

WHAT IS TE21?

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What is TE21 ? It is a new art movement created solely to give established professional artists of personally expressed mosaic the possibility of exhibiting together, internationally. We hope that what we have formed is an exciting opportunity for artists working in an otherwise marginalised facet of mosaic.

At present, we, the progenitors, are the first four founder members - myself (from England), Toyoharu Kii (from Japan), Dugald MacInnes (from Scotland) and Lucio Orsoni (from Venice) - four very diverse artists from four different countries but with one singular and exclusive aim. As this aim becomes more established, we wish to entice like-minded artists to join us, thus building up a core of artists worldwide who use mosaic solely as their means of self expression, i.e., where the content or voice of the work is paramount.

We are well aware that self expression is a minority aspect of mosaic, yet we are driven to create this new movement as we become ever more aware that mosaic is still not considered a worthy medium for addition to National Art Collections. For example, there is no contemporary mosaic work in the Tate Gallery in London. The Curator, Sir Nicholas Serota, has responded to any correspondence by continually saying that mosaic belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum, an excellent museum in London but for the applied and decorative arts only.

Is mosaic ever to be accepted as a fine art medium? Yes, of course, aspects of mosaic do, and must, belong with the decorative arts, but one specific aspect of the medium which is ignored or largely unexplored, belongs also to National Art Galleries and Collections. The example from England which I have just given is but one of many instances of a Curator of a leading National Modern Art Collection having a blinkered vision as to the full potential of the mosaic medium. MOSAIC is not recognized as a serious art form, and this is a lamentable situation.

Two crucial elements have not helped this predicament.

One. The very word 'mosaic' conjures up for many people a preconditioned understanding of the medium - that is, one which they recognize as either functional, utilitarian, decorative, or having a religious content. Aware of this preconditioning, we - as a group - have deliberately dropped the word 'mosaic' from the movement's name. TE21 stands for Tessellated Expression for the 21st Century - which fortunately translates well into French and Italian.

Two. In his illustrious book, *Mosaic: History and Techniques* (published in 1971), the late great mosaic historian Peter Fischer - a dear friend of mine - concluded the Introduction to his new publication thus: "The mosaicist should not see his [!] work as an independent microcosm, but should bear its architectural role in mind." Thus Peter saw mosaic primarily as playing an enhancing role for architecture - in effect a supporting role - and this sentiment has been taken, in its entirety, as an Absolute.

It is a very bold and strongly upheld role for mosaic - witness the prominent part

mosaic has played throughout history, for wall, floor, ceiling, and façade decoration. But it is time to disengage mosaic from architecture, because it overrides and excludes the sensitivities of studio artists - those who use the medium of mosaic for personal expression in individual portable works. This overlooked expression must now assert its rightful recognition in the modern mosaic pantheon.

We are indeed grateful to Chartres as a city with the foresight to have initiated an International Collection of contemporary works of personal expression, in the spirit of an enlightened Fine Art collector. This vision for the medium can be doubly witnessed today, both by the present exhibition of the city's founding works here at the Galerie Chapelle St Eman; and by the very fact that we have been invited to give launching papers to this symposium!

I would like to expand a little more on what we mean by 'using the medium of mosaic for self expression'. I know many of you, familiar with the many facets of mosaic, will be all too well aware of what I mean, but for clarity, please allow me to elaborate.

The creation of such a work is primarily concerned with concepts - with conveying deeply felt emotions or closely perceived ideas, and creating a work of art not through painterly or sculptural media, but through the unique materials to be found in the timeless medium of mosaic. The long lineage from which we all work is universally acknowledged to be rich and wondrous - but we must attach equal cultural importance to the expressive present period for mosaic.

So, each artist in this new movement, TE21, must have a profoundly-developed passion for mosaic, individually expressed through an established 'voice', i.e., a recognizable working style, where each can explore their realm of being through abstraction. By coming together and by creating a unified front, we feel we can form a strong and diverse force to fully re-present the medium.

Thus, to sum up, we have but one simple aim - to join together to present international mosaic exhibitions solely pursuing personal expression, and with crystal clarity to divorce mosaic from the ornamental and the functional and to establish a cerebral and visual genus for the medium as a potent one for contemporary expression.

Thank you.