

# Artist etches inspiration into color tiles

BY DIANE DANIEL  
CORRESPONDENT

When Marina Bosetti moved from Asheville to Raleigh three years ago to live with her longtime boyfriend, she decided she wanted to make her artwork more permanent as well.

Bosetti, 44, a successful clay artist for two decades, of late had been doing raku, a firing technique that produces beautiful but fragile pieces.

"I think in the natural progression of things I wanted to make bigger and more permanent things," Bosetti said. "Over time I'd evolved away from pots to doing more painting on tile. But raku isn't really suitable for tiles, so that meant changing the way I fire."

Bosetti, who lives in the Mordecai neighborhood of Raleigh, found studio and showroom space in Boylan Heights. There, she set

up shop as Bosetti Art Tile. Her work is true to its name — gorgeous bas-relief tiled murals that would be equally at home on a canvas or in a kitchen backsplash, as well as tile-framed mirrors that would improve anyone's image. With her leftover clay, she makes some pots, birdbaths, and other items and says she still enjoys throwing clay and keeping those skills up.

Bosetti creates her tile designs by etching into or building up on clay slabs, which she has compressed using a slab roller. The slab is cut into tiles and glazed. Bosetti fires the clay to 2,174 degrees Fahrenheit, which allows the stoneware tiles to be used inside or outdoors in any weather.

Her images are colorful and curvy, featuring flowers, animals and the human form, mostly female.

"I've broken it down into three things," she



Marina Bosetti's recently finished 'Purple Sun' will be on display at Seven Sisters Gallery in Black Mountain on Aug. 1.

STAFF PHOTO BY COREY LOWENSTEIN

said. "The nature ones are all about Beaufort or Asheville, all watery images or mountainy images."

Before living in Asheville for three years, Bosetti called Beaufort home for 13. She stopped off there during a yearlong Atlantic sailing trip and couldn't bear to leave. The former Brooklyn, N.Y., resident was now a slower-paced coastal Tar Heel.

Though Bosetti, a Pittsburgh native, had studied sculpture at the venerable Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and worked for other ceramists as well as doing her own work, she said her work "didn't come alive" until moving to Beaufort.

"I was moaning to a friend about my art and he said, 'When have you really tried to make it work?' So after I moved to Beaufort, I re-

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ally tried. I bought a little kiln. And then I maxed out my credit card, and in one fell swoop, I ordered everything I needed. In the first year, I was making more money from my little pots than I had waiting tables."

Bosetti decided on one of her favorite colors in Beaufort as well. "Most of time there I lived across from the Rachel Carson preserve. I like that smoky gray-blue color I use because it reminds me of sailing on rainy days," she said.

More recent images are those that are spiritual or celestial.

"The work I do that's a little religious is about my mom and her love of the church," she said. "She died of breast cancer when I was 16."

Bosetti said her inspiration came last year when donating a painted woman's torso for a local breast-cancer fund-raiser. "It got me thinking about my mother and death. I used a sacred heart image in the middle and a church window design for the bodice of the dress."

The human form is her third often-used image, she said, usually women who are contemplative and graceful.

## A bigger canvas

As her tile offerings expand, Bosetti is beginning to work with more homeowners and interior designers on larger projects. She recently completed an entryway mirror for one homeowner, a kitchen backsplash for another, and just finished three large bathroom mirrors for Raleigh residents Mimi and Fred Fletcher.

The couple have been redecorating the 2,800-square-foot townhouse near Rex Hospital they bought two years ago.

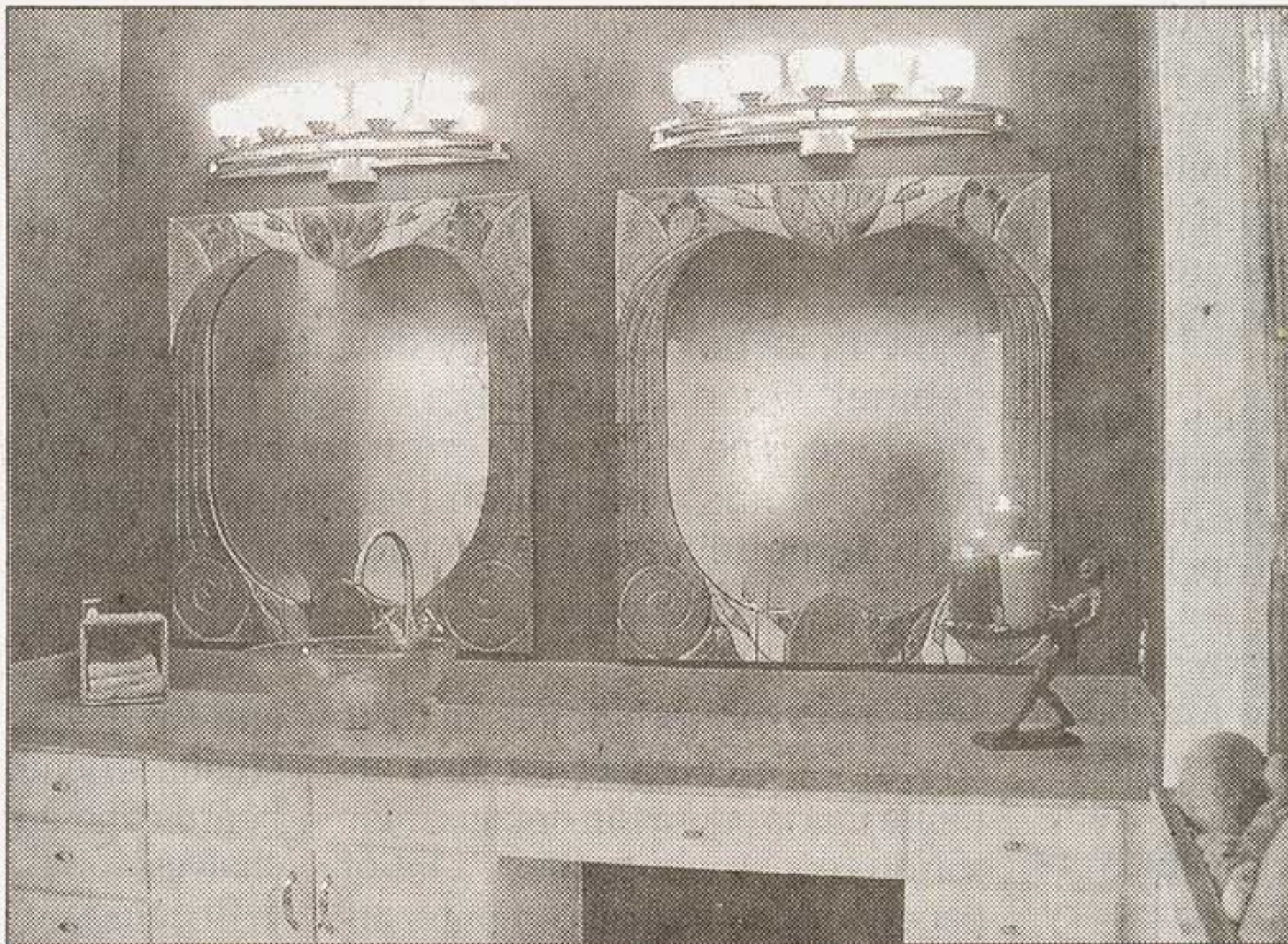
"We were redoing the bathrooms and we knew we needed to find some different mirrors that were colorful and beautiful," Mimi Fletcher said. Their decorator suggested they look at Bosetti's tile and they decided to custom order tile-framed mirrors, the couple's first functional piece of art.

"We agreed on a color palette and talked about some concepts, and she went off and did the design," Fletcher said. "We liked it, and in a month we had them up. They made the room."



Marina Bosetti has been creating tiles from red clay for three years. Here she works on two tiles for a commissioned piece.

STAFF PHOTO BY COREY LOWENSTEIN



After seeing Bosetti's work, Raleigh residents Mimi and Fred Fletcher custom-ordered tile-framed mirrors for a bathroom. It's the couple's first functional piece of art.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIMI AND FRED FLETCHER

Bosetti, who meets with potential customers at her studio, is there from morning until late afternoon or evening, usually with her black standard poodle. She has two human helpers as well.

"One of the things I love about living here is the Pullen Arts Center and the N.C. State Crafts Center," said Bosetti, who has been exploring her art in the classroom.

"Both of them run classes and they're reasonably priced. I'd go pay a fee and work before I had a studio of my own. I started going to classes, initially all ceramics classes. But in the last

year I started making paper, doing bookbinding, taking a printing course." That, she said, has affected her tiles, which are becoming flatter. She also started making prints with designs similar to those on the tiles and may frame some for two shows this summer, in Black Mountain and Carrboro.

"Shows are a great motivator to create," she said. "You want to be excited about what you're doing, and so you want to find something new. My newest work has more images. It's getting busier. It's opening its eyes more."

**NAME:** Marina Bosetti

**WARES:** Handmade tiles and other ceramics

**LOCATION:** Raleigh

**CONTACT:** 414-8950 or [www.bosettiarttile.com](http://www.bosettiarttile.com)

**PRICES:** Hand-painted custom tile is \$150 per square foot, and bas-relief is \$192.50 per square foot. Hand-painted standard tile ranges from \$18 for a 4-by-4-inch tile to \$150 for 12-by-12 inches. Mirrors range from \$189 to \$600, according to size.

**WHERE TO BUY:** Bosetti Art Tile, 1201 W. Lenoir St., by appointment or call first. Also, Bosetti will be a featured artist in September at N.C. Crafts Gallery, 212 W. Main St., Carrboro; 942-4048. Show opens Sept. 1. Opening reception Sept. 10, 6-8 p.m.

"The more she creates permanent work for people's living spaces, "as opposed to just selling little pieces," the more challenged Bosetti feels as an artist, she said.

"I want to make art that's really a part of people's lives. I think it makes more of a statement of who I am and who they are."

Send suggestions for *Who & Ware* to Diane Daniel, *The News & Observer*, 112 S. Duke St., Suite 4, Durham, NC 27701, or e-mail her at [whoandware@newsobserver.com](mailto:whoandware@newsobserver.com).