

PEACE TUNNEL



Kristin Wohlers is an accomplished artist who specialises in the design and fabrication of mosaic sculpture. She set up Barossa Mosaics with fellow artist Kate Jenkins and together they offer workshops, collaborate with other artists, with community based art projects and offer private commissions.

In the late 1990s, Regina Heygster had the “crazy” idea to convert an existing tunnel near the inner city of Bremen into an art work. She developed a few designs but then hid them in a drawer as she thought it was too crazy and she had no idea how to finance such a project. Shocked by the events of September 2001, Regina Heygster decided to act on her idea to change a neglected building into an art work and space of reflection. She chose the inner city Remberti Tunnel, a beautiful Art Deco building and easy to use as a canvas for her project. She wanted to create a sign for peace and friendship and sought the support of all the religious groups in Bremen. Today, representatives from all different religious backgrounds are part of the project: Muslim, Jewish, Ba'háí, Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist just to name a few, are involved supportively in the project.



*One end of the peace tunnel
Understanding is the Gate to Comprehension*

Regina, a trained graphic designer and art teacher, developed her design for the tunnel and embarked on the long road of convincing the owners German Railways (Deutsche Bahn), the city administration and the mayor at the time, Henning Scherf.

All parties are supporting the project but not financially. When asked why the town's public art department is not supporting the project, Regina replies that the city administration felt that her project was too simple to qualify, labelling her project as naïve art. Today, the Peace Tunnel is featured as an example of public art in Bremen by the city's administration and is well integrated into school curricula, churches and religious education, events staged by the city and many peace initiatives.



Dove with the Key of Bremen

Regina was not going to give up and with a support letter from the mayor she proceeded. The lack of financial support was addressed with the foundation of the Friedenstunnel Bremen setzt ein Zeichen e. V. (Peace tunnel Bremen sets a sign). This foundation takes tax deductible donations and finally in 2006 enough money was raised to start building the project.

Regina started with the fabrication of the mosaics for the fronts of the tunnel. The substrate shapes of the *Dove with the Key of Bremen* and *Tree of Life with the Lotus Flower* were made in stainless steel. The mosaic was then set into this framework .



Tree of Life with the Lotus Flower

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Regina and Kristin by one of the peace tunnel trees

The two entrance trees required a more complex approach to achieve the exact shapes. Gunnar Zropf, a sculptor, joined forces with Regina. First she produced an exact 1:1 cartoon of the trees. In situ, the two artists shaped the tree with a mixture of clay and straw. This served as the positive to make a plaster mould into which the concrete is poured for the substrate. Each tree consists of eight parts to allow easier handling. Finally Regina started work in her studio and placed the tesserae. When installed the trees turned out exactly how she imagined.

Asked how she learnt mosaicing she states “I just have it in my heart and head. I have studied many mosaics and mosaic artists’ methods. I admire this art form and love the meditative process of placing piece by piece to express the picture that I have in my imagination. I am self-taught. I am very happy to express my mosaic art in the PeaceTunnel.”



Detail of tree leaves



Concert in the peace tunnel

On Sunday I went to the tunnel and listened to the beautiful performance of violinist Milva Hosty. Standing in the tunnel, listening to the music and reading the peace messages was very grounding after all the horrible events in recent times.

The rainbow coloured light projected on the roof of the tunnel also casts a warm light on the mosaic strip with the word PEACE in 137 different languages. 82 tableaux with peace messages from around the world invite contemplation.



Regina Heygster is to be admired for her stamina, endurance and love for the project having been involved now for over 15 years! If you are ever in Bremen in Northern Germany, check it out!

Find out more about the tunnel on [Facebook](#)

Or see their website www.rembertitunnel.de

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Find out more about Kristin at www.barossamosaic.com