

Groutline



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U.S. Artists

Interpret “Ardore” By Sue Coombs



Photo: Sue Giannotti

Senza Limiti, by Sue Giannotti, 2013. 16” X 12”. Marble, metal, slate, smalti, and gold.

In the charming city of Chartres, France, 50 miles southwest of Paris, you can find the eleventh-century Chartres Cathedral, rising an impressive 377 feet above the center of town. This landmark is an example of French Gothic architecture, complete with a large interior labyrinth. It doesn't matter where you happen to be in Chartres; the majestic cathedral is always visible.

This medieval city is rich with history, so it seems fitting to have a venue dedicated exclusively to the exhibition of a time-honored art form. Since 2003, La Chapelle Saint Eman has been reserved for showcasing international mosaic art. The current



Photo: Karen Ami

Unspoken, by Karen Ami, 2013. 10” X 10” X 5-1/2”. Smalti, ceramic, stone, copper on carved polystyrene, and wood.

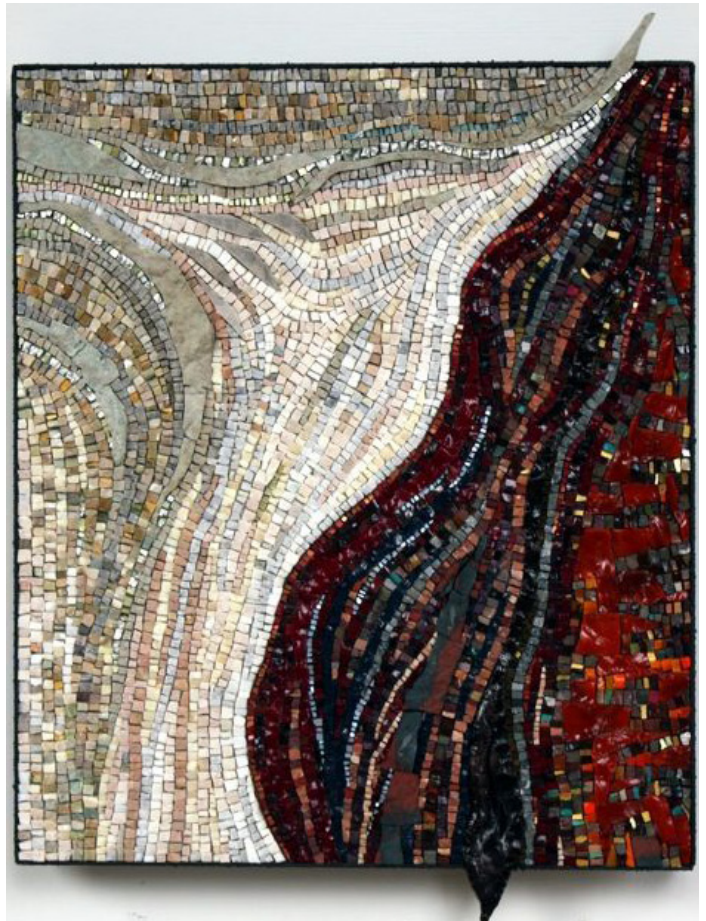


Photo: Matteo Randi

Respiro, by Matteo Randi, 2013. 14” x 12-1/2”. Smalti, marble, stone, and gold.

exhibition, *Ardore*, features the work of three American-based artists: Karen Ami, Matteo Randi, and Sue Giannotti from the Chicago Mosaic School.

“Ardore” means a feeling of intensity—an eagerness for love, life, and connection. Fittingly, this exhibition depicts each artist’s poetic interpretation of the passionate theme through tesserae, line, and color.

The renowned artist Verdiano Marzi acted as a mentor to the three artists, bringing their work to the attention of curators and exhibition organizers in France and Italy in 2012. Karen, Matteo, and Sue were invited to show at the Prix Picassiette Festival in Chartres, where Matteo received an award. The positive response to their work began the planning stages for the current collaborative exhibition.

“*Ardore* exemplifies many years of our dedicated practice, exploration, and discovery of the possibilities within mosaic art,” said Karen Ami. “It is a privilege to learn from masters, students, and each other. We are grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of this art form as it moves forward.”

In preparing work for the exhibition, each artist honored traditional classical mosaic techniques within the context of contemporary expression. La Chapelle Saint Eman seems an appropriate venue to echo this historical reference.

Karen, Matteo, and Sue accomplished an expression of individual mosaic voices comingled with a common tradition and passion. As educators, their dedication to the art form is evidenced by the varied mosaic development courses offered at the Chicago Mosaic School.

About the Artists

Karen Ami founded the Chicago Mosaic School in 2005. She earned her MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago and her BFA at Tufts/Boston Museum School. After setting aside her practice to start the mosaic school, she served as president of the Society of American Mosaic Artists for three years. Karen returned to her mosaic work and now incorporates her study of mosaics with her passion for drawing, ceramics, and sculpture. Her mosaic work expresses a sensuality of form and figure in a visceral style, using themes of love, connection, loss, and rebirth. Karen successfully captures the spontaneity of drawing through the use of tesserae and handmade ceramic elements.

Born in Ravenna, Italy, **Matteo Randi** began his formal training in mosaic art at the age of 11. He continued his training at the Istituto d’Arte Gino Severini, then at the National School for the Conservation of Mosaics, both in Ravenna. Currently Matteo is educational director of the Chicago Mosaic School—a title befitting his extensive expertise in classical mosaic techniques and tools. In his own work, Matteo combines a traditional mosaic language with contemporary exploration, and the effect is masterful. Standing before his work, one is lured to investigate the mosaic surface in which finely articulated tesserae are arranged in musical rhythm. As the viewer lingers upon the surface, he or she always discovers something not seen before. Surprisingly, Matteo still uses the same hammer he received at the age of nine.

Sue Giannotti, based in St. Louis, has been a well-respected faculty member at the Chicago Mosaic School since 2005. A graduate of Washington University, Sue divides her time between creating mosaics and teaching workshops. She offers instruction in mosaic technique, design, and contemporary exploration. Sue’s teaching style is academic and thought provoking; it challenges the student to make mosaics that express intent and authenticity. Her students come away with a deeper understanding of techniques to enhance their mosaic work. Sue’s own mosaic work possesses a quiet intensity that hints at a deeper meaning lurking beneath the surface. Incorporating metalwork and sporting a muted palette, her works create a landscape for longing and meditation. Sue’s work parallels the concept of using less to say much more.

The Chicago Mosaic School is home to the Chicago Gallery of Contemporary Mosaics, featuring artist studios and a mosaic library, and two retail stores: Tiny Pieces: Mosaic Tools and Supplies, and Chicago Rock and Mineral: Natural Materials for Mosaics.

For more information, visit chicagomosaicschool.com.