



6 OTTOBRE 2022  
27 NOVEMBRE 2022

Museo Diocesano di Faenza  
Spazio espositivo di  
Santa Maria dell'Angelo

6 OTTOBRE 2022  
16 OTTOBRE 2022

Galleria della Molinella

FAENZA

## Seeing through mosaic Matylda Tracewska

This exhibition is a special and long-awaited event for me, as there have been so many obstacles, including the pandemic, that made it postponed by a year. For many years I have been part of the artistic community of Ravenna; I am a graduate of the local Academy of Arts, and while I am not currently living in Italy, still I do actively participate in cultural events organised here. Faenza is particularly close to my heart as it is here that, in the Carlo Zauli museum, my first Italian solo exhibition took place in 2009. It was my diploma project awarded with a distinction, and the starting point of my international artistic adventure. That is why, with pride and pleasure I am returning to Faenza, not alone, but in the company of the artists from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, whom I respect and had invited to participate in this project.

My professional career has been divided between Ravenna and Warsaw. I had studied painting in Poland long before I took an interest in mosaic and now, after years of studying in Italy, I have become part of the teaching staff at my home art academy. In Poland there is no Roman or Byzantine mosaic tradition, yet, which I had not realised earlier, this medium is somehow omnipresent in contemporary art. Naturally, it is not a typically Polish phenomenon, but a global trend, pointed out by the Ravenna art community long ago. And artistic visitors such as Space Invader, Chuck Close and Ricardo Zangelmi seem to prove their point. For me personally, this was yet a reassuring, if not surprising discovery back in Poland—to be able to encounter on a regular basis people who are not mosaicists per se, in the country with no mosaic tradition, yet whose artistic practice is so close to mosaic, and therefore, so appealing to me.

'Mishmash' is a Polish term of German origin used colloquially to describe disorder, confusion or chaos. At the same time, mishmash refers to mixing, combining various accidental or seemingly random elements; there are also people who literally interpret mishmash as... mosaic. The artists and their works selected for this exhibition are very diverse, and artistically distant. The Myszmasz exhibition will be then a journey through a variety of aesthetics, various approaches to the artistic matter, various intellectual stances. Seemingly though.

When can we qualify a work of art as mosaic? What would be the fundamental elements that constitute this medium? This is not a new question, actually it has been recurring in the academic discourse or in the theoretical debate positioning mosaic in relation to painting, sculpture, textiles, or more recently, installation art. One of the differences that I consider crucial in the juxtaposition of traditional mosaic and what is defined broadly as 'art of fragmentation' is not the question of material and the means of mounting—with or without a substrate, nor being familiar with the craft and rules, what really matters is the element of destruction, present or not. In traditional mosaic the creative process revolves around destruction (cutting material that irreversibly becomes damaged) and construction, which involves restoring the very same material in a new form, with certain rules applied.

For the artists present at the current exhibition the aforementioned process is rarely relevant. They are rather gatherers, collectors and amateurs of tiny elements, accumulated either for years or for the sake of a certain project, used then to create a bigger form, with logic of their own. They often resort to the objects of little worth, unappealing, found, even disposed—approached with respect, attention and care. Even for me, still practising traditional mosaic that remains the starting point for my artistic explorations, all those strategies, including upcycling, become a more and more valid *modus operandi*, which seems to resonate with the contemporary world, so exploited that there is more need for repair than for any further annihilation. Other aspects that we all refer to are: the arduous process and the repetitive gesture. With all that said, mosaic means a specific way of seeing and existence in the world. I do appreciate the fact that in my Warsaw community I discovered some artists that share the same experience. Some I have known for years yet only after my return from Ravenna I saw this quality, with others I became more familiar while working on this project. I am happy to be able to present their art to the audiences of the region that has been my second home, now more metaphorically.

My big thanks to Giovanni Gardini, for his trust and engagement, for taking the risk and believing in this project, for taking the responsibility of the co-curator and offering us the exhibition space at the Santa Maria dell'Angelo church.

I would like to thank the protagonists of the exhibition, Maciek, Arek, Janek, Maja, Igor and Elwira, for accepting the invitation, their effort in preparing this project, their talent and artwork that have inspired the whole undertaking. And for being my mosaic companions in Warsaw.

I would also like to thank the mayor of Faenza Massimo Isola for his support and access to the municipal gallery Molinella, the local authorities of Ravenna and the organisers of Mosaic Biennale, especially Fabio Sbaraglia the Mosaic Assessor and Daniele Torcellini, the curator of RavennaMosaico for including our exhibition as a part of RavennaMosaico festival. I am grateful to the authorities and employees of the Warsaw Academy for help and financial support. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to all my professors, teachers, artists and befriended mosaicists for teaching me to 'see through mosaic'.