

# CULTURE — MAY 8, 2024 French Mosaic Artist Béatrice Serre Celebrates 30 Years With a Solo Exhibition

by GAY GASSMANN



French mosaic artist Béatrice Serre celebrates 30 years of pure creativity with a solo exhibition, where forms, colors, materials, and even nature converge.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

With a major solo exhibition of new creations and a monograph of her work, French artist Béatrice Serre has a lot to celebrate this year. All are converging as an homage to her three decades as a mosaic artist and creator. "I have invented a new kind of technique. This is 30 years of mosaic exploration. My work is a language."



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

Born in Paris in 1970, her early years were ones of constant movement and travel with her family, which saw them journey from Gabon to China to Brazil. The young Serre was inspired by everything she saw, absorbing all. "I started out with nothing and studied art for seven years. I am interested in everything because everything is linked. With my work, you break something and then you put it back together and everything lives together. All the forms, the colors, and the materials." It's an important point of view to have in mind when creating her extraordinary work.

keep in mind when viewing her extraordinary work.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

In the beginning, Serre was invested in textiles and tapestry, and the world of mosaic is not such a leap. All involves weaving things, putting pieces together, and crafting stories with other materials instead of thread. In her constant search for creative expression, no materials are off-limits. She works at ease with everything from glass and marble to fossils, lapis lazuli, opals, pyrite, and turquoise. There is also crystal and onyx, to name but a few. All is a never-ending experimentation with color, texture, and light. Then, fitting the pieces together, she creates harmony with seemingly unrelated forms, shapes, and materials.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

For Serre, her process is simple. "In my head, I already see everything finished. I have so many ideas. I am asked to do things, but I also propose others. I can draw projects, all by hand – no computer drawings!" Indeed, the artist has shared her highly personal style on everything from a 12m-long terrace wall in New York City to projects for Qatari royalty. Her work is showcased from California to Morocco, and she has also collaborated with the French interior designers Jean- Louis Deniot and Thierry Lemaire.

Serre has a solid, traditional background in art and has metamorphosed the mosaic technique into a spectacle of contemporary creation. Her work takes all forms, from furniture and entire walls, to mirrors, objects, and jewelry. There are no boundaries for Serre, and she does not separate craft from art, which allows her to move freely and without limits to her work. She even ventured into the world of fashion when the French fashion designer Stéphane Rolland contacted her to collaborate on his FW21 Couture

collection. The results were both stunning and unexpected, with beautiful embroideries and mineral mosaics. Serre also recently launched a precious capsule collection of clutch bags with luxury footwear brand Aquazzura, with each piece unique and dedicated to a different stone.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

The artist lives and works in Oise in northern France. "I have a studio at home in a large, 1,000sqm house, where I live with my husband and all my materials. I am in contact with nature, with lots of natural light, a garden, and animals. We are right next to the forest, and I am free. All the doors are open." This is where she cuts all of her mosaic pieces by hand, surrounded by the beauty of nature and inspired by the cosmos.

Paying tribute to a 30-year practice, the Parisian Galerie Gastou recently put up a solo exhibition of Serre's art. Featuring 20 works, *Cosmosaique* is nothing short of show-stopping. To see Serre's work for the first time is thrilling and with names like *Big Bang*, *Constellation*, *Supernova*, and *Star*, they are emotionally charged and thought-provoking. Victor Gastou of Galerie Gastou explains, "Like all good discoveries, it just came to us, through the decorator Thierry Lemaire. We went to see the studio with my late father, gallery founder Yves Gastou. For me, it was a real shock. We had not shown any mosaics before and with Beatrice, we went to the best right away." The gallery has worked with her since 2017, but this is the first solo show devoted entirely to her craft. The exhibition also includes some earlier works, including a piece from 2014, but the majority was created for Gastou.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

"For me, my vision is the human mosaic," is how Serre describes the pieces on view. "I

interpret materials like fossils and minerals, and everything has a meaning. Some works are big, but there are also the little, precious things." Viewing them, one is reminded of watercolors and how all her materials seem to flow into each other. Her hand is subtle and refined and it is fascinating to see how she treats a hard material, making it look as delicate as a snowflake.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

When discussing her process, she shares, "I already have it all figured out in my head. I place the principal materials first and then the little pieces around the larger ones. I have to find perfect balance and I am not rigid. If something needs to be modified, that's what happens." According to Gastou, her work is unique. Most importantly, it is highly personal. "The idea was to give the entire gallery space to Béatrice and to enter into her world of mosaic. And there is the book." He is referring to her first book, a visual catalog of her practice, with large double-page spreads and wonderful details to discover. There is a handy picture index at the end with dates and materials to help contextualize the breadth of her artistic practice. Serre explains, "This book is an homage to my work and to mosaic art in general. It is important to understand the technique and my practice. This is not tiling!"



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

The art of mosaic as practiced by Serre is time intensive and demanding. Her creations are a look at the traditional technique with a new eye and experimentation in materiality. Serre invites viewers into her universe of glittering surfaces and unexpected juxtapositions, highlighting her belief in the harmony of the cosmos. "I was there, in my little world, working, and I am now so happy to be showing my work," she says. Her message is simple and universal. Differences are a source of inspiration; a class where

message is simple and universal. Differences are a source of inspiration, a place where the imperfect meets the sublime.



Photo: Courtesy Béatrice Serre

“My biggest inspiration is the cosmos,” she concludes. “Space and the micro and the macro. The stars. Everything is united, everything has its place.” Looking at her expressive works, with all the pieces fitting together, this world view makes perfect sense. Serre is on constant lookout to create harmony with materials, textures, and color. Her work connects nature with the handmade, the rough materials with the refined ones, all in balance.

Originally published in the Spring/Summer 2024 issue of Vogue Living Arabia



by GAY GASSMANN

#### VOGUE RECOMMENDS



CULTURE

3 Dynamic Arab Women Discuss the Power of Books in the Bibliothèque Nationale De France



CULTURE

Zayn Malik on His Regret About One Direction, and the Unexpected Skill Gigi Hadid Passed On to Their Daughter



CULTURE

HM Queen Rania Celebrates Sweet Mother-Daughter Moment with HRH Princess Salma



CULTURE

Vogue Reviews: The Lana, Dorchester

# VOGUE ARABIA CLUB

