



Francesca O'Donnell - owner of local business 'Out There Mosaics' is a **talented and skilled artist who creates stunning mosaics and has recently branched off into creating beautiful pieces of jewellery**. We chat to Francesca about the creative process involved in creating these unique pieces of jewellery.

FRANCESCA O'DONNELL

'OUT THERE MOSAICS'

You have branched out now not only to create beautiful mosaics, but also stunning jewellery pieces. How did this new venture begin?

I used to dabble in jewellery years ago making richly decorated gothic like brooches in black fimo, that were encrusted with glass beads and highlighted with antique gold.

Getting back to jewellery feels a natural progression from the large intricate mosaic artworks I have been involved with in recent years, into small, colourful pieces of art you can wear.

I started putting small pictures into jewellery blanks, but that quickly was replaced by using some of my tiny mosaic tesserae like Murano millefiori and Mexican smalti. Once these were covered with resin, the pieces suddenly came to life.

My passion for working with glass was inspired by a fascinating lampwork workshop with well known jewellery artist Skye Petho, from Arthouse Industries. Whilst I failed at lampworking, the properties of melting glass drew me in, and I began combining Murano millefiori and glass into glass fusions.

Can you tell us about the style of your jewellery?

Like most of the things I create, there is no one style - simply an exploration and play with various materials, where one idea leads to another. The fact that jewellery pieces come out of this 'play' is a bonus, and I use these to create a small range that may include earrings, necklaces and rings that work together. The underlying theme is usually colour and pattern. **Your jewellery pieces are all individual -**

what do you use to make your designs, and how difficult is the process?

Creating jewellery is a bit like entering a lolly shop ... so many exciting materials to choose from, with the only limit your imagination. I rarely plan a piece; I tend to find a new material and start playing. I work with most of my containers open around me and look for colours, shapes or pieces that will work together.

Glass fusions can be a bit more challenging, as the fusing glass comes in a flat sheet, which has to be cut. This requires both skill and patience. Patience I have bucket loads of; the skill to cut a piece that is actually even and what I want is more challenging.

After the small pieces of glass are layered together, they need to go into a kiln for 5 hours or more, where the glass is heated through a series of temperature cycles which gradually bond the pieces. The glass is then allowed to cool slowly over a specified time, soaking at specified temperature ranges, which are essential to the annealing process. This prevents uneven cooling and breakage and produces a strong finished product. Thanks once more to Skye here for her help in understanding this process and the use of her kiln.

The other challenging element I have come across is working with the gloss resin finish. It not only has fumes you need to avoid, but can develop tiny air bubbles and lines which are hard to remove and can spoil a piece if not noticed early.

What are some of the favourite pieces that you have created?

So often I stumble across things that really draw me in. I recently found some large jewellery blanks of birds. By embellishing these with

tiny shards of Mexican smalti to form feathers and using Murano millefiori for the eyes, I had way too much fun making these in a range of colours which quickly led to the Rainbow Lorikeet and King Parrot, which I have just finished.

Have you ever been commissioned to make a piece of jewellery for someone before?

I recently met a woman whose mum had passed away from breast cancer, and she was looking for gifts to thank those that had supported her. I felt that for these gifts to have meaning, they needed to represent symbols of hope and remembrance, so I combined the icon of the breast cancer ribbon with birds and blue beads hanging from a silver circle with the word 'hope' engraved. As necklaces, they would sit near the heart and be a special reminder of her mum.

How can people see and purchase your jewellery?

Later this year we will be launching our new look website and online store that Vick and I are currently planning and hope to have up and working by mid June.

You can always find us at the Artists in the Vines at Cassegrain Winery on the fourth Sunday of the month. For those who have not yet experienced these markets, they are a 'must do' destination. Set in the shade amongst the trees at Cassegrain, these markets offer a huge variety of unique stalls filled with handmade

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goodies and art. There is always an outstanding line up of musicians, and who can resist a relaxing day out with great food, wine and entertainment!

We are also excited to be invited as 'artists in residence' at the Tara 'Spotlight Exhibition of emerging artists' and The Great Day Out, which will be held May 16 and 17 at the Tara Anglican School in Sydney. We will be exhibiting our mosaics and jewellery and demonstrating over the two day event.

You can also see many pieces on our website www.outtheredesignandmosaic.com and our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/outtheredesignandmosaic>

What are your future plans for your jewellery?

After the launch of our online store, we plan to follow up some connections we have made in Sydney and Melbourne to possibly have some mosaics and jewellery pieces available in a few trendy shops that sell the type of merchandise that would complement our artworks.

The other hat I wear is teaching ballet at WPMPA, which I love. In my conversations with students recently, it has reminded me just how passionate these kids are about their dancing and their friends. With this in mind, I have decided to create a series of fun pieces which will include dance and friend icons with a selection of gorgeous millefiori beads on colourful leather and silver necklaces.

Thanks Francesca.