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# MICRO MOSAICS TO MACRO MOSAICS:

From wearable adornment to environments of interaction

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

**LAILA COSTA**

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# i. Executive Summary

This report details the research into micro mosaics and large-scale art projects undertaken by the Fellow (Laila Costa) during April and May of 2017. The potential for these two arts practices to intersect and the possibility of their merging was of great interest to the Fellow. Discovering ways to include the community in this process provided the underpinning motivation for the bulk of this research. In addition, the Fellow was confident that this research would enhance her personal practice and further develop her skills and knowledge as an arts educator, curator and community arts worker.

“The arts have the potential to bridge our worlds, harness the wisdom of our different views, engage our imagination to explore new ways of thinking, and create experiences that can be shared by all people in our community.”<sup>1</sup>

Venice and Ravenna, Italy, are both cities where traditional micro mosaics are created, materials are readily available and there is a culture of appreciation toward the historical and contemporary context of mosaics. Mosaics have been a part of the fabric of these cities, its buildings and public art since the Byzantine era (circa 1453). The Fellow undertook a one-week intensive courses at Mosaic Art School in Ravenna and another in Orsoni, Venice. There she produced two pieces of jewellery and one framed miniature. Whilst micro mosaic is understood and valued in these Italian cities, sales are limited and demand minimal. In Australia, the market is virtually non-existent and the cost of materials and labour make it an extremely niche industry.

The Fellow’s research into micro mosaics included visiting large-scale macro mosaic projects including Parc Güell and Antoni Gaudí’s building in Barcelona. Parc Güell was the prime influence for artist Niki de Saint Phalle who envisioned

and created her own mosaic sculpture garden, Ill Giardino dei Tarocchi in Tuscany which the Fellow also visited. In contrast to Parc Güell, de Saint Phalle’s self-funded, mosaic garden allowed for a more personal and self-exploratory creation involving the symbols on Tarot cards.

Whilst these courses and projects made up the bulk of the Fellow’s research, visits to museums, exhibitions and other incidental community initiatives provided additional research opportunities and knowledge for contemplation. These included:

» Museums - Museum of Arts’ mosaic collection, Ravenna.

Ettore Guatelli Museum, Ozzano Taro, Parma.

Sagrada Familia, Casa Mila (La Pedrera) (1906-12), which included the Federic Amat - Zeptrope exhibition, and Casa Batlló (1904-6), Barcelona.

Federic Marès Museum, Barcelona.

Museum of Jewellery, Vicenza, including the Sigilli exhibition.

» Exhibitions – The Venice Biennale. Various including Ettore Sottsass’ Glass Works and the Arsenale.

Vetrine delle Dolomiti Friulane: Patrimonio dell’UNESCO, Pordenone.

Parma 360 festival of contemporary creativity including La città delle Donne, in the streets of the city centre, Parma.

1 Arts Victoria. 2014: The Arts Ripple Effect: Valuing the Arts in Communities, Arts Victoria, The Australia Council for the Arts and Castanet



- » Workshop visit - S.U.V Bead Workshop, Venice.
- » Community art projects - Parco della Pace, Ravenna.  
I Fiori di Ravenna: Ravenna Città Amica delle Donne.

Meeting with Carolina Zanelli of Il Filo project, Pordenone.

- » Private self-funded projects: La Cava Dipinta e La Cava Abitata, Rubbio, by Maestro Toni Zarpellon. Personal meeting on site.

These invaluable experiences allowed the Fellow to gain a deeper insight into an European centred, Italian specific cultural viewpoint. The Fellow aims to share the benefits and networks gained from her research with students and the wider artistic community. The Fellow has begun to pass on her new knowledge through micro mosaic demonstrations such as the one she held during her solo exhibition in North Sydney during July of 2017.

It is envisaged that the Fellowship will inform her work as a community arts worker where ideas for larger scale collaborative creations are in the planning stages. There is growing evidence surrounding the benefits of community based art on society as a whole by

engaging hard to reach demographics, such as youth, ethnic and socio-economically disadvantaged communities;

- » providing a creative focus for communities to explore issues and aspirations;
- » creating new and diverse artistic work and cultural experiences;
- » developing confidence, pride and a sense of belonging in participants;
- » providing artists and participants with new career pathways and work opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

The Fellowship created the opportunity for The Fellow to develop her knowledge and skill which resulted in several recommendations for various art industry sectors and stakeholders including government, the private sector, education and training, industry and professional associations, and artists and collectives.



1. Various mosaic sample boards, Mosaic Art School, Ravenna, and



2. *The Empress and other tarot sculptures, Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle*

# 1. About the Fellow

Laila Costa is a visual artist, contemporary jeweller, community arts project manager and curator. She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Australia, U.S.A and Argentina, in a variety of artist run spaces and commercial galleries. In 2011 she was awarded a study grant for a Mosaics course in Spilimbergo, Italy, by Ente Friuli nel Mondo and in 2012 was an artist in residence at Residencia Corazón, Argentina. Costa is a studio artist at NorthCity4 studios, Brunswick, and is co-founder and curator of TempContemp Gallery, a one-year project due to commence in August 2018.

Costa worked as a sessional teacher within the Design, Visual Art and Supported Learning Departments at Swinburne University of Technology from 2006 to 2016. She is passionate about education and providing students with the learning required to develop their own personal voice, nurture a strong curiosity and love of learning.

As a program manager and curator of the Urban Campfires program at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Collingwood, she engages with individuals and community groups to produce bi-annual exhibitions. Produced in conjunction with the Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House, the program aims to create a welcoming environment, provide a comforting distraction and diminish the stress and discomfort due to involvement with the court system. The issues of social justice are the basis of the curatorial premise and workshops are devised to produce outcomes for public and private display within the building. The Fellow is currently working on producing an art collection for the Heidelberg and Shepparton courts.

## Qualifications

- » Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Swinburne TAFE, Upgrade 2016
- » Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts, Victorian College of the Arts, 2003
- » Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, 1992
- » Advanced Certificate in Art and Design, Box Hill Institute of T.A.F.E, 1988

## Memberships

- » National Association of Visual Artists (NAVA)
- » Artshub
- » Craft Victoria
- » Mosaic Association of Australia and New Zealand (MAANZ)



3. The Fellow working on a micro mosaic ring at Mosaic Art School, Ravenna. Photo credit Mark Glazebrook

## 2. Aims of the Fellowship

“The mosaic is a world-old technique and at the same time it is as contemporary as our heartbeat... Because of its taste for assemblage, because of the association of fragments and ideas... because of its high chromatic vivacity” (Enrico Baj).

The purpose of the Fellowship was to undertake study in order to learn new skills and techniques that are not currently available in Australia. In addition, visits to large and small-scale art projects that incorporate mosaic features were scheduled in order to enhance the Fellow’s current knowledge in project management and developmental process.

As part of the Fellowship the following training was undertaken:

- » Completed a five-day Micro Mosaic for Jewellery course (Italy).
- » Completed a five-day Micro Mosaic (filati) course (Orsoni, Venice, Italy).

Participation in these workshops enabled the Fellow to study new techniques and develop specific micro mosaic skillsets, including the hands-on production of micro mosaics and jewellery pieces. The Fellow was also able to document the process of micro mosaic production and develop a list of materials, processes and techniques that can be adapted for the delivery of future classes, demonstrations and publications within Australia, thus supporting the skill development of other artists.

The Fellowship has also informed the Fellow’s work in the community arts sector where she manages various projects and budgets. These projects may begin small and with input from differing groups, expand over time. Each artwork has the potential to grow and produce larger outcomes such as murals, sculptures and installations.

The artworks are produced in conjunction with workshops that the Fellow structures and manages. These workshops are facilitated by local artists and are based on the participant’s interests and requests. The fellow also receives input from various stakeholders including funding bodies, and must always consider the dimensions of venues where the work will be exhibited. The Fellow also utilises her knowledge and experience of past and contemporary community art practices globally.

The art produced brings benefits to many: the participants, the hosting institutes and organizations, the funding bodies, the team managing the project and the community of viewers who visit and experience the art. For people who come across the art in their daily life, it enhances their interaction with the space. It enables a moment to ponder the motivations, thoughts and skills used, which can be an uplifting experience. For example, artwork in a magistrate’s court that is produced by people who may be experiencing similar issues as the viewer, can offer consolation. Artwork can likewise enhance the experience of the staff working in these spaces daily.

The people who create the art also benefit in many ways, from skills acquisition to interaction with other community members. The sense of inclusion can increase their sense of wellbeing and mental health. In this way, community arts projects can increase participant’s ‘ability to function at broader political, social and environmental levels. Through the artwork, these projects provide the important dual benefits of connecting socially isolated participants to the mainstream and connecting the mainstream to the socially isolated participants’.<sup>3</sup>



## 3. The Australian Context

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Australia is a young country that has a very short cultural history (excluding for the purposes of this report the 50,000 years of indigenous history) and limited educational exposure and engagement with the arts in the primary and secondary school system. We are a post-colonial, multicultural society that brings together different cultural histories, skills and ideologies. Overwhelmingly, the artistic vision presented is that of a white, middle class male perspective. However, as this perspective shifts, there is potential for innovative, ambitious and adventurous projects to be envisioned. Education is always key as are the funding and systemic structures that enable creatives to realise their aims. Ideally we require a strong government with a bold cultural vision that understands the economic and social benefits gained from artistic enterprise. “‘Art literacy’ has similar public benefit to that of text literacy and numeracy in providing the value that comes from having an educated public.”

### 3.1 Mosaic Art

In a highly mechanised and digitally engaged society, handmade skills and craft techniques are being increasingly appreciated and finding new markets. The pushback in some sections of the community against mass production has seen an increased interest in bespoke and unique pieces, and these products can now reach a global audience via websites and social networks.

Micro mosaic is a specialised, traditional form of mosaic that is extremely time consuming, labour intensive and has a niche market globally. There are currently no micro mosaic courses available in Australia. There are very few practicing artisans and fewer with extensive knowledge in these techniques, particularly in a jewellery making context. The materials and equipment required are not readily

available and are costly. This, combined with the amount of labour involved in producing one micro mosaic piece can make these items expensive and push them into the luxury market.

While there is a healthy Australian mosaic making community including mosaicists who produce commission pieces and work in various styles and materials, the awareness of micro mosaic is minimal, even for people with specialised knowledge of the arts and crafts.

The Mosaic Association of Australia and New Zealand (MAANZ) are an active community who are planning a symposium in August 2018 in Tasmania. The event will include speakers, exhibitions and workshops and provide an opportunity to engage with mosaics. MAANZ publish a quarterly e-magazine, Opus Oracle, which has feature stories, a member's showcase, technical tips, and state representative reports. MAANZ are working hard to raise the profile of this important art form.

There are many large scale mosaic pieces that are accessible to the public in Melbourne including:

- » The Angel by Deborah Halpern, commissioned by the Australian Bicentennial Authority for the south moat of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), which has now been installed on the Yarra River bank at Birrarung Marr.
- » The Flinders Street Railway Station Mural, a mosaic and painted mural by Mirka Mora, commissioned early 1980s and completed in 1986 at Flinders Street Railway Station.
- » The Legend of Fire, 1980 – 1982, by Harold Freedman and commissioned by the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade, East Melbourne.



» The Once Upon a Slime Outdoor, 2008, by Helen Bodycomb, commissioned by the City of Melbourne, and presented at ArtPlay.<sup>4</sup>

## 3.2 Community Arts Projects

Community art projects are usually implemented at a local level and funded by councils, suburban neighbourhood houses, schools, non-government organisations, religious and community organisations. There are several community projects of all sizes and models rolling out as more funding becomes available via state and local government, for example in nursing homes and magistrates' courts.

As community engagement is proven to increase people's sense of wellbeing, physical and mental health, more organisations are open to facilitating art projects as part of their programs. Some private companies are also getting on board with social responsibility policies, and engaging in community projects. The benefits for individuals and communities collaborating include improved economic, social, physical and mental health outcomes.

Indeed 'There is mounting evidence that participating in the arts develops creative thinking that is transferable across all knowledge areas. It teaches us to link diverse ideas and experiences. Creative thinking and the flexibility of mind and action are increasingly recognised as desirable attributes in the 21st century.'<sup>5</sup>

While there are progressive arts projects being undertaken in Melbourne, inspiration is often drawn from overseas. The question is 'How and when will Australia catch up to its international counterparts and fulfil its artistic potential.'

For community art organisations, The Australian government has been supporting the arts via its official arts funding body, the Australia Council. State governments

also support the arts through state funding bodies such as Creative Victoria. Various other forms of funding trickle down through state government departments and councils.

However, Europe has a much longer history of support for artists, and a deeper understanding and acceptance of the cultural advantages and social reach of their work. While private and artist run initiative galleries in Australia are opening up to the idea of community engagement and social practice as areas of growth in programming, we are still a long way behind.

The Abi-tanti project is an example of a successful European community based art project. It was launched in 2000 by the Education Department of the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, Turino, and is considered a work in progress. The Abi-tanti are wooden humanoid objects that have been made by thousands of primary school children. They investigate the notions of identity, difference and migration. The objects are then placed in agoras (public spaces for meeting), the first one of which was a piazza in Turino. The Abi-tanti have since migrated throughout Italy, Europe and arrived to inhabit the courtyard of the Immigration Museum and steps of the Victorian Parliament House in Melbourne, 2017. The project was invited by the inaugural Arts Learning Festival who celebrate the importance of arts in education and funded by Independent Schools Victoria.

The Abi-tanti project is continuing its migration and has partnered with numerous primary schools, educational institutions, private businesses, public galleries (including Le Louvre) and festivals (such as Triennale di Milano). The project is inspired by the theories of lifelong learning, peer education and access for people of all abilities. It works with 'the notions of the present time that require new thinking and fresh ways of being together, to plan a future open to peace and hope using the cultural tools of art and creativity.'<sup>6</sup>

4 Campbell, R, Murray, C, Brennan, S, Pettit. J. 2017: The economics of Australia's small-to-medium visual arts sector. National Association for the Visual Arts

5 Arts Victoria. 2013: Making Art With Communities: A Work Guide, Arts Victoria, VicHealth & Castanet

6 Dipartimento Educazione Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea. 2017: Abi-tanti La Moltitudine Migrante

In Australia, there is a push for art projects with this level of global reach, however, we still look to these overseas models as best practice and inspiration. The Melbourne Based 5000 Poppies project fulfilled some quite ambitious outcomes and is a positive example of well targeted funding within Australia. The project started as a private art program, and quickly went viral. After gaining this high visibility, the project received significant funding via the commonwealth funded Anzac Centenary. As a result, crocheted and knitted poppies have been sent to Australia from around the world by 50,000 makers. These poppies have travelled to RHS Chelsea Flower Show, London, Fromelles, France, and numerous other smaller venues. 61,000 plus stemmed poppies were also installed for the Australian War Memorial in Canberra for Remembrance Day 2018.

## 4. Skills enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition Areas

This Fellowship was designed to aid in the development of skills and knowledge across several areas of mosaic making technique that are not currently available in the Australian education space. The Fellow planned to return home and share these learnings within the Australian sector.

### Skills Enhancement 1:

#### Micro Mosaic Filati for Jewellery course

The Fellow participated in a five-day Micro-Mosaic Filati for Jewellery course at the Mosaic Art School in Ravenna. This built on her knowledge and skills both in the Greco-Roman technique of mosaic making and as a jewellery maker.

The Filati Technique was introduced and developed at the end of the 18th century by the Vatican to produce exquisite jewellery. The technique consists of the creation of micro-tiles (tesserae) made by pulling fused glass under a gas flame of 900C°. For each pull, a unique color is reached, never repeated. The rod shapes and colours can be customised as the artist sees fit, in order to make detailed imagery. The micro-mosaic technique, along with the recipe of the “stucco” from powdered marble, is still a very well-kept secret.

While undertaking this training, the Fellow aimed to:

- » Learn the techniques of smalti glass making (Filato) and fusion. These included cutting, micro-design, how to mix glass colours and the assembly of tiny mosaic portions to create jewellery components.
- » Create two pieces, such as a brooch, pendant or ring. The first piece was developed on a base made of metal alloy or brass, allowing the Fellow to use

the basic techniques. The second piece was more complex and developed on a sterling silver base.

- » Enhance skills gained in 2011 when the Fellow participated in a two-week intensive “Introduction to Mosaic Making” course at Scuola Mosaici del Friuli, Spilimbergo, Italy.
- » Increase the Fellow’s historical knowledge of mosaic by visiting the many buildings in Ravenna, which house a vast collection of Early Christian and Byzantine mosaics. These buildings, such as the Basilica of San Vitale, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and Baptistery of Neon have been on the UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1996.

**Action/Outcomes:** create micro-mosaic jewellery pieces using the newly learned processes and document the process via photography and text.

**Action/Outcomes:** develop a list of materials, processes and techniques to use in the delivery of future classes (both practical and theory), demonstrations, talks and publications in Australia.

### Skills Enhancement 2:

#### Master in Mosaic Workshop - Roman Filati

The Fellow participated in a five-day Master in Mosaic “Living the Venice workshop: History, Theory and the Application of Mosaic Art” course. The Angelo Orsoni Mosaici foundry in Venice began producing Byzantine gold leaf and Renaissance coloured glass smalti in 1888. This further enhanced her knowledge and skills in micro mosaic making.

While undertaking this training the Fellow aimed to:

- » Learn how to pull filati, controlling the shape, thickness and colour and build upon her skills in the Byzantine technique that she briefly experimented with in 2011 at Spilimbergo. The Fellow completed a small 4 x 4cm mosaic in the direct method using the Venetian smalti (coloured, non-transparent, compact glass slabs) in a contemporary style.
- » Study the onsite working foundry, its furnaces and crucibles, and the production of smalti pizze (or slabs) and filati micro-mosaics. The Fellow familiarised herself with the resource of the Orsoni 'colour library' which consists of over 3000 colours, tints, tones and shades.
- » Research and visit suppliers of filati glass and other materials required to undertake this work in the future.
- » Learn the techniques required to make gold leaf tessare, which is made onsite by Orsoni.
- » Research mosaics on a guided tour of the Venetian island of Torcello.

**Action/Outcomes:** create a new mosaic using the newly learned processes and document the process via photography and text.

**Action/Outcomes:** develop a list of materials, processes and techniques to use in the delivery of future classes (both practical and theory), demonstrations, talks and publications in Australia.

## Knowledge Acquisition 1:

### **Visit Il Giardino dei Tarocchi (The Tarot Garden), Pescia Fiorentina, Tuscany (Italy).**

The Fellow visited Il Giardino dei Tarocchi in Pescia Fiorentina, province of Grosseto, Tuscany. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi or The Tarot garden is a tarot based sculpture

garden created by French artist Niki de Saint Phalle between the late 1970's and 2002. The artist's inspiration came from Park Güell by Gaudí in Barcelona, Spain. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi houses twenty-two monumental figures representing the greater mysteries of the tarot, constructed of reinforced concrete and covered with mirrors and ceramic mosaic. The figures can be walked through, and the artist lived on-site inside the sphinx like Empress sculpture for several months during the construction of the garden.

During this visit the Fellow aimed to:

- » Study the garden as it provides an excellent example of a large-scale project built by a community of like-minded individuals of varying skill levels. There are no examples of a similar approach being utilised in Australia.
- » Continue on-going discussions with managers of this important community-arts site.

**Action/Outcomes:** document the visit with text and photography.

**Action/Outcomes:** document information about techniques and project management approaches.

## Knowledge Acquisition 2:

### **Visit Parc Güell (1900-14), Casa Mila (La Pedrera) (1906-12) and Casa Batlló (1904-6) in Barcelona (Spain)**

The Antoni Gaudí buildings that occupy Parc Güell were influenced by architecture, forms in nature and religion. The most significant quality of his work is the seamless integration of architecture, sculpture, stained glass, ironwork and ceramic mosaics which create an eclectic style known as Modernisme Catalan.



Gaudí adorned many of his buildings with ceramic mosaics and tiling adding the element of colour. He introduced a new technique that was to mix traditional, square cut tesserae with irregularly shaped pieces selected from broken ceramic or waste tiles. This style is called *trencadis* or broken tile mosaics. Gaudí's style is decorative and incorporates natural motifs, organic arrangements and frequently avoids straight lines and angles.

During these visits the Fellow aimed to:

- » Undertake a tour of the site to build upon existing knowledge and better understand the history, influences and mosaic techniques.
- » Study the similarities and differences between Parc Güell, Barcelona, and Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Florence.
- » Study the park and buildings as world-class examples of large-scale commissioned projects built by an artist with the assistance of various expert craft and trades people. This park is significant and provides a wonderful opportunity for learning as there is no example of a similar approach being used in Australia.

**Action/Outcomes:** document the visit with text and photography.

**Action/Outcomes:** document information about techniques and project management approaches.

## 5. The International Experience

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“Watching young students of the Scuola Mosaicisti at work, I understood what a workshop really is: an atelier where hands literally think, see and interpret, where scrap materials are ennobled, where natural stones converse with metals and Venetian smalti, where anything is possible, where a work of art can be hermeneutically refounded with one’s own ...hands.” (Concetto Puzatti)

Mosaic is a term that identifies an art and technique that has responded to cultural, political and technological issues throughout the ages while reflecting the contemporary desires of (it’s) society. Lifestyles and religious beliefs have often underpinned the imagery and narrative within mosaic art works. The wealthy upper classes and the clergy commissioned mosaic works to convey their power, status and inform the viewer of their obligations.

The earliest examples of mosaics were found in the Greek Hellenistic and Roman period (V century BC – V century AD) when river pebbles were used to pave courtyards and streets with simple geometric patterns. These refined images portrayed naturalistic and mythological subjects and emphasised the profiles of figures.

Italy is the birthplace of mosaic which dates back to Roman times where pebbles were initially used on floors and then substituted with readily available marble, cutting them into four-sided tessare. These floors were used in villas, imperial palaces and baths, and were called opus tessellatum. Marble mosaics on floors and wall decorations ultimately became integrated into the architecture. The common themes used were historical, mythological and naturalistic, such as still-lives, hunting scenes, animals, and geometric patterns. The available colours used were limited to the natural colours of white, black, red and yellow.

The Byzantine and Medieval era (V – XV centuries) saw coloured smalti decorate walls, ceilings and domes of churches and basilicas. The renaissance period saw artists and craftsmen further develop materials and techniques with Rome, Florence and Venice becoming the cities of influence. The Vatican City Workshop invented filati, using them in micro mosaics. The XIX century saw this form reach its pinnacle in jewellery and small boxes purchased as souvenirs by tourists on the Grand Tour. This history then fed into the modernism period when artists experimented with shape, texture and technique to produce new pieces that reflected the modern experience and lifestyle.

### **Destination 1: Micro Mosaic Filati for Jewellery Course, Mosaic Art School, Ravenna, Italy (10 – 15 April, 2017).**

**School Director: Luciana Notturmi**

**Teacher: Annalisa Marcucci**

The Fellow arrived in Ravenna to commence a weeklong intensive course and was immediately confronted with works of mosaics in the streets and on buildings. Ravenna is a UNESCO world heritage city as it is a Byzantine city that houses some of the world’s major mosaic works in churches, baptisteries and basilicas. Since 2009 it hosts the International Contemporary Mosaic Festival that is a biennale exhibition of contemporary mosaics from around the world. The event involves the whole city and cultural institutions in a program devoted to contemporary mosaic art, offering visitors exhibitions, meetings, conferences, workshops and guided tours in the most evocative places within the inner city.

**Objectives:** Complete the course and use newly acquired skills to create two pieces of micro mosaic jewellery; in this case, a circular topped ring and circular pendant, using the traditional materials and techniques.

**Background:** The school is comprised of a large workshop, indoor and outdoor studio area, and an office which houses many examples of past student's work. The teachers there also create personal works that are sold at a separate mosaic outlet. Teachers also make mosaics of varying sizes and styles, undertake restoration project work and design three-dimensional sculptures on commission. Some teach in the art course at the University of Ravenna where mosaic is a core subject.

**Outcomes:** The Fellow developed skills in a variety of areas during the training course, all of which are outlined in detail below.

#### **Skill: Smalti and filati**

- » The materials used for making filato canes are generally a specific type of smalti called Mother Tints. Historically, they came only in primary colours - lattimo (white), solfigno (yellow), rubino (red), buccaro blu (blue) and buccaro nero (black). But a few extras have now been added - verde mare (sea green), giallo oro (golden yellow) and giallo rosso (reddish yellow). It is possible to mix these vitreous materials together to create new colours.
- » There are particularities inherent in certain colours. Buccaro nero (black), for example, is rarely used on its own as it is so dark it resembles a hole between the tessare. It also has a low melting point that causes difficulties when mixing with other colours. When a dark colour is needed it is preferable to use either the buccaro blue, rubino or verde mare that are almost black when not mixed with other colours.
- » It is possible to use regular smalti to make filati however it is important to be aware that these materials are not specific for filato and can change colour during the melting process. The Fellow experienced this when she chose an

inappropriate golden yellow smalti that became dull ochre yellow once made into filati. The change in colour meant that they could not be used in the design and a mother tint, solfigno, had to be used.

#### **Skill: Melting and pulling techniques**

**Melting:** The smalti and/or mother tints are cut into small tessare and placed into a small, shallow crucible with a poker. A blowtorch attached to a tank of methane gas is lit and the tessare along with the poker is slowly heated. As the material heats the flame is turned up until the tessare are visibly hot, starting to glow and will stick to the poker. Still in the flame, it is necessary to press the poker into the material, turning, pressing and pulling so that the molten material adheres and forms a ball on the tip. Once the material is balled on the tip of the poker, it is possible to lift the molten ball off the crucible and ensure it is stuck securely by pinching the base with a pair of metal tongs.

**Mixing:** The glass must then be mixed and rotated around the poker to get a uniform material. The ball of glass should be evenly heated and when visibly molten, a second poker is used to rotate the glass around the poker, making sure to push the poker away from the body. Once mixed, it is important to even out the surface as much as possible, smoothing over any holes or services.

**Shapes:** Once the material is well mixed and in a uniform ball, it is necessary to create one of two shapes to then be able to create other shapes. Shapes and their corresponding base shapes are: a) Cylinder, the base for round, square, rectangle, petal, leaf, and heart; and, b) Lollypop, the base for flat, curve, double curve, blade of grass. The base shape is made using metal tongs. The second shape can be made with the tongs or by squishing the material between a marble base and a marble slab.

**Pulling:** Once the desired shape has been obtained the filato rod can be pulled. Heat the tip of the shaped Glasson and the poker until it glows orange. Once it is softened start to pull the glass with the tongs, first from one side and then from

the other. It is necessary to keep the main ball of glass in the flame to be able to pull the filato threads. When the thread is at the correct length it is paced on the work surface and broken with the tongs. Continue to pull until the glass is finished.

**Flame use:** When working with the flame it is important to keep the material in the flame always and constantly moving. If the material moves in and out of the flame it will heat and cool too many times and become stubborn and unworkable. Also, it is important to work quickly as it is quite easy to 'burn' the glass producing an undesirable colour or a material that is unusable. The Fellow experienced this when over-heating a light pink that became blackened and unusable for her project.



4. Heating the smalti in the crucible with a blowtorch and poker, Mosaic Art School, Ravenna. Photo credit - Mark Glazebrook



5: Pulling circular blue filati from the molten mass using tongs and the flame, Orsoni, Venice. Photo credit – Elaine Varacalli



**Skill: Making the Micro Mosaic**

**Tools:** Once the glass has been pulled into rods, a triangular diamond file and a pair of pointy surgical tweezers are required.

**Cutting the tessare:** The rod is scored at the required height with the diamond file and with the tweezers, grip the tip of the rod above the point scored and snap the piece free from the rod. The tessare are placed temporarily on the thumb to manoeuvre it into the bezel and stucco.

**Stucco:** The type of mortar used for making filato mosaic is laid in a thin smooth surface over the bezel. The original materials used by antique mosaicists are still used today, although exact recipes and amounts are not known. The ingredients are lime powder, travertine dust (size 00), raw and cooked linseed oil. It can also be called 'oil stucco' or 'oil mastic'. The ingredients are combined in a pot and are placed over a flame until they are heated and well mixed. The mixture is then poured into a container to dry, this can take up to one year. When dried, break a small piece of the brick, reduce it to a powder and depending on the season, add raw linseed oil in summer and cooked linseed oil in winter. Add six drops of oil to one teaspoon of stucco dust and mix well until the stucco has a smooth and malleable consistency. Stucco can stay soft for 6 – 12 months if sealed securely. Once the micro mosaic is completed, the stucco is quite dry and strong after only three days however, it can take one to six months to cure entirely.



6. Pieces of dried stucco mixture, Mosaic Art School, Ravenna



7. Adding raw linseed oil to the finely ground stucco, drop by drop. Mosaic Art School, Ravenna

It is most helpful to place a photocopy of the design in the bezel and on top of the stucco for reference. This image is cut little by little before a number of tessare are inserted. The filato tessare are made specifically to the colours and shapes that are appropriate for the design created. It is possible and advisable to use different shapes and sizes to enhance the design and create movement.



8. Ring with micro mosaic in progress. Mosaic Art School, Ravenna

**Working method:** The placement of the tessare is very important, as they need to be resting against something - either the wall of the bezel or previously inserted tessare. They are inserted vertically into the stucco, making sure they are standing straight by pushing lightly on the base. The mosaic must be made methodically filling the bezel working form one area to the next, top to bottom, left to right as it is not possible to work starting in the centre. As it is crucial for the tessare be placed up against something, one must work their way in and build around the central design.



9: Tray of selected colour filati and the completed ring. Mosaic Art School, Ravenna

Visit Byzantine building to view the mosaics in situ: The Fellow had the pleasure of visiting many of the city's UNESCO listed buildings and a guided tour was included in the course. The tour visited many of the mosaics studied and used as examples in art history classes. The visit included the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the Basilica of San Vitale, Baptistery of the Neonians and the Baptistery of the Arians. The Domus Dei Tappeti di Pietra (House of Stone Carpets) opened in 2002, exhibits the Roman marble floors of 14 rooms of a private residence from the V – VI centuries.

## Destination 2: Il Giardino dei Tarocchi (The Tarot Garden), Pescia Fiorentina, Tuscany, Italy (19 April, 2017)

Niki de Saint Phalle (1930 - 2002) was the artist and architect of The Tarot Garden. Construction commenced in 1979 and continues to this day, and has been open to the public since 1988.

"In 1955 I went to Barcelona. There I saw the beautiful Park Guell of Guadi (sic). I met both my master and my destiny ... I knew that I was meant one day to build my own Garden of Joy. A little place between man and nature."<sup>7</sup> (Niki de Saint Phalle)

The Giardino is located on a small, rocky hill that was a former olive grove and the original trees remain amongst the sculptures. The land belonged to a wealthy friend and patron of the artist who allowed her to build her vision there. From the top of the hill you can see the Tyrrhenian Sea, cypress trees and the non-functional nuclear plant. It is windy and the sky is constantly changing as clouds roll in from the sea. To reach the garden you must walk up a hill on a dirt road, covered with trees until the sculptural forms begin to appear. This slow reveal was planned in the garden's layout and is an important part of the journey. De Saint Phalle wanted visitors to wonder around the garden freely, at their own pace, discover the works as they went and revel in their emotion and mystery.





10. *The Magician, Wheel of Fortune and High Priestess. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle*



11. *The courtyard of The Emperor with olive trees. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle*



Mosaics of ceramics, glass and mirrors cover the sculptural forms. The ceramics are all custom made for the form and some contain imagery and written text to heighten the visual experience. Paint was used where there is no mosaic.

De Saint Phalle, a successful artist working globally on commissions and exhibitions, self-funded the Giardino project with income derived from this work. She even created a perfume, silkscreens and polychrome sculptured vases especially for the project. The Foundation of the Tarot Garden was constituted in Rome on August 4, 1997 and on July 8, 2002 the Region of Tuscany grants official juridical recognition to the Foundation.

The Niki Charitable Art Foundation was created by Niki de Saint Phalle and became officially active upon her death in 2002. The Foundation maintains the artwork and archives and holds the intellectual property rights for them. The Giardino is funded by the Foundation, admission fees and through the garden's boutique that sells merchandise.

**Objectives:** To visit The Tarot Garden and view the entire project on site, observe how the various sculptures interact in the landscape and identify how the ceramic mosaic tiles are made. The knowledge acquired will assist the Fellow in her work as a community arts worker, thus inspiring new projects and ways of working. Given that there is nothing comparable in Australia, this site was a place where the imagination could meander freely, a space where contemplation is encouraged and dreaming is stimulated. The garden takes the tiny world of filati micro mosaic and transforms it into a large-scale, interactive garden that activates the emotions of its visitors.

**Outcomes:** The Fellow acquired considerable knowledge during this visit, some of which could be employed in significant community arts projects in Australia, all of which are outlined in detail below.

### **Knowledge: process and project management**

- » 1978 – De Saint Phalle designs the layout for the Giardino and makes initial models.
- » 1979 - Land is cleared, foundations dug at the site, and water and electricity are connected. The artist spent the next ten years on site renting a cottage nearby, hiring assistants from the surrounding farms to help her with the enormous undertaking.
- » 1980s - De Saint Phalle began work on the first architectural sculptures. Construction begins with The High Priestess (Artist: Jean Tinguely), with De Saint Phalle's partner and his Swiss team welding the iron understructures for this first group of sculptures, which also includes The Empress (The Sphinx). Tinguely is a pivotal person in the Giardino's formation, working on the welding as he began the physical construction of the first three major sculptures and emotionally supported the artist throughout the project until his death in 1991. His kinetic sculptures are prominently featured, for example the main fountain in front of The High Priestess, on The Tower of Babel and Inside of Injustice.
- » Each sculpture began its life as a steel armature welded into shape, another thinner layer of iron is applied to all the sculptures, followed by a double layer of casting mesh stretched over it to receive the cement. The interiors are lagged with a coat of insulating material and a layer of mesh. Later on, before applying the last layer of white cement, a coat of tar is applied to protect sculptures from outside elements. Cement was sprayed over each form via a cement pump and then finished by hand to smooth the texture. Given the scale, scaffolding and fixed and transportable cranes were used. This process took up to two years to complete.
- » In 1983 the artist moved into the huge sculpture The Empress, designed in the form of a sphinx, which served as her studio and home for the next seven years. By 1988 she had moved into a New York loft-style studio built underground at the Tarot Garden.

- » The mosaics were created by a crew of artists keen to experiment and research new ways of working to realize De Saint Phalle's vision. When ceramics were used, they were moulded, in most cases right on the sculptures themselves, numbered, taken to the ovens, cooked and glazed and then finally put back in place with mortar. This process results in a 10% decrease in size so the empty spaces need to be filled by hand with pieces of glass. This is a slow and tedious process whereby the ceramics need to be shaped, formed and painted before going into the kilns.
- » 1990s - De Saint Phalle works on legalizing the status of her garden. She begins spending less and less time each year on site but progress continues, with maintenance of the garden and its sculptures becoming increasingly important. Restoration of the sculptures begins, using new gluing techniques and employing acetic silicones for the mirrors and glass. Smaller sculptures are completed and the mosaic work continues. Jean Tinguely passes away and for health reasons, de Saint Phalle moves to La Jolla, California, where she lives for the next eight years. The Garden's 'anti-boutique', furnishings are put into place and architect Mario Botta builds a gateway at the entrance to the Tarot Garden. The Giardino opens to the public.
- » 2000s - On the 21st of May 2002, while still making plans for the garden, De Saint Phalle dies at the age of 71. Upon her death, in accordance with her wishes, all new development at the Tarot Garden comes to an end.



12. Detail of custom moulded ceramic and glass inlay for the covering of *The Empress*. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle



13. Custom ceramics, based on *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli, surrounding a circular window. *Il Giardino dei Tarocchi*, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle

**Knowledge: Employees and workers.** The bulk of the workers came from two sources. Firstly, from people currently working with de Saint Phalle and Tinguely in Europe (such artist assistant Pierre Marie Lejeune and Isabelle Dunoyer de Segonzac who directs the workshop). Secondly, from those living in the local villages, whom worked on various aspects of the project, and with many still working there to this day. Overall this approach made the Fellow feel like it was a small family owned business rather than a commercial tourist attraction

**Knowledge: Maintenance and preservation.** The Giardino is closed to the public from November to March except for the first Saturday of each month when entry is free. In de Saint Phalle's words - "Not many people understand that Il Giardino is a fragile work of art with its mirrors, glass and ceramics, and it needs delicate continuous care. This is the reason why Il Giardino cannot remain open all year as without adequate nurturing would fall into ruin in a few years. And this must be carried out by the team who, having built the garden together with me, has acquired the experience and the ability to do it with knowledge and love."<sup>8</sup> The Fellow documented areas of the garden where work was ongoing, bringing the importance of constant upkeep to the fore. Such work exemplified a commitment to the integrity and sustainability of the artist's initial vision.

**Knowledge: Observation of people interacting with the park.** The Fellow spent time watching various people and groups interacting with the space. Overall there was a feeling of joy, curiosity, a sense of wonder and many smiles on faces. People engaged with large and small areas, walking into the interiors of the sculptures (where possible), walking up steps, sitting and reflecting. Some took the time to stop and read words written into the ceramics. This allowed the mosaic covering to become a story on top of a story, fine details that draw the viewer further into the artist's intentions. One particular story on the tiles of the Hanged Man sculpture told of the grief experienced after the death of de Saint Phalle's partner, Jean Tinguely. The Fellow observed the facial expressions of visitors that read these tiles, contemplating de Saint Phalle's pain and loss, adding to the gravitas of the experience.

The different texture and quality of the mosaics provided a continuously changing surface. The mirrors, for example, had the quality of reflecting the light of the day, the trees and nature adding a shimmering, magical quality and movement. There are also fountains that activate the sense of sound as the water moves on its course. Some fountains spun and others cascaded.



The sense of touch is also activated amongst the texture and surface of many ceramics in the garden, de Saint Phalle encouraged this interaction. A very popular location was the The Emperor sculpture, consisting of twenty-two columns, each one diverse and filled with detail. The majority of the columns were three dimensional structures amongst cones, domes, pyramids, horns, skulls, and others with insect and spider forms. The varying textures and scale of these tree trunk like forms lured many visitors to touch them. It was also a popular place for photographs as the courtyard is circular and the viewer is surrounded by colour, shape and form.



14. Columns of The Emperor were made to be touched. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle



15. Visitors interacting with The Emperor's courtyard. Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Grosseto, by Niki de Saint Phalle

### Destination 3: Parc Güell in Barcelona, Spain (1 May, 2017)

"The straight line belongs to Man. The curved line belongs to God." (Antoni Gaudí)

In the 1890's the Art Nouveau movement was concerned with an ornamental, non-historical style of architecture which broke with tradition and revolted against the rising Industrial Revolution. It looked to nature for linear patterns, flowing curves and twisting plant like forms. 'Its' pervasive influence on the applied arts may be seen in wrought -iron work, furniture, jewellery, glass, typography and



even women's fashions; it had a profound effect on the public taste'.<sup>9</sup> Artists returned to traditional crafts that reflected the quality of the materials and showed the working of the human hand.

While Anton Gaudí (1852 – 1926) was no doubt influenced by Art Nouveau, the style he created would become known as Modernisme Catalan. All of the Architecture within Parc Güel was designed by Gaudí with construction of this important heritage site commencing in 1910 and completing in 1914. At that time, Barcelona was a thriving, rapidly expanding metropolis with a large bourgeois centre being planned. Gaudí desired a new artistic form of urban representation that was mixed with his religious conviction and a deep-rooted Catalanist patriotism.

Eusebi Güell, a wealthy textile industrialist and patron contracted Gaudí to create an estate for wealthy families in a large steep, mountain property overlooking the city and the Balearic Sea. It would have sixty plots for residential buildings based on the British residential estates. Whilst work started and made much progress, plots did not sell as building conditions were highly restrictive, and the project became unviable. Work was halted in 1914 with only two of the sixty houses envisaged having been built. Upon Güell's death, the family offered the site to the Barcelona City Council who acquired it in 1922 and opened the park to the public in 1926.

The whole site is a major Spanish tourist attraction and in 1984 UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site. Recognition by UNESCO was attained due to Antoni Gaudí's exceptional creative contribution to the development of architecture and construction technology at the end of the 19th and 20th century.

**Objectives:** Visit the park and view the entire project. As with Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, the Fellow observed how the various areas interact in the landscape and how the ceramic mosaic tiles are made, in particular, the trencradis technique. The park provides a place where the public can walk around and sit, and allow the

imagination to meander freely. The large property allows for much walking, often up steep hills to benefit health and well-being. Parc Güell was the inspiration for Niki de Saint Phalle's Giardino in Tuscany. Specifically, The Hypostyle Room which has eighty-six striated columns inspired in the Doric order and was designed to be the market for the estate. Some columns are not vertical but lean on precarious angles and were designed this way to mimic a forest.

**Outcomes:** Given that there is nothing comparable in Australia, the knowledge acquired will assist the Fellow in her work has a community arts worker, inspire new projects and ways of working.



16. Monumental flight of Steps leading up to the Hypostyle Room. Parc Güell, Barcelona, by Antoni Gaudí.



### Knowledge: Process and project management

- » Gaudí laid out the plans for the estate, on dividing the site into levels, such as aqueducts, footpaths and steps, demarcating plots and setting up water collection systems.
- » It consists of The Entrance and Porter's Houses, Monumental Flight of Steps with a water fountain, the Hypostyle Room, Nature Square, Laundry Room Porticos, Austrian Gardens, Viaduct, roadways, paths, and a spiral ramp.
- » By 1903 two entrance pavilions had been constructed, as well as the main flight of steps, the shelter for horse-drawn carriages, the outer enclosure, the viaducts and part of the great esplanade, together with the water evacuation system.
- » By 1907 events were already being held in the great square, from which we know that the Hypostyle Room was entirely covered by then, while the tiled bench running around it was completed in 1914.
- » Gaudí moved into a house on the park during 1906 to live with his father and niece. In 1907, Eusebi Güell converted the old mansion (Casa Larrard), that was already there when he bought the site for development, into his usual residence.

**Knowledge: Trencadis.** Trencadis is a type of mosaic created from broken glazed tile shards. Other architects of the Modernisme Catalan used it, however it was Gaudí's most famous. He covered his three-dimensional architecture, such as ceilings, walls and other structural features with glazed ceramics of different shapes and bright colours. He often used found objects, discarded ceramics but also sourced from tile factories for unwanted stock. Occasionally the ceramics would include plates, pottery, cup and saucers.

17. From Nature Square looking over the undulating bench towards the city and sea. Parc Güell, Barcelona, by Antoni Gaudí.





18. Detail of the trencadis style mosaic bench decorated by Josep Maria Jujol. Parc Güell, Barcelona, by Antoni Gaudí.



19. Ceiling medallions in the Hypostyle Room that include collected ceramic fragments. Parc Güell, Barcelona, by Antoni Gaudí.

**Knowledge: Workers and skilled artisans.** Josep Maria Jujol was one of Gaudí's assistants. He was an architect who also designed furniture and painted. He was Gaudí's trusted collaborator on other projects such as Casa Batlló and Casa Milà. Between 1911-1913 Jujol worked at Parc Güell covering some structures with trencadis style mosaic. He decorated the undulating benches that curl around the edges of Nature Square and the ceilings of numerous small domes with ceramic fragments in the Hypostyle Hall. There is speculation that he created the medallions of the four suns that represent the four seasons. He used very different materials in the medallions such as wineglass feet, bottle caps and perfume bottles.

**Knowledge: Maintenance and preservation.** Nature Square (or the Greek Theatre) is currently undergoing restoration works, as commission by the Government Committee of the Barcelona City Council, in order to improve the rainwater drainage system and the waterproofing of the ceiling of the Hypostyle Hall. Since October 2013 the park has been regulating the amount of visitors from 9 million to 2.3 million annually in order to improve the park's sustainability and overcrowding.

#### **Knowledge: Observation of people interacting with the Parc Güell.**

The Fellow spent time watching various people interact with the space. The majority were overwhelmed with joy and excitement as their visual senses were stimulated by colour, line, texture, form and shape. The organic nature of the flowing lines allows the eye to move around easily and the design entices the viewer to ascend through the park. Some notable observations included:

- » The Monumental Flight of steps is full of details such as gargoyle like animals, grottoes, a fountain in the form of a snake and the very popular dragon or salamander. Many people stop to take photos at the salamander; it being the emblem of Catalonia.
- » Heading up towards the Hypostyle Room people tend to move around the

columns and mostly look up at the ceiling that is covered in trencadis, with the medallions being particularly popular.

- » The Nature Square features winding seating that edges the space. Here the majority of people congregate, taking many photos on the seats to take in the view. This space is very much like a piazza where people walk, chat and sit with a sense of community. Gaudí had intended there to be public concerts and entertainment on the site. This occasionally takes place.
- » As at Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, people touch the mosaics and admire the details though Parc Güell. However, Parc Güell is less tactile and a lot of its mosaics are out of reach.
- » The amount of visitors was manageable, something that wouldn't have been the case before visitor restrictions were put in place in recent years. It is easy to see how much the movement of people has impacted the fragile nature of the mosaics and the walkways.
- » It was noted that some mosaic pieces were also used at Casa Batlló which was built while the park was under construction; a surprising detail of continuity between the architects' works.

Visiting large scale, sculptural environments such as the destinations mentioned highlights many considerations that would need to be addressed when undertaking similar projects in Australia. Acquisition of land to host projects of this scale may present concerns surrounding site specifics, traditional ownership, environmental impact, materials, community support, use of local knowledge and labour. The Fellow has explored many of these issues throughout her recommendations.

#### **Destination 4: Master in Mosaic workshop: Roman Filati Class (Micro mosaic). Orsoni, Cannaregio, Venice, Italy (15 – 20 May 2017).**

**Honorary President and Artistic consultant: Lucio Orsoni**

**Teacher: Antonella Gallenda**

The Fellow arrived in Venice to commence a week long intensive course at the Orsoni foundry. The foundry has been in its current location since 1903. The company was founded in 1888 and the four generations of Orsoni have specialized in making coloured and gold leaf smalti for interior and exterior mosaics. Not only does it supply mosaicists from all over the world, it is the only supplier of gold leaf smalti for restoration work at the Basilica di San Marco, Venice. The course was titled 'Roman filati mosaic' after the techniques used at the Vatican Mosaic Studio that opened in 1727. It was there, towards the end of the eighteenth century, filati and the micro mosaic were invented. This technique then spread to Florence and Venice and were used to make souvenirs for tourists on the Grand Tour.

Venice is a city made up of islands, canals and bridges. It was founded by mainland inhabitants seeking refuge from the Barbarians after the fall of the Roman Empire around 400A.D. By the late medieval period it was a great seaport with trading links to the Mediterranean, Middle East and Asia. The Venetian Republic reigned from 1697 to 1796 when Napoleon invaded the city. It had much economic wealth and political power that produced lavishly decorated Byzantine and Renaissance buildings. The interior of the Basilica di San Marco, the private church of Il Doge, was covered in Byzantine gold leaf mosaic, giving it a shimmering light reflecting surface.

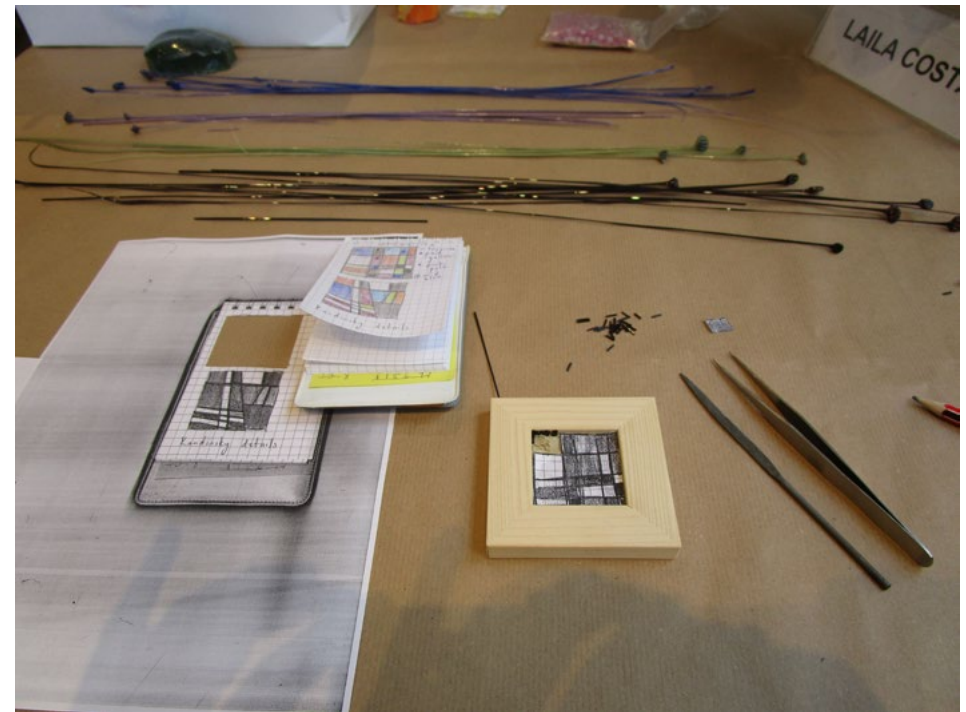
During the Republic period, a flourishing of glass foundries and producers in the city gave rise to the fear of fire and the destruction of the city's mostly wooden buildings. Glassmakers were ordered to move their foundries to the nearby island of Murano in 1291. Great leaps were made in these foundries as they experimented with new materials and techniques. Murano glassware is world famous for stemmed glasses, chandeliers, millefiori and jewellery beads.

**Objectives:** Complete the training course and use gained skills to create one 4 x 4cm mosaic using the Venetian smalti. The contemporary style piece will be created using traditional materials and techniques. Compare these with the skills and knowledge gained in Ravenna. Study the onsite workings of an operating foundry, its colour library and the production of gold leaf smalti.

**Background:** The Orsoni foundry is a large space made up of many various working areas that include the studio workshop where classes are held, the foundry, the cutting room, the studio workspace for the manager, administrative offices, showroom for the public, warehouse and colour library. There is also a beautiful garden courtyard and the Domus upstairs where students can stay. The teacher, Antonella Gallenda, has been with Orsoni since she was seventeen and was the assistant to Lucio Orsoni who is a renowned mosaic artist. She makes filati jewellery and micro mosaic on commission and stocks a small amount in Venetian gift shops. Gallenda is an expert in pulling the filati and is the only employee who makes them to fill orders around the world. It astounded the Fellow to think she could order filati from Australia and know that Gallenda would hand make each filato to the requested colours and shapes. These hand pulled materials that have been produced in the same manner for hundreds of years, now have to compete with inferior versions made by machines.

**Outcomes:** The Fellow developed skills in an array of areas during the training course, all of which are outlined in detail below.

**Skill: Micro mosaic.** The Fellow made a micro mosaic set in a wooden frame with a sunken bezel. A larger bezel allowed for easier handling, unlike the jewellery bezels. The Fellow selected a detail of a Kandinsky painting she had seen a few days earlier at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo (GAMeC). This consisted of a multi-coloured geometric composition. The larger surface area meant a lot more filati had to be made.



20. Preparing to begin the micro mosaic with selected design, pulled filati and photocopied template. Orsoni, Venice.





The filati making process and working method was very similar to the techniques the Fellow learnt in Ravenna. As a result, the Fellow felt more confident in handling the flame and pulled longer filati. A significant difference being the stucco used was not the traditional style. Instead, a modern synthetic putty was used. This surprised the Fellow given the insistence of using traditional stucco during the previous course. The Orsoni course employed the synthetic stucco to save time and allow students to concentrate on making the filati and micro mosaic. The Fellow did notice the difference in consistency and malleability of the synthetic material. The fact that it is industrially produced ensures its availability and speeds up the drying process. The micro mosaic making method, tools and tessare cutting process were also very similar.

**Skill: Colour Library.** The library began in 1888 when the first smalti were produced. It is a physical record of every colour produced and it is still used to cross check the quality of the current smalti being made. There are over 3000 colours with their tints, tones and shades meticulously ordered and numbered. There is a section dedicated to flesh colours that are difficult to make due to their chemical compositions. Given her love of colour and the architecture of the building, the Fellow found this space fascinating.

21. Work in progress with modern putty used instead of traditional stucco. Orsoni, Venice.



22. *The Colour Library is a working archive. Orsoni, Venice.*

**Skill: Working foundry.** There was constant movement happening in the foundry as the company makes the smalti, cuts them for orders, receives and delivers goods, project manages commissions and quality controls their products. The Fellow learnt more than she expected by watching, asking questions and listening to the workers interact. As she can speak Italian, and can understand the Venetian dialect, she was privy to much conversation between colleagues that was of a professional nature. A tour of the facility was available that highlighted the practices of its many different areas. Photography was forbidden in the foundry as the company had invented some of the equipment in use.

The foundry furnaces are kept alight constantly at 980C when not in active use and are only turned off at Christmas and during holiday breaks in August. The heat was the first thing the Fellow noticed as she observed the men working the furnaces. The amount of staff required to work varies depending on the task. When there are large orders they work in day and night shifts. The pokers that are used to work the glass are made of steel and very heavy as noted by staff - "that the men work in the furnace and women work the in cutting room."<sup>10</sup> Employees working the overnight shift heat the glass to 1300C. The high temperature allows fusion of the silica, soda, opacifying substances (anti-monium) and oxide. This becomes glass that is ready to work with the following day. When the glass is still glowing, it is removed using special tools and squeezed into slabs through a roller machine. The slabs are then put in an Annealing furnace and are slowly cooled from 500C to room temperature. This hardening process is necessary to prevent stress due to differing cooling times and ensuring the colour does not change. The annealed smalti are easier to cut into tessare.

After the glass slabs are cooled they go to the cutting room where the women use a chopper machine. They cut the smalti first in slices and then into tessare. The hand-operated machine was inspired by Angelo Orsoni and designed more than 100 years ago. This machine allows tessare to be cut so that no two are exactly alike and appear as if they have been cut with a hammer and hardie. This differentiates them from industrially produced smalti that are made in moulds and look identical. Cutting the smalti is a full time job and the dull tapping noise from the machines could be heard in the adjoining classroom. The tessare are placed directly into bags of certain weighs that will be shipped out for orders. The Fellow could not believe that so much of the process is done by following traditional, hand-made methods. She felt privileged to view this labour intensive work, an experience many mosaicists will never have.

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In conversation with Liana Melchior, Orsoni employee, while giving a tour of the complex.



The Orsoni foundry was acquired by the Trend Group in 2003. The Trend Group are a Pino Bisazza company known for the production and distribution of industrial mosaics and are based in the nearby city of Vicenza. The Fellow was not informed about the future strategy for the foundry however, there were known plans for the creation of a new contemporary bathroom decorated with tessare.



23. The foundry with large furnace emanates constant heat. Orsoni, Venice.



24. In the Cutting Room the workers use the hand-operated machines to cut the tessare. Orsoni, Venice.

**Skill: Gold leaf tessare.** The production of gold leaf tessare is a very labour intensive process that requires multiple handling and layers of smalti. Gold leaf tessare is available in thirty-two different shades of colour. The Fellow was fortunate enough to observe the various stages of its production during her visit, as outlined below:

- » A glass blower blows very large bottle balloon like shapes from transparent smalti. They are very fragile and look like an oblong bubble. These are broken into a rough shape of about 15 cm square by the women from the cutting room who wear thick gloves and hit the glass with a small hammer.

- » These square shapes are transported into the cutting room where a sheet of gold leaf is gently placed on them. Each square or page is laid out on large wooden trays in single layers that eventually produce a twenty-five-page book.
- » When completed they are moved into the foundry furnaces. A long, cast iron ladle scoops out the selected smalti and places the liquid material on the gold leaf. The three components become welded together and as gold does not oxidise it remains bright and reflective. They are then put through a roller to flatten them and then the annealing process begins.
- » The result is one round flat smalti with a perfect golden square in the centre. It can then be taken into the cutting room where an employee will cut the smalti into tessare. This is done by hand using a metal grill and a glasscutter. The tessare are immediately bagged and ready for use. Any offcuts are recycled.



25. A sheet of gold leaf being placed onto the hand blown glass. Orsoni, Venice.



26. The gold leaf smalti being hand cut into tessare. Orsoni, Venice.

## Destination 5: Various museums, exhibitions, workshops and community art projects

### a) Museum of Art, Ravenna. Mosaic collection, from traditional to contemporary.

The mosaic collection ranged from traditional smalti mosaics to contemporary examples. It also included mosaics using alternative materials, for example, rubber and roughly ground up glass bottles. This was a concise representation of the mosaic community around Ravenna and the museum is still actively collecting pieces to reflect modern interpretations.





27. Omar Hassan, *CAP 952*, 2013, used spray can caps



28. Giorgio Tentolini, *Oltre l'approdo*, 2013, cardboard tessare



**b) Parco della Pace, Ravenna.**

Opening in 1988, at the suggestion of the International Association of Contemporary Mosaicists, this is an open-air museum combining mosaic works by artists of different nationalities including New Zealand, Russia and the United States. The works produced using some of the most original techniques and materials were chosen by a commission presided over by the art historian Giulio Carlo Argan. The underlying theme is peace and friendship among people, a peace that “is strongly desired by all men who work and compete to shape culture in all the countries of the world” Argan.



29. Edda Mally (Austria), *Le Ali della Pace*, 1984, sculptural mosaic



30. Claude Rahir (Belgium), *Fontana*, 1984, sculptural mosaic

**c) Ravenna – I Fiori di Ravenna: Ravenna Città Amica delle Donne.**

Linea Rosa, a voluntary association active since 1991 for the support and defense of women in difficulty or who have suffered violence, has developed the project “Ravenna, the city of women”. Involving the mosaicists of Ravenna, a tile with a white background and a red calyx flower was created with the inscription: “Ravenna, a city of women’s friend”. This tile can be seen on the walls of many houses and is a testament to the sensitivity of Ravenna towards women in difficulty, as well as a symbol of welcoming to all the women who visit the city.





31. Welcoming mosaic tiles on the front of a home supporting women's' safety. Ravenna.



32. Welcoming mosaic tiles on the front of a home supporting women's' safety. Ravenna.

**d) Parma 360 art festival and La Città delle Donne street project, Parma.**

Parma 360 is an annual art festival that sees art installations and sculptures in the streets, exhibitions in galleries, workshops and forums. La Città delle Donne is also an outdoor art project which locates advertising placards and billboards around the city centre. Each board celebrates the life of a Parmesan woman and lists her personal achievements and the benefits these provide to the city.

**e) Ettore Guatelli Museum, Ozzano Taro, Parma.**

Ettore Guatelli was an artist, writer, school teacher and collector. The museum houses 60,000 objects in this collection of everyday utilitarian objects and tools.

The objects reflect the human ingenuity of creativity, particularly those of the lower classes who lived and worked the land. The objects are displayed in patterns throughout Guatelli's farmhouse, shed and garage, forming an installation of shape, colour and texture. The museum also offers an educational workshop that actively engages with the rural community and young children in particular. Visiting children are encouraged to play and create small sculptures and toys. Some of the artwork produced through these workshops are sold in the museum gift shop. The museum also hosts a year-long program that includes musical events, and a display of texts and poetry written in response to the collection.





33. Objects, such as scissors, nails and handsaws, arranged on the shed walls at Ettore Guatelli Museum, Ozzano Taro.

**d) Sagrada Familia, Casa Mila (La Pedrera) (1906-12) and Casa Batlló (1904-6), Barcelona.**

Since 1926 they have supplied smalti for La Sagrada Familia (Barcelona) after the architect of the Casa saw the Orsoni glass in Paris during the Great Exhibition in 1889. The Fellow was fortunate to see the smalti used on the spires of the Sagrada Familia when in Barcelona. The shapes still being constructed include grapes, oranges, apples and chestnuts.



34. Grape mosaic made with Orsoni tessare. Sagrada Família, Barcelona.





35. A detail of an exterior mosaic wall with custom made ceramics and glass. Casa Batlló, Barcelona.

#### e) Museum of Jewellery, Vicenza.

The museum is directed by Alba Cappilleri with exhibition design by Patricia Urquiola and is located in the Basilica Palladiana. This museum includes a historical collection from the Roman period until current day and is divided into six sections which look at particular aspects of jewellery – symbol, magic, function, beauty, art, fashion, design, icons and future.

Of particular interest to the Fellow, the collection provides outstanding examples of micro mosaic rigid bracelets in gold and filigree gold with the filati tessare

measuring half a millimetre. Made in Rome circa 1800 -1850 by Luigi Gallandt. No photos where allowed.

#### f) Il Filo project, Spilimbergo.

'The Thread' is a mosaic project initiated and managed by mosaicist Carolina Zanelli. During her Fellowship, the Fellow was fortunate enough to have met with Zanelli and discuss the project. Essentially, the project involves a continuous line of mosaic that runs across houses through the town. The community based collaborative project sees town residents and volunteers add to the continuous line in July each year. Six mosaicists assist: Lisa Battistutta, Gabriella Buzzi, Laura Carraro, Dagmar Friedrich, Sarah Persello, Valentina Rossi, and the village municipality Tramonti di Sotto, Pordenone sponsor the event.

'This mosaic line connects first of all the habitants of the village, and we wish we were making the village nicer, with our colors. Of course they are free to say if they want the filo on the wall of their house, but the final line will run all over the village, guiding the visitor to explore the village and its beautiful hidden corners...It is a symbolic colorful shared mosaic line!' Carolina Zanelli

#### g) S.U.V Bead Workshop, Venice.

This Bead making studio has been in operation since the 1920s and the business has remained in the same family for three generations. It involves traditional bead making with smalti cane. The Fellow was given a guided tour and was pleased to see beads being made in the workshop, the bead threader and the showroom.





36. Making decorative glass beads by hand with a flame. S.U.V, Venice



37. Beads that have cooled down and still remain on the rod. S.U.V, Venice

#### **h) La Cava Dipinta e La Cava Abitata, by Maestro Toni Zarpellon, Rubbio.**

In the mid 1970's artist Toni Zarpellon began creating caves when a friend offered him the Rubbio site. The site is high up in the Dolomite Mountains, not accessible by public transport and is in a forested area. The disused rock quarry inspired the Maestro to paint directly on the rock formations giving them faces and personalities. Over the years he expanded the work painting new editions and solidifying his concepts. The Cava talks of society, its negative and isolating aspects of the capitalist system and the damage done to nature. Maintenance is done by the artist himself, repainting faded paint and constantly cutting back the weeds. The artwork is popular and often visited by schools, local groups and tourists. At the top of the hill, a concrete structure from the second world war holds a logbook documenting the names and countries of many visitors.



38. La Cava Dipinta with Maestro Zarpellon, centre, and Fellow.

## 6. Considerations and Recommendations

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The Fellow has considered the new skills and knowledge gained through this Fellowship and has identified the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1 – Government Support**

- » Support artists and projects via more funding across the federal, state and local levels. Organisations such as the Australia Council for the Arts and Creative Victoria should increase funding to specifically targeted areas.
- » Engage with artists who work in traditional art forms and lost trades to enable a greater understanding of their contemporary needs and leverage growing public interest.
- » Engage with community arts workers so that the benefits gained by supporting community via art are clarified and given agency.
- » Support artists and community organisations by commissioning more public projects and further build a vibrant expressive Australian voice.
- » Foster a culture where the arts are seen as a vital and integral part of life that benefits all citizens.
- » Foster an environment where philanthropists are encouraged to financially support the funding of art works and projects that could not otherwise be created thereby adding to the cultural life of the country.

### **Recommendation 2 - Private sector support**

- » Provide an alternative to government funding and offer security in times of unsteady funding patterns.

- » Look to the European model of long standing association between artists, communities, galleries and patrons.
- » Foster an environment where supporting a cultural or arts project is seen as beneficial to both parties and the socially responsible thing to do.
- » Aligning themselves with traditional skills and larger, more ambitious projects, presents organisations as agents of change. Such support can be viewed as leaving a legacy.

### **Recommendation 3 - Education and Training**

- » Higher Education and VET art and design sectors to include micro mosaic in history courses to widen knowledge and appreciation, and to offer mosaic as a course/unit.
- » Higher Education and VET art and design sectors to include community art in history courses to widen knowledge and appreciation, and offer community art as a course/unit.
- » Imbed small business studies in all art and design courses. Some VET courses are already doing this.
- » Provide an opportunity where individuals with the ability to build and form relationships across disciplines are able to realise artistic outcomes that envision new combinations of materials and techniques.
- » Seek opportunities to engage students and staff in community art projects to gain hands on working knowledge.
- » Promote research and experimentation with traditional artisanal techniques and skills via artist talks, demonstrations and workshops.

- » Provide intern opportunities within an artist's studio or within community arts organisations.
- » Offer short courses to current students and the wider public.

### **Recommendation 4 - Industry and Professional Associations**

- » Leverage on the niche, bespoke area of jewellery and promote its awareness.
- » Widen audience by educating about contemporary jewellery and expose it to the many varied forms it may take (e.g., micro mosaic).
- » Educate public about the labour intensive process required to produce hand-made, individual pieces of art and the threat that inferior imports pose.
- » Foster interest and education in cross-disciplinary art forms to imagine potentially new collaborations.
- » Provide a forum whereby micro and macro projects and their possible outcomes can be explored through open dialogue.
- » Facilitate exhibitions, conferences and workshops.
- » Reflect on contemporary work practices and how best practice outcomes may be achieved.
- » Encourage members to be brave, bold and confident with projects that may not 'fit in the box'.
- » Educate the wider public about the general wellbeing and health outcomes achieved by community engagement.

### **Recommendation 5 - Artists and collectives**

- » Participate in exhibitions, forums, workshops, etc., so to keep the arts community vibrant and strong, and feel confidently equipped to actualise their visions.

- » Monitor industry and professional associations so that contemporary and diverse voices are being heard and relevant areas of concern are addressed.
- » Investigate best practice across the world and aim to integrate into own work processes

Some of the destinations visited by the Fellow occupied land that was gifted to artists or provided by benefactors, indeed, this is an incredibly rare occurrence. There are some Australian programs, mostly run by councils that provide free art spaces for limited durations such as the Active Spaces in Darebin program. The program "works with real estate agents, property owners and creative business to transform areas which have an abundance of vacant shops, graffiti tagging and bill posters into economically stimulated and culturally charged destinations."<sup>11</sup> Yarra council is seeking to do the same on Victoria Street, Richmond. These spaces provide opportunities for communities to establish larger scale art projects. If a project resonates with the community, it gains a life and momentum of its own such as Melbourne's 5000 Poppies project. It is then up to the management team to seek more funding to take the project to the next stage, and expand and amend the scope. The team need to network with the local community, council, state and federal governments, and philanthropists to ensure success. The Fellow recommends that similar community relationships be promoted and established by arts bodies and councils Australia wide.

Changes that make it easier to facilitate larger community art projects need to come from federal and state governments and councils. Many arts bodies, community centres and arts educational institutes are aware of the growing area of community art projects and their associated benefits. Universities such the Victorian College of the Art have Community Art and Social Practice courses at graduate levels and actively engage with the wider community and stakeholders to produce outcomes. Some TAFE courses also include similar units, though they are not yet core units. The Fellow recommends more courses involving community arts practices be established throughout all levels of arts education.



As the art landscape slowly changes, many councils are embracing the benefits of community and are offering opportunities. There are now community engagement officers in some councils as well as in some progressive businesses and organisations. While the state and federal governments are slowly evolving, they do need to be constantly lobbied and reminded of why the change needs to happen. Unfortunately, it is often the dollar value put to these outcomes that bureaucracies may focus on. Community art projects have many unquantifiable outcomes that do save money in the long term, though these abstracts do not easily produce hard data. With this in mind, the Fellow recommends further research into the benefits of collaborative art projects to communities be undertaken in order to broaden the knowledge base and provide these benefits to all stakeholders.

The National Association of Arts (NAVA) have been lobbying government on a raft of issues to improve the working environment for artists and organisations. This includes leading campaigns for change targeting key decision makers and responding to government inquiries or calls for comment. They are currently drafting a new Code of Practice and advocating for policy change. The Fellow recommends that artists and other interested parties support this action.

It must be remembered that large scale social change can come about from small local changes, which begins with a conversation, an email to the local member or meeting with council. Margaret Mead is quoted as saying 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.'<sup>12</sup>

## 7. Acknowledgments

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### Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute):

The ISS Institute exists to foster an aspirational, skilled and smart Australia by cultivating the mastery and knowledge of talented Australians through international research Fellowships.

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### Italian Australian Foundation Inc. – Fellowship Sponsor:

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## 8. Abbreviations, Acronyms and Definitions.

### Definitions

**Art Nouveau** – (c.1890 c. 1914) Means “New Art”. An artistic movement free from historic tradition reflecting the rise of industrialisation and looks to nature for inspiration.

**Bezel** - a base for filato mosaics jewellery such as a brooch, pendant, ring, small picture in frame, locket, etc. Bezels are usually made of metals of silver, copper, gold, nickel, brass, etc. The edges of the base have a rim surrounding it so that the mosaic is protected.

**Crucible** – melting pot made of steel and able to withstand large amounts of heat

**Filati** – (thread) rods of smalti that are melted and drawn out extremely thin, then clipped or cut into tiny pieces. Used in micro mosaics.

Filato rods are made from smalti and/or mother tints. They can be made in various shapes and sizes and are usually about 50 – 80 cm long. The glass rods are cut into pieces, which are then placed into the stucco with tweezers.

**Hammer** – a tool consisting of a piece of metal with a flat end that is fixed onto the end of a long, thin, usually wooden handle, used for hitting things

**Hardie** - A tool with a steel or iron cutting edge, rather like a stonemason's chisel. The Hardie is fixed into a log and used together with a mosaic hammer to cut tessare

**Micro mosaic** - In these mosaics, ‘micro’ refers to the size of the pieces making up the picture. These are tiny filaments or filati of coloured glass, end on. There may be as many as 5,000 to a square inch - giving as much detail as a picture on a typical computer screen. Glass micro mosaic technique developed in the 18th century, in the Vatican Mosaic Workshop in Rome, where they still undertake restoration work today.

The most extensive collection of this kind of work is the Gilbert Collection of micro mosaics in London.

**Millefiori** - A kind of ornamental glass in which a number of glass rods of different sizes and colours are fused together and cut into sections which form various patterns, typically embedded in colourless transparent glass to make items such as beads, glasswares and paperweights.

**Modernisme Catalan** – was the historic period around the turn of the 20th century given to an art and literature movement associated with the search for Catalan national identity. Its main form of expression was in architecture, but many other arts were involved painting, sculpture, design and the decorative arts for example, cabinetmaking, carpentry, forged iron, ceramic tiles, ceramics, which were particularly important, especially in their role as support to architecture. Modernisme was also a literary movement that included poetry, fiction and drama.

**Mosaicist** - a person who makes mosaics

**Opus** – Latin term which means ‘work’.

**Opus tessellatum** - Latin 'set with small cubes'. Tesserae laid in a rectilinear, brick pattern. This technique was used for geometric designs, borders and backgrounds.

**Pizza (Pizze plural)**- a thin smalti slab or disc that is made by pressing the fused glass on a flat surface or by drawing it through two cylinders. After annealing, (controlled cooling) the slab is cut with diamond-pointed instruments or a hammer and hardie

**Poker** – a metal rod with a handle, used for prodding and stirring an open fire

**Smalti** – (the plural of smalto) are specialised mosaic tessare made from coloured glass. Originally developed in for byzantine mosaics, the glass is poured into flat slabs that are then broken into individual smalti with rough, irregular surfaces that may be pitted with air bubbles.

**Smalto** – opaque coloured glass paste obtained by fusing at about 1200 – 1400 C a mixture of vitrifying and stabilising substances, flux and metal oxides.

**Stucco** – is a type of mortar used for making filato mosaic. The original materials used by antique mosaicists are still used today. It can also be called 'oil stucco' or 'oil mastic. The ingredients are lime powder, travertine dust (size 00), raw and cooked linseed oil. There are modern alternatives available such as polymer clays that come in different colours or epoxy resins.

**Tencradis** – is a mosaic technique whereby surfaces are covered with small pieces of broken tiles often taken from demolition sites and disused objects. Gaudi also sourced the tile from tile manufacturers who had left overs and seconds.

**Tessare** - The plural of "tessera", a name given to piece used in a mosaic. Originally tesserae were the cubes of stone used in ancient classical mosaics, but now the term is used for pieces of any kind of mosaic material, whether they are ceramic, stone, pebbles, glass or some other substance. In micro mosaic using filati, the tessare of sections cut across the rod usually in heights of 5 – 8mm.

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations based in Paris

**VET** - Vocational Education and Training

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