The old and the new, ancient craft and cutting-edge technology come together in the works of Japanese-born artist Megumi Naitoh. Naitoh’s pieces begin with a digital photograph of an individual which is then altered and pixilated on the computer and used to make silk screens for printing on clay. After numerous printings to achieve the desired color mix, the clay slab is cut into tiny tiles, bisqued, glazed, fired, and the completed tiles mounted onto a base and final imagery added. The resulting pieces are mosaics in the traditional sense and yet they are not. The first large series of wall pieces are recognizable as faces, although distorted faces; the later series are smaller, the size of computer monitors and the smallest, imitating iPhones. As the frame decreases in size, the image becomes less and less recognizable. In parallel with her work, Naitoh is exploring the effects – good and ill – that technology has had on modern society and whether, in creating new ways to communicate more broadly and more quickly, we are at the same time blurring our sense of identity and inhibiting our ability to form close relationships.

**ARTIST’S STATEMENT – MEGUMI NAITOHO**

“The work illustrates my fascination with the idea of revising the traditional mosaic in a contemporary approach. My interest in Byzantine and Roman Mosaic and in the current digital print media have resulted in production of these mosaic works of pixilated images.

I am interested in exhibiting visuals that articulate the overpowering of current technology. For the past 5 years I have been working with pixilated images that are a reflection of the fast-paced and frequently uncontrollable aspects of technology.

All the images are created from photographs and are digitally manipulated. Each work consists of thousands of small, colored ceramic tiles. They are arranged in a grid formation as pixels are laid out in a digital photo. These files have over 20 layers of prints and over 6 colors of underglazes.”


**RESUME – MEGUMI NAITOHO**

Born, Tokyo, Japan

1996 B.S., Applied Design, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

2000 M.A., M.F.A., 3D, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA

2000-2001 Adjunct Faculty, Emmanuel College, Massachusetts College of Art, The School of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

2002 Instructor, Art New England Workshop, Bennington College, VT

2002-present Assistant Professor, Art, Emmanuel College, Boston, MA
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Adjunct Faculty, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Massachusetts Cultural Grant</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Juror’s Award, Annual Juried Show 2004, Essex Art Center, Essex, MA</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Solo Exhibition Award, The Clay Studio, Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Third Place, Ceramics Competition, Gallery International, Baltimore, MD</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Emerging Artist Award, NCECA 2007</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>LEAP Award finalist, Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh, PA</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>NCECA International Residency Award (Denmark)</td>
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**BIOGRAPHY - MEGUMI NAITOH**

Born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, Megumi Naitoh pursued her education in the United States, first at San Diego State University where she studied applied design and ceramics and then at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, receiving both an M.A. and an M.F.A. in 2000. Following her graduation she began teaching and since 2002 has been Assistant Professor of Art at Emmanuel College in Boston and Adjunct Faculty at Massachusetts College of Art. Naitoh recalls her native city as a “…dense city with its own strong traditions that was also flooded with the foreign culture of different countries,” a description that could also be given to Boston where she currently lives and works. The adaptations of one culture to another, sometimes successful sometimes not, intrigued Naitoh, as she saw the possibilities for enrichment for the blended societies. Her present work reflects the influence of another dense, multicultural city – ancient Rome – and specifically Naitoh’s interest in Roman and Byzantine mosaics. Equally influential on Naitoh is the myriad of technological advances that have transformed the way information is transmitted. As a member of a generation who grew up in a digital world, Naitoh is both familiar with and comfortable in this world, but at the same time she is interested in how technology in all its aspects affects contemporary life, both the individual and the greater society. “We create the technology, and yet technology controls our lives,” says Naitoh, “and for good and for ill the part it plays grows larger with each new discovery.

Roman mosaics and modern technology came together in 2001 when Naitoh visited the Worcester Museum of Art in Massachusetts to see the exhibitions *The Lost City of Antioch* with its stunning mosaics and contemporary artist Chuck Close’s portraits composed of small blocks of line and color. Drawing on that inspiration Naitoh created wall-sized mosaics composed of tiny tiles, portraits that are recognizable as such but which are distorted, and whose creation involves the use of very modern as well as very ancient techniques, cutting-edge technology and intensive hand labor. The process begins with a digital photograph of an individual. The photograph is then downloaded to the computer, Photoshopped to pixilate it, and then the resulting colors are separated into the standard CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) breakdown of computer images. Four silkscreens are then made, one for each color, which will be used as the negative for the print. She silkscreens the print onto thin slabs of clay, applying layer after layer to achieve the final color, adding in two extra colors to enrich the final value. Once the portrait has been reproduced on the clay, it is cut into small squares, varying in size, which are bisqued, then glazed and fired. The final step is to reassemble the pieces into a grid, using adhesive to attach the tiles to a solid base, often Plexiglas. Circuit board imagery is added.
around the images and along the top and bottom. The completed work is an image that appears in some ways like a traditional mosaic but in others like a computer printout, containing over twenty layers of prints, and revealing the subject of the piece in a new way.

Her next series was smaller, approximately the size of a computer monitor screen, and the portraits now altered, more abstract. Although they are still recognizable as portraits, the identity of the individual is no longer clear, blurred the way identities on the Web are also often blurred. More recently Naitoh has done much smaller versions, her “iPhone” series, named after the popular cell phone and roughly the same size and configuration. Again, the portraits are pixilated but now barely recognizable in the confined space; interestingly, the portraits sharpen focus as the viewer moves away – perhaps a statement about the individual regaining his focus as he moves away from his digital connection.

It is not just the technique, however, that ties Naitoh’s work to the Roman inspiration. “The Romans created mosaics of scenes from their daily lives…I am also creating mosaic out of our daily lives, specifically online activity,” Naitoh says. However, these digital mosaics differ in an important way. “Historically, mosaic was a way to reveal imagery and design, yet in our contemporary culture it is used in an opposite manner – to obscure nudity, identity, or an obscene gesture…Many of us probably have more than a couple of alternative online identities to blog, shop, pay bills, or maybe meet people. However, we rarely disclose our real names online. The current phenomena of Facebook and YouTube remind us of our strong desire to reach people, yet we are fearful of revealing our identities.”

Even the titles of the work reflect the obscuring of identities: the first pieces carry the names of the individuals while the computer-size ones have only the initials of the individual and their file number.

Naitoh has exhibited in a number of shows; has been awarded an NCECA Emerging Artist Award and also an NCECA International Residency Award; and has her work included in several private collections as well as the Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ.

4. Ibid.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY – MEGUMI NAITOH

Books and Catalogs


Periodicals


**GALLERY REPRESENTATION – MEGUMI NAITOH**

Madelyn Jordon Fine Art, 14 Chase Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

**WEB SITES – MEGUMI NAITOH**

[http://www.meguminaitoh.com](http://www.meguminaitoh.com)
Web site for Megumi Naitoh

[http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/2aa/2aa656.htm](http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/2aa/2aa656.htm)
Two essays from exhibition catalog *Terrors and Wonders: Monsters in Contemporary Art*.

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Statement by Megumi Naitoh

Artist statement – Naitoh

[http://emmanuel.edu/Departments/Art/Faculty_and_Staff/New_Faculty_Bios/Megumi_Naitoh.html](http://emmanuel.edu/Departments/Art/Faculty_and_Staff/New_Faculty_Bios/Megumi_Naitoh.html)
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Article on exhibition “Bitmapped Characters: Ceramic Tiles by Megumi Naitoh.”

Artist statement and resume, Naitoh, on Madelyn Jordon Fine Art web site

http://issuu.com/webbooks/docs/vewbook/25
Photo, brief description of Naitoh from Emmanuel College Viewbook

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