



A graduate of the University of Dallas and a 1987 Rotary Foundation Graduate Scholar to Italy, Julie Richey creates residential, commercial and public art projects in the US, Italy, Mexico, and Spain. She is the 2009 Orsoni Prize winner and curates annual art and culture tours to Italy.

The First Annual International Symposium of Contemporary Mosaic, *Re/Inventing the Chair*, was held in Udine and Clauiano, Italy 10 – 21 June 2015. Organised by a creative and energetic group of local volunteers, artists, cultural representatives and elected officials, the symposium was a resounding success.

The original concept for the event emerged from the Clauiano Mosaics More organisation, which has hosted several successful international mosaic exhibitions in the town of Clauiano, distinguished as one of the *borghi più belli d'Italia*, or most beautiful towns of Italy.



Work begins

The committee envisioned an event which would feature international artists to create original works, and would highlight one of Friuli's most important industries: chair-making. The challenge: to spend nine days in Giulio Menossi's Udine studio, creating a mosaic chair that's "a fantasy of colour and mastery."

Eleven chair manufacturers based in Friuli were approached, and they generously offered to provide two chairs for the artist randomly assigned to their company. One chair was to be embellished by the artist during the symposium; the other would be left untouched, a model of the company's fine craftsmanship. On the gala night, held at the lovely historic Villa Manin in Clauiano, the chairs were displayed side by side in a "before and after" style that allowed both models to shine.



Lilian Sizemore's chairs



Goddess Caguna's Throne
Vanessa Rivera

It was a magical evening, with artists elegantly dressed, speeches made by local and regional sponsors and dignitaries, fine food and wines, and lively music. The Mayor of Clauiano, Roberto Fedele, entertained guests by singing several traditional songs in his smooth tenor.

The artists were hosted by the symposium organisers, who generously provided lodging, meals at local restaurants, and studio supplies. Giulio Menossi opened his studio as a "chair laboratory," where for nine days, the artists raced to complete their visions before the deadline. Much

espresso was consumed. The most tireless of all was Mr Menossi, who spent the majority of his time culling a dazzling assortment of materials from his impressive stash of antique and modern smalti, stone and other materials. He generously offered invaluable technical support during the creation of each chair. Media coverage was extensive and enthusiastic, with daily visits from local photographers, journalists, and even television reporters. Several of the artists who spoke Italian were interviewed by the Pordenone TV station and appeared on an evening broadcast.



See more pictures on facebook [here](#) or [here](#).

Reconstruction
Liliana Waisman

Organisers engaged the public and created buzz about the exhibition by hosting a Facebook page for the symposium, featuring daily posts by the artists and the organisers; Musivarium Festival 1st International Symposium of Contemporary Mosaic. Full images of the works were embargoed until the chairs were finished and photographed, but artists were encouraged to post teasers of small, intricate details of their work in progress. Once the page went live, people were encouraged to vote for their favourite chair online. The winner was Vanessa Rivera of Puerto Rico, whose *Goddess Caguna's Throne* entry was a colourful, poetic tribute to her native island and its culture.

The symposium culminated in a weekend of unforgettable events in Clauiano featuring crafts, food, music, poetry and dance. The chairs were displayed in the civic gallery, where visitors were invited to meet the artists, hear about the inspiration for their respective chairs, and vote for their favourite. The afternoon concluded with an awards presentation in the piazza, where California artist Mia Tavonatti won the people's choice award for her swirling, stained glass *Acqua Forte*. A surprising tie was announced between Canadian Suzanne Spahi, who created the elegant *Venetian Fantasy* and Liliana Waisman of Argentina for her illuminated *Reconstruction* as jurors awarded them for re-inventing the chair.



Acqua Forte
Mia Tavonatti



Venetian Fantasy
Suzanne Spahi

The top two chairs by Tavonatti and Rivera were displayed at the Milan EXPO. Future exhibits are planned in Italy and beyond, where the whole collection will be on tour.

Artists

Angela Zimek, Austria
Irina Kuchmenko, Russia
Julie Richey, USA
Liliana Waisman, Argentina
Lillian Sizemore, England and USA
Marianne Minuzzi, France
Mia Tavonatti, California
Olga Goulondris, Greece
Rosemarie Castro, Brazil
Suzanne Spahi, Canada
Vanessa Rivera, Puerto Rico

Chair Sponsors

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Julie Richey

See more of Julie's work at www.juliericheymosaics.com