

## THE FOLK INLAY & MOSAICS OF ECOUNIQUITY

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That job taught him how to work with granite, one of his favorite elements to use. Of course he likes the shiniest, most colorful granite the best.

“The more exotic the better,” he said.

He began combining some of his found objects with the stone he was laying, often practicing in his own yard – walls, benches, archways, stepping stones. People noticed his work, and word about his designs began to spread.

One of Whitaker’s hobbies is contra dancing – a type of folk dancing he does at the Laurel Theater in Knoxville almost every week. He’s well known as the “mosaic guy” at these dances, and through them he met a woman from California who was interested in his work. When she saw it in person, she fell in love with it and wanted him to come out to California to create a courtyard for her. He



spent a good part of the next year and a half working at her home on the serpentine walls, walkway, and entranceway. One of his favorites from that job was a mosaic dragonfly designed out of exotic river rock.

“What inspired the dragonfly was the stone they had. It was a cranberry colored stone. I knew if I split it I’d have two identical parts for the wings.”

That’s generally how Whitaker works. Sometimes he draws out a template of a design he’s going to create. But more often he works in an open-ended way, letting the design be determined by the found pieces he’s using.

“The material determines what I’m going to do,” he said. “I use old materials, gathered materials. They tell you what they want you to make.”

Other projects include a large, white marble sunburst in an outside patio, large lantern- or candle-holders made out of stone, curving walls with built-in benches and plant holders, circular windows surrounded by found objects—all of the designs emphasizing organic curves and very few straight lines.

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*Above, Left: “Moon Window,” a free-standing privacy wall at Andy’s home, Kingwood Terrace. Marble, river rocks, old bricks, sea shells and more have all found a place in Andy’s assemblages at Kingwood Terrace, site of his early inlay experimentation.*

*Above, Center: One of Andy’s iconic rock lanterns, this one located at the Front Porch restaurant in Cosby, Tennessee.*

*Above, Right: Various marbles, and granite pieces for contrast floor the “Star Patio” seating area outside the Front Porch.*



*Left and inset: A green marble crane, from a courtyard wall at Al Harb’s home in Knoxville, Tennessee, and a white marble crane from the built-in seating to the left of the courtyard fountain (see cover). Andy enlarges a realistic silhouette for his inlays, which he transfers to the surface and carefully cuts away just enough to hold the pattern and a mortar outline. The inlay pieces are trimmed out free-hand with a variety of tools. “I like a turbo edge for the blade, and I do all dry cutting,” he said. At the time of this interview, Andy had just started using a Bosch grinder featuring a rear air intake. “So far, its worked really well, and should last a lot longer with all the brick dust.”*