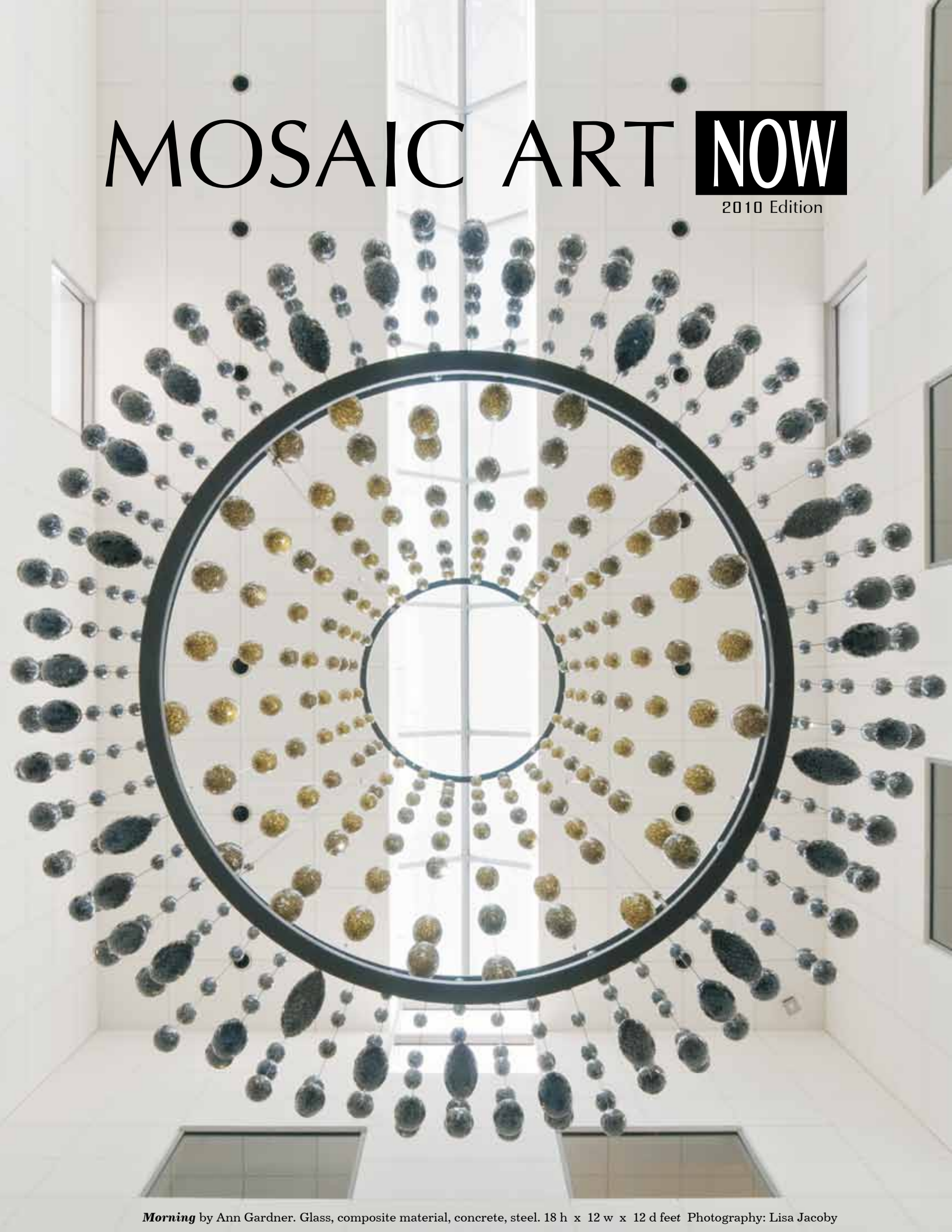


MOSAIC ART NOW

2010 Edition







Creative Capital: Laurel True

Laurel True is a mosaicist with a mission: to create economic opportunity through mosaic art. In a paper presented to the International Conference on the Arts in Society in Venice in 2009, Dr. Randy Sanders of Southern Louisiana University wrote: “True has coordinated many public art projects that emphasize viable economic options for trades people as well as children in impoverished and blighted regions. Her projects place her in the role of a recruiter of artistic inspiration as she shares her talent while nurturing the participants’ creativity.” True has lead community projects in Oakland, CA; New Orleans, LA; and Ghana, West Africa.

Says True, “Not all places and people have financial capital, but everyone has creative capital.”

Last year, True arranged an artist’s residency at Kitengela Glass, a glass foundry and art studio outside of Nairobi, Kenya, founded by artist Nani Croze. The residency took place in part at the local Rudolph Steiner School that Croze had helped to found. Kitengela Glass hosted True and her assistant, Erin Rogers, and supplied recycled glass materials for a mosaic that True facilitated with the children of the Steiner School. Teachers at the school were taught mosaic methods, and tools were left behind so that the institution could continue to pursue mosaics.

Here, True shares with us a scrapbook of the Nairobi project.

Photos by Laurel True and Erin Rogers (www.lemontreemosaic.com)

(Left) Me crossing a gorge on a cable bridge that was the first leg of our “commute” to the Steiner School every day. It was a daily 5-mile round-trip.



Arrival at Kitengela Glass after a long hour's drive over rocky dirt roads. Kitengela rises out of the red dust like an oasis.



Kitengela's philosophy is: "Recycling everything, paying fair wages, protecting our environment." For our mural, we used 98% recycled materials- all donated by Kitengela



Buildings and mosaics by various Kitengela artists ...



No surface goes unadorned at Kitengela. There is art everywhere. Mosaic seats and table by Kitengela mosaic artist Edith Nyambura, Kitengela's resident mosaic artist.



The mosaic pool at Kitengela with its fabulous sculptures. The baboons come to drink at twilight.



Our guesthouse. We called it our "Smurf House." It sits on the outskirts of Kitengela. Wonderful view of the plains, birds, and bush babies. And the site of the occasional leopard fight.



Mosaic floor in Kitengela Gallery by Nani Croze and Edith Nyambura. All recycled materials - glass made from melted-down bottles and discarded mirror and tile - were used in this mosaic.



Sorting through Kitengela Glass recycling bins for materials to use in the Steiner School mural.



Working on the design for the mural using students' drawings of local flora and fauna as my inspiration. I used at least one element from each child's drawing in the mural design.



Setting off from Kitengela on the 2.5 mile commute to the Steiner School. That's the Nairobi National Park on the other side of the gorge.



Every commute was a safari. In addition to zebra, we saw warthogs, impalas, antelopes, baboons, and even a giraffe.



At work at the Steiner School after the mural's design has been approved by their college of teachers. Here I am transferring the mural's design to a prepared board.



Day one: working with the students who ranged in age from 10 to 16. Here I am explaining how I used their drawings for inspiration. We also spent some time talking about tools and safety. The school arranged for the kids to come to work during their art class.



After the introduction and a demonstration of setting techniques, the students go right to it. We filled in the flowers and birds and other design elements first. The bulk of the work was done by the 7th and 8th graders.



Salvaged glass cullet, recycled stained glass and bottles from Kitengela Glass. You can see we painted the substrate white so that all the beauty of the glass would shine through.



Grouting the mural with 8th grade girls and other dedicated students. We grouted with local sand and cement. The pink buffing gloves we brought from the United States were pretty popular!



The mosaic was a focal point of excitement for the students at the school. Many students helped, watched, and asked questions.



The final mural will be hung in the dining hall they're constructing at the Steiner School now. That's Erin Rogers on the right and teachers Mr. Komora and Mr. Lawrence with the kids. We did a specific training for teachers so they could continue making mosaics at the school — something they're really excited about.

A couple of adults even talked with me about ideas to take the mosaic techniques and skills they've learned to several local groups with plenty of "creative capital" and a need for financial development.



There are some wonderful mosaics in Nairobi. This is a lion by artist David Kimani and the Juhudi Children's Club.



These mosaic pillars at the entrance to the Nairobi National Museum are by Beatrice Ndumi and John Munyua.



Recycled-glass mosaic plaza at Nairobi National Museum by Nani Croze and Kitengela Glass artists.

Laurel True has been traveling to Ghana, West Africa, for more than 20 years. Since 2001, she has been facilitating community mosaic projects with adults and youth in the town of Nungua, providing job training and art education to under-served communities. Long-term plans in Nungua include the development of a mosaic training academy and sculptural playground covered in mosaic. To learn more about these projects and how you might help, go to <http://www.truemosaics.com/ghana.html>.

True is currently working on a book that will feature all the projects she has facilitated in Ghana and Kenya since 2001. *Creative Capital: Community Mosaic Projects in Africa* will be available on www.blurb.com.

The Rudolph Steiner School of Mbagathi, Nairobi, Kenya is founded on the principle of creating a learning environment that honors the cultures of its students, the environment in which they live, and a respect for one another. "We wish our children to grow up into strong and creative human beings with initiative for their life in order that each child can reach his/her full potential." The school is heavily reliant upon outside financial support. If you would like to sponsor a child or help in any way, please contact Judith Brown at rssmn@kenyaweb.com. To learn more about the school, go to: <http://www.rudolfsteiner.co.ke/index.html>

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Mission

Mosaic Art Now promotes the international understanding and appreciation of contemporary mosaics through high-quality publications and a lively online presence. We deliver provocative and inspirational content for artists, curators, architects, designers, collectors and educators.

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Photos (above) from left to right: *One Day* by Ann Gardner, Laurel True with students at the Steiner School, *Clay End* by Emma Biggs, *Nightshirt* by Julie Richey, *Solar Flare* by Yulia Hanansen, and *Meredith* by Ellen Blakeley.