient Roman port of Ostia.
- **Pique Assiette** – (Picassiette) Created with broken crockery.
- **Porcelain** – see Fully Vitrified
- **Riven** – Showing the rough cut edge of the tessera to add texture to a mosaic (usually marble)
- **Smalti** – Hand made enamelled opaque glass tesserae.
- **Tessera** – The mosaic cube or tile pl. tesserae
- **Unglazed ceramic** – Usually referring to high fired durable dust pressed ceramic tile in which the colour pigment runs through the body of the tile, also called Porcelain or Vitreous Ceramic.
- **Vitreous Glass** – Machine pressed glass tile.
- **Zillij** – The Islamic style of mosaic with formed geometric shapes.



The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QEST) supports excellence in British craftsmanship. QEST was founded by the Royal Warrant Holders Association in 1990 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Association and the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. In 2017 HRH The Prince of Wales became Patron, with Vice-Patrons the Earl of Snowdon and the Marquess of Salisbury.

In 2006 Gary became a Craft Scholar with an award to study at the prestigious Orsoni Mosaic Foundry in Venice.



www.drostle.com

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