

## **The Exeter Years (2000-2015)**

It was in Exeter in 2008 that I originally met Elaine M. Goodwin at an open studio showcase held at her home in the city, and where I encountered her captivating mosaics. From the very first moment, I was transfixed with her art, and knew instantaneously that I had to start a collection.

I acquired my inaugural piece, *The First Man* in 2009. Since then, I have regularly added to my collection. Now displayed in my Florida home, they continue to delight and inspire me each day, their surfaces ever responding to changing moods and light: never the same. Goodwin's mosaics differ from the more familiar art forms of painting and sculpture; more dynamic in nature, they express a spirit that evolves with the light throughout the day.

Goodwin has spent a lifetime researching mosaic techniques by visiting Greek, Roman and Byzantine sites, along with ancient cities in India and the East. This knowledge is reflected in her work, which continuously evolves, transforming the ancient methods into her unique, 21<sup>st</sup> Century abstract tableaux. She has created ways of cutting tesserae that are hers alone.

During the years 2000-2015, Goodwin was influenced both by the rainy climate and the proximity of the sea.

For the most part, abstract in nature, Goodwin's collection from this period harnesses an energy, reflecting the elements and light that is present in the South West of England. The collection makes use of Venetian tesserae in precious metals (yellow gold, white gold and platinum) and hints of pale blues and greens. Each tessera, expertly cut and positioned with strategic precision to capture, mirror, and reflect the light, lends the works an aura of both harmony and motion. There is an interplay between light and dark as found in *Dancing on the Shadows of Light* (40) and *Beyond Belief* (31). In pieces such as *Light Fountain* (30), and *Awakening ii* (41), the tesserae are positioned in such a way that imbues vitality, serving to energize the senses.

The work from this period is noted for its intricacies and subtlety, for example the faint undertones of pale blues in *Now is Ever* (32), *Above Each Other* (34), and *The Eye of the Beholder* (39), create a sense of an opening up to an expanse, a freeing of and an elevation of the mind to a higher plane.

These same pieces along with *Anticipate i* (25), and *Sospiri ii* (38) capture yet another theme that is observed in Goodwin's work – that of the female form – though of course abstract. Of note are the triangular shapes, and curved lines that run through them, intimating a sense of “she”.

There are also pieces which reflect Goodwin's twin loves of antiquity and Byzantium. *Metastasis* (22), is a stunning centerpiece framed by Carrera marble, and which depicts five nested windows. The piece has a hypnotic effect, drawing in the gaze, and inviting contemplation. The five 'windows', in dark tones of black and silver, are magnificently juxtaposed against the brilliant white of the marble.

The classical form is most strongly observed in *Apatheia* (23), *Not Quite* (24), along with *Mirror Pots* (28), and *Missing Me* (29). Here, marble is used in a more uniformed fashion, and often contrasted with a concentration of coloured Venetian gold tesserae that enchants and fixes the gaze. These works are marked by symmetry, which in antiquity represented balance and harmony. *Whispered Vespers* (37), *Spirit of Byzantium* (35), *Now is Ever* (32), and *To be or Not to Be* (42), acknowledge the Byzantine period, with richer tones, the use of Venetian gold tesserae in some cases, and an aura of sacredness. These pieces exceptionally have a mystical element, acting as a mirror to the soul. As with much of Goodwin's work, there is a synergy between the here and now, and a higher and more spiritual realm.

It is clear that central to the collection is a sense of the ethereal, and an invitation from the artist to the viewer to enter into a dialogue with a form that is beyond the current moment. Pieces such as *Coup de Foudre* (36), *Echoes of Light* (33), and *Anticipate i* (25) call the

viewer to reflect on the light, with the light itself being reflected in the mosaics. Goodwin has said of her own work, “for all who look, at each and every moment, light is held, captured, and let go – continually and continuously. It is, for me a sublime engagement.”

The collection from the Exeter Years is indeed sublime.

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