

A photograph of a mosaic floor. The background consists of large, light-colored hexagonal tiles. Interspersed among these are smaller, dark blue square tiles. In the center of the image is a prominent star-shaped mosaic. This star is composed of a central dark blue hexagon, surrounded by a ring of eight red squares, which is further surrounded by a ring of eight dark blue squares. The entire design is set against the larger hexagonal tiles.

**THIS
EDITION:**

Mosaics

**Vol. 39
November
2019**

WANDER to WONDER

WANDER to WONDER

by MARTINA NICOLLS



Mosaic at the Nairobi National Museum. Kenya

**The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder.
G.K. Chesterson**

Copyright. Martina Nicolls 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author. All photographs are by Martina Nicolls.

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE.....	4
WHAT IS A MOSAIC?	5
MOSAIC TECHNIQUES.....	7
ANCIENT ROME MOSAICS.....	9
ANCIENT ROME EMBLEMATA	11
ANCIENT ROME ATHLETE.....	14
RIDING THE BULL MOSAIC	17
TUNISIAN MOSAIC.....	18
CHELLAH MEDIEVAL NECROPOLIS.....	21
CLAPHAM COMMON BANDSTAND	27
GEORGIAN MOSAICS	36
MOSAIC GARDEN IN NAIROBI.....	41
THE AUTHOR: MARTINA NICOLLS	42



editor's note

Welcome to the 39th edition of WANDER to WONDER

This edition of Wander to Wonder focuses on some of the mosaics I've seen—the ancient and the contemporary, the rustic and the colourful, such as the red, white and blue cover photo taken in Morocco, and the North direction sign at the Nairobi National Museum in Kenya. The photographs were taken predominantly in Cyprus, France, Georgia, Kenya, Morocco, and the United Kingdom.

Until next edition, with another theme,

Martina

MARTINA NICOLLS



what is a mosaic?

A mosaic is a piece of [art](#) or image made from assembling small pieces of coloured glass, stone, tile, or other materials. It is often used in decorative art or as interior decoration. Most mosaics are made of small, flat, roughly square pieces of stone or glass of different colors, known as tesserae, hence the term tessellated tiles. Some, especially floor mosaics, are made of small rounded pieces of stone, called pebble mosaics.

Trencadis or 'pique assiette' (French for 'stolen from plate') is a mosaic made from pieces of broken pottery, china, glass, buttons, figurines, or jewelry which are cemented onto a base to create a new surface. Almost any form can be used as a base, and any combination of pieces can be applied, restricted only by the imagination.

Mosaics have a long history, from around the Mesopotamia time in the third millennium BCE. They come in and out of fashion, but endure as art because they change and adapt, reflecting current times, colours, shapes, themes, expressions, and designs.





mosaic techniques

There are three main methods: the direct method, the double indirect method, and the indirect method.

The direct method of mosaic construction involves directly placing and pasting (gluing) the individual tile or object onto the supporting surface, such as a vase. It suits small projects that are transportable, and adjustments to tile color or placement can easily be made. However, it is difficult for large projects, and to control the evenness of the finished surface.

The double direct method is a contemporary version to work directly onto fibre-glass mesh. It suits large projects. The mosaic can be constructed with the design visible on the surface and transported to its final location. The mosaic can be cut up for shipping and reassembled for installation. The artist can work in a studio rather than at the site of installation.

The indirect method of applying tesserae, or tiles, is often used for very large projects, projects with repetitive elements or for areas needing site specific shapes. Tiles are applied face-down to a backing paper using an adhesive, and later transferred onto walls, floors or craft projects. This method enables the artist time to rework areas. Mosaic murals, benches and tabletops are some of the items usually made using the indirect method, as it results in an even and smoother surface.



morocco



ancient rome mosaics

From October 10 to December 10, 2019, the National Museum of Georgia is hosting an exhibition featuring mosaics from the Capitoline Museums, called “Colors of Ancient Rome: Mosaics of the Capitoline Museums.”

The Capitoline Museums is one museum that contains a group of artworks and archaeological displays in Piazza del Campidoglio on top of The Capitoline Hill in Rome, Italy. Mosaics in the Tbilisi exhibition are on loan from The Capitoline Museums.

The exhibition is part of a season of Italian cultural events in Tbilisi, through the close collaboration between the Italian Embassy and the Georgian government.

In “Colors of Ancient Rome: Mosaics of the Capitoline Museums” there are 21 mosaic exhibits dating between 2nd century BCE and 4th century CE.

Mosaics were used in ancient Rome to decorate walls and floors of residential spaces for the city's middle class, with designs and techniques used in them tracked to imperial locations thousands of kilometres apart.

The exhibition is curated by Claudio Parisi Presicce and Nadia Agnoli from the Rome Museum. The initiative is also supported by Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.





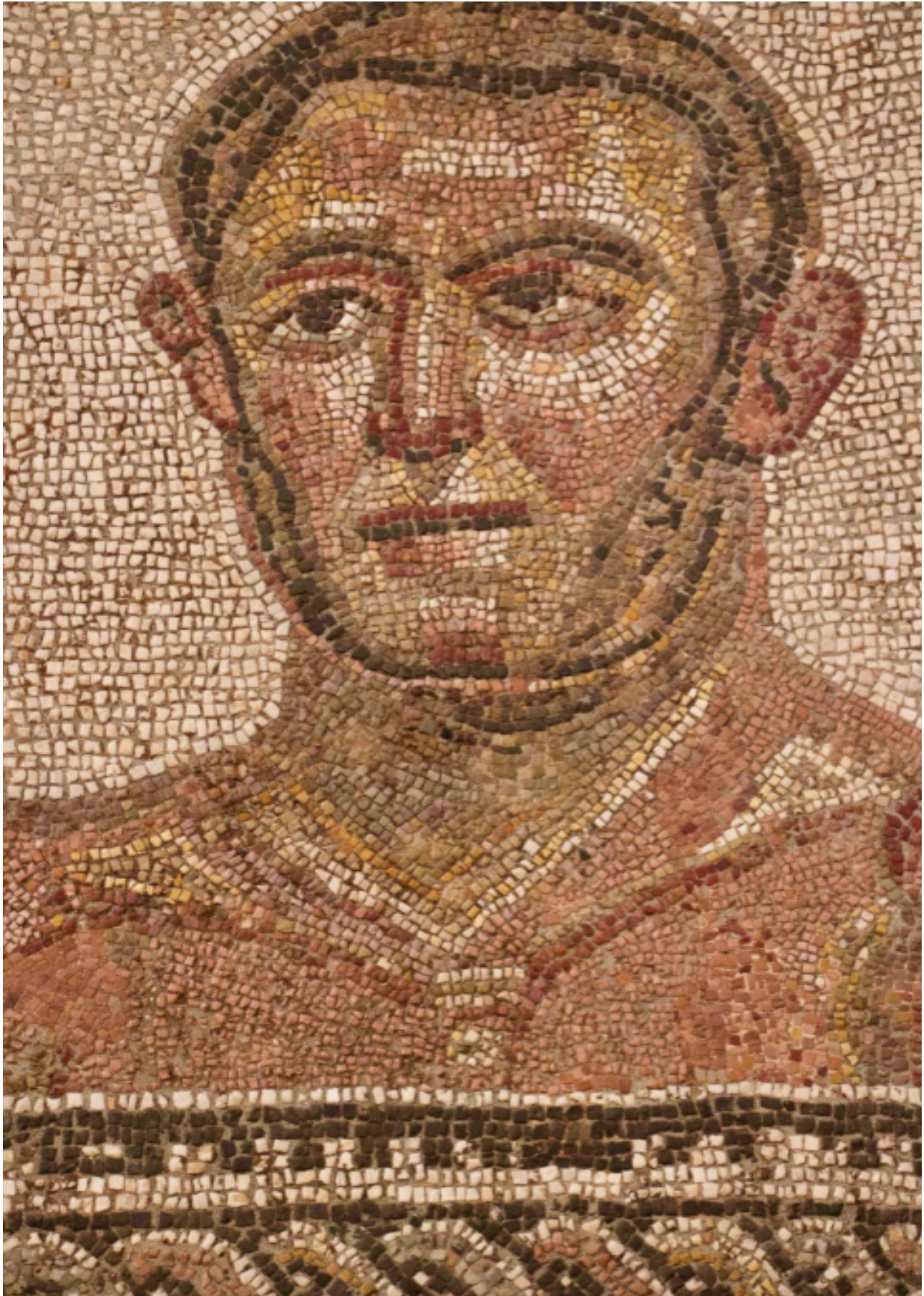
ancient rome emblemata

One of the exhibits at the “Colors of Ancient Rome: Mosaics of the Capitoline Museums” in Tbilisi, Georgia” is the polychrome mosaic with the personification of the month of May. It is a 52 x 52 x 4 centimetre design made of pebbles, limestone, and glass in the second half of the 4th century AD. It was discovered in 1874 in Rome, on the Esquiline near the Auditorium of Maecenas.

It has small multi-coloured tiles in a ceramic coffer, with a border of dentils. A youthful man is in the centre, with Maius (May) in the upper right-hand corner. He wears a short, off-the-shoulder garment with a vase of fruit in his left hand and a flower in his right hand. There is a Latin inscription reading ‘bevi et vivi’ – ‘drink and live.’

The exhibit, shown below is a wall mosaic border with sea snail shells, marine bivalve shells, glass, and Carrara marble, of 29 x 48 x 10.5 centimetres, made in the middle of the first century AD. It was discovered in Rome during the digs at the Velian Hill for Via dell’Impero.







ancient rome athlete

One of the exhibits at the “Colors of Ancient Rome: Mosaics of the Capitoline Museums” in Tbilisi, Georgia” is the polychrome mosaic of the bust of an athlete. The exhibit is 108.5 x 97.5 x 3 centimetres of limestone, marble, and glass paste, made in the first period of the Severan Age (AD 193-211). It was found in 1879 in Rome in the area between the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and Porta Maggiore. It belongs to the baths built by Emperor Septimius Severus (Thermae Helenae).

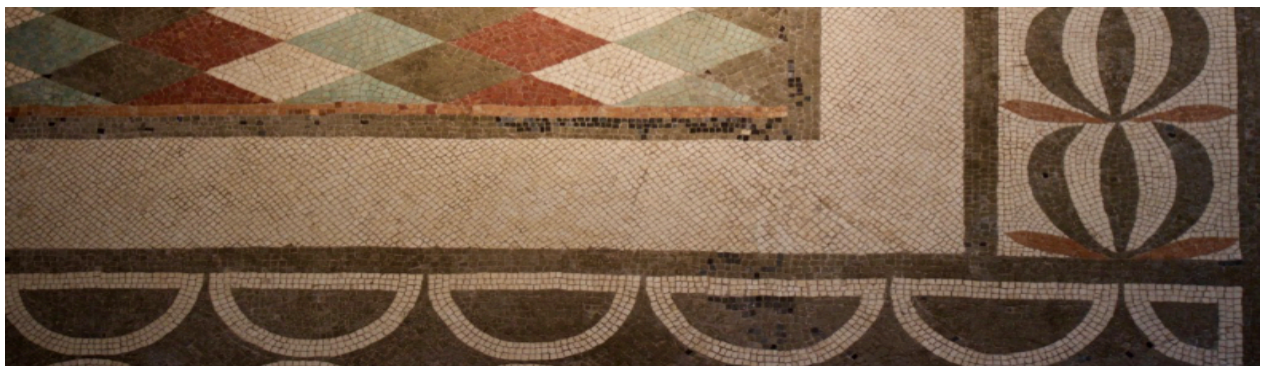
Another is an octagonal mosaic with peacocks. It is 135 x 110.5 x 12 centimetres, made in the 2nd century AD of limestone, marble and glass paste. It was discovered in 1940 in Rome in a tomb on the Via Appia, at the left tower of Porta San Sebastiano. The peacock, a sacred bird of Bacchus (Dionysus), is a symbol of resurrection and immortality. There is also a poppy symbolizing the ‘flower of oblivion.’





ancient rome fish

Another exhibit features geometric motifs and fish. It is 63 x 110 x 10 centimetres, made of Portasanta breccia, rosso antico marble, pink limestone, palombino marble, basalt, and green lithomarge. It was made in the late 3rd to early 4th centuries AD. It was found in 1880 in Rom at Via Nazionale near Palazzo delle Esposioni. It has an ovoid shape with a fish in the centre.



riding the bull mosaic

In the centre of one of the exhibits at the “Colors of Ancient Rome: Mosaics of the Capitoline Museums” in Tbilisi, Georgia” that decorated the floor of a funerary chamber near Porta San Paolo (Porta Ostiensis) is a woman riding a bull. The piece is 125 x 158 x 4 centimetres and made of palmbino marble and basalt in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD. It was discovered in 1936 in Rome during digs at Via Ostiense near Porta San Paolo. The scene represents the abduction of Europa – the wife of Jupiter – symbolizing conjugal love.



tunisian mosaic

At the Cluny Museum – the Museum of the Middle Ages – in Paris, France, has an exhibit of a marble mosaic from Tunisia. The 5th century fragment is from Bulla Regia, which was acquired in 1884.



morocco

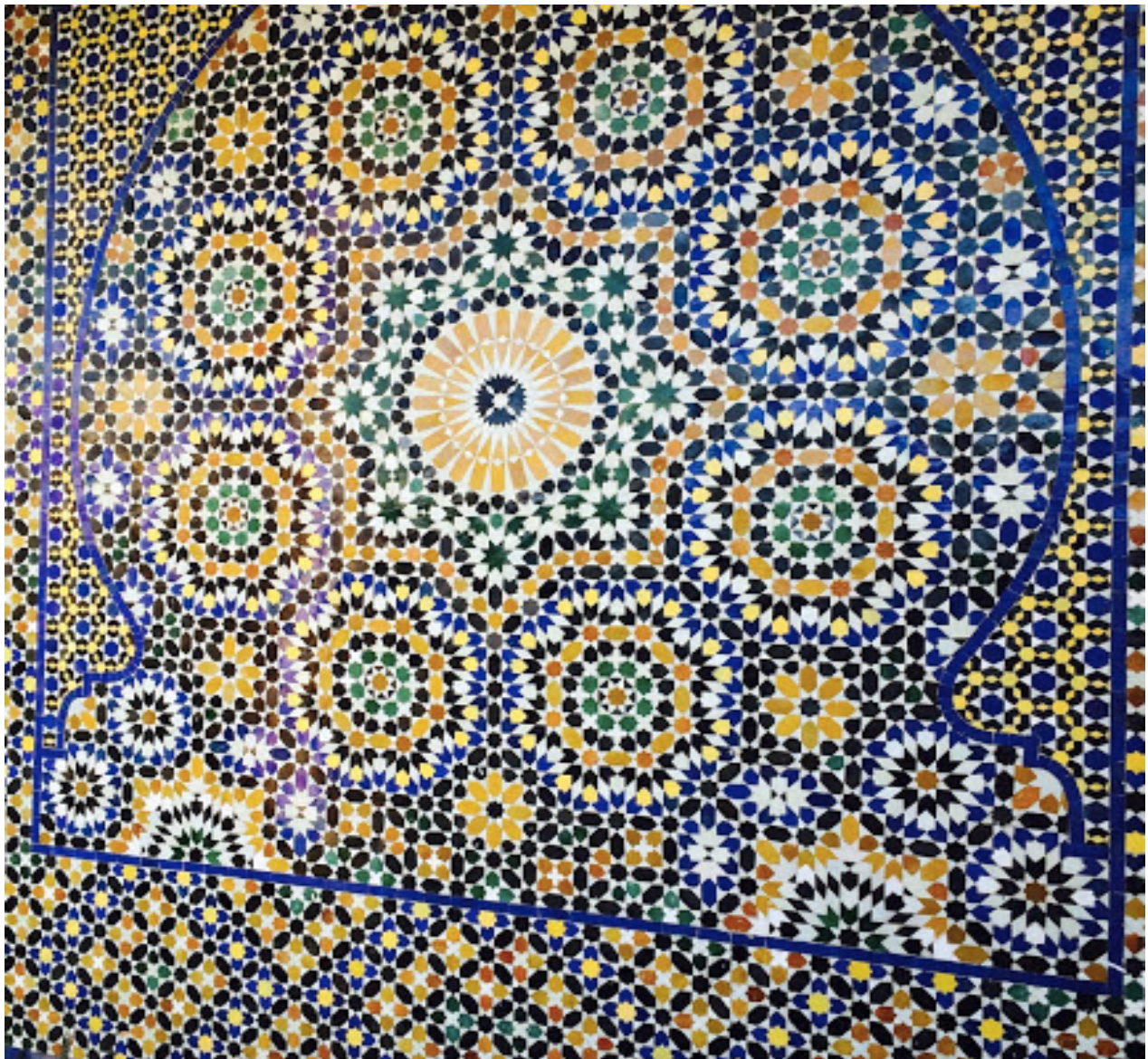


morocco



chellah medieval necropolis

In Chellah, the medieval Muslim necropolis in Rabat, Morocco, the Phoenicians established a trading site. It was later an ancient Roman colony. Chellah was rebuilt by the Marinids in the 13th century. The ruins are largely still intact. The previous two photographs show the Chella site and its ancient mosaics. In contemporary times, Islamic mosaics are evident throughout Rabat and the rest of Morocco, and across the Middle East.









france

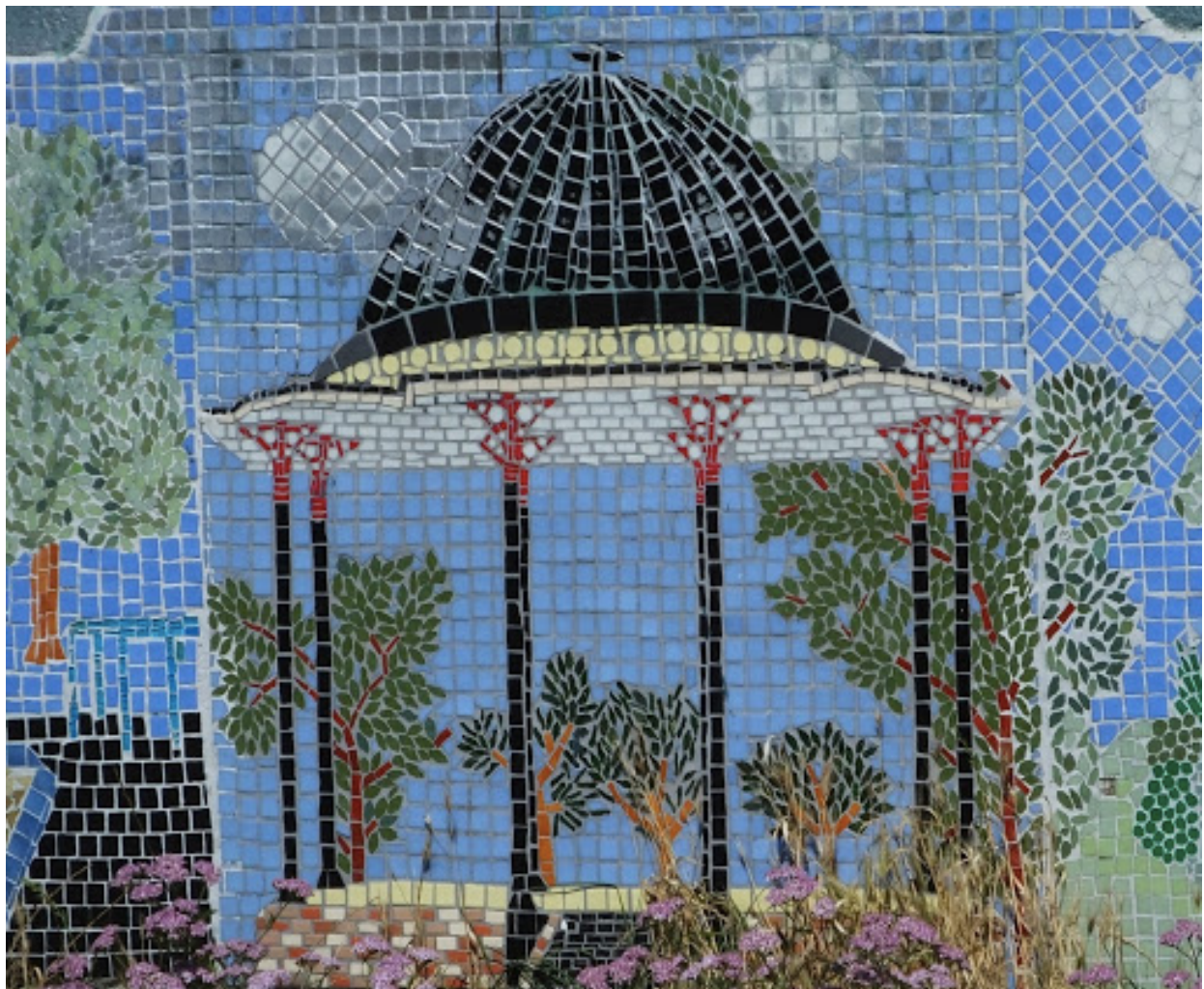


france – art deco



clapham common bandstand

In the centre of the Clapham Common, a park in Clapham, London, is the Bandstand (rotunda) constructed in 1890. It is the largest bandstand in London. Architect to the London County Council, Thomas Bashill designed it, replicating older ones built in South Kensington in 1861. Clapham is in Lambeth Council, and the council had to hold it up with scaffolding in 2001 to prevent it from collapse. The scaffolding remained for five years until restoration took place in 2006-2006, funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the council, and the public. The mosaic, also in Clapham Common, is a tribute to the Bandstand. In August 2019, the Bandstand was redecorated.





cyprus



cyprus



georgia











georgian mosaics

My favourite street art mosaic is in Tbilisi, Georgia, of the bathers. The first one shows three women swimming with their arms outstretched, wearing bathing caps and one-piece swim-suits—in yellow, maroon, and red. The other one shows several women sitting among fish, grape vines, and wine pots, with their long hair flowing freely.

These mosaics are on the wall of the Laguna Vere Swimming Pool. The Soviet-era Olympic pool began construction in 1965 and opened in 1978, designed by Georgian architects Shota Kavlashvili, Guram Abuladze, and Ramaz Kikadze. Artist Koka Ignatov created the mosaics. Built in the Brutalist style of concrete and mosaics on exterior walls, it had an outdoor pool, a diving pool, a water slide, an amphitheatre, sauna, gym, and café. It was the first world-class pool and complex in the Caucasus region. It won a design award in 1982. The pool closed in 2014.

I photographed the two blue-clothed outside the old building of Pioneer's Palace near the original Parliament House. With buildings in the background, the two officials—a male and a female—have a fire hose, and are standing in front of a red fire engine.

Nino Siradze aims to photograph the Soviet-era mosaics before they disappear. She remembers the colourful mosaics in her childhood because they contrasted against the grey concrete of the city. (<http://soviet-mosaics.ge>)

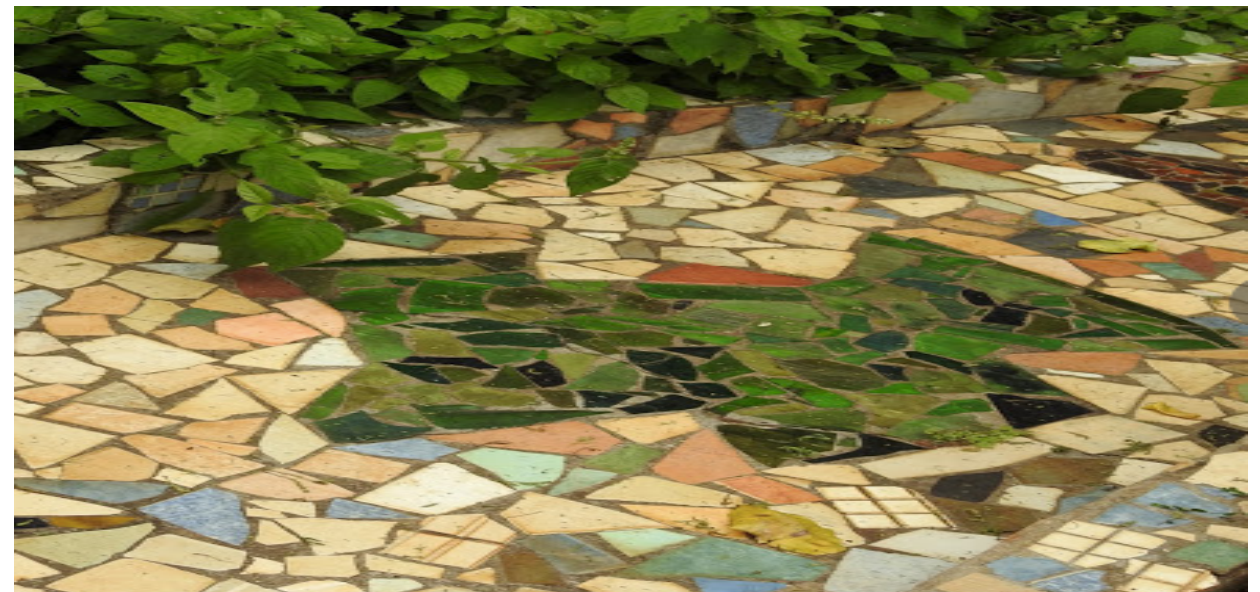
The two glass mosaics, one of St. George on his horse, slaying a dragon, and the other of the Georgian flag, are located inside the Zurab Tsereteli Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) on Rustaveli Street in Tbilisi.



kenya









mosaic garden in nairobi

A beautiful place in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is the mosaic garden at the Nairobi National Museum. Created by Dutch artist Nani Croze who settled in Nairobi in the 1970s, it features pathways with animals and plants in mosaic – flowers, snakes, snails, leaves, trees, hands, fish, and symbolic shapes and figures. In addition, there is a mosaic glass wall in blues and black with fish and faces, standing 4 x 5 metres tall. (<https://www.kitengelaglassart.com>)



the author: Martina Nicolls

I am an author and humanitarian aid consultant with over 30 years' experience in the management, implementation, and evaluation of international aid development projects, particularly in post-conflict environments and countries with transitional governments, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Darfur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia, Georgia, Kosovo, and Sri Lanka, and also Mauritius, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia – and others. I provide technical advice on areas such as peace-building and conflict mitigation, education, poverty reduction, human rights, child labour, human trafficking, monitoring and evaluation, and data quality.

But mostly I am a wanderer. Wherever I am and wherever I go, I take photographs and I write. My books include:

Similar but Different in the Animal Kingdom (2017)
A Mongolian Lament (2015)
The Komodo Verses (2012)

Liberia's Deadeast Ends (2012)
Bardot's Comet (2011)
Kashmir on a Knife-Edge (2010)
The Sudan Curse (2009)

MARTINA NICOLLS

martina@iimetro.com.au

<http://www.martinanicolls.net>

<http://martinasblogs.blogspot.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/Martina-Nicolls-მარტინა-ნიკოლსი-1450496988529988/timeline/>



