

Dazzling art gets a helping hand from JM

An artist in Indiana discovered the wonders of GoBoard® years ago. Typically used in bathrooms and kitchens for tile floors, walls, countertops and showers, this artist uses GoBoard regularly as the base for her beautiful mosaic art.

Artist Nancy Keating creates beautiful, intricate mosaics. And although you can't see it in the finished products, Johns Manville is there too, playing a supporting role.

GoBoard®, JM's tile backer board, serves as the substrate that Keating builds many of her artwork pieces on. She uses it in her own artwork, as well as for student projects in classes that she teaches. And recently, Keating put GoBoard to work in a big way – 440 square feet to be exact.

"It's lightweight, easy to use and cut, and can hang outside," Keating said in reference to using GoBoard. "I've never had any problems with GoBoard, it's great."

GoBoard is an ultra-lightweight, waterproof, durable tile backer board, used for bathrooms, showers, tub surrounds, mud rooms, kitchen backsplashes and more. It is also approved for exterior applications anywhere tile is installed. This includes mosaics when properly installed according to manufacturer's instructions and using exterior-rated mortars and grouts.

Cosmic Flow Mural

Keating was commissioned to create two large-scale mosaics for her hometown, Carmel, Indiana. The artwork was installed on two sides of a parking garage in the center of the city. With all the colors and iridescent backgrounds, the mosaics (one in hot and one in cool colors) morph throughout the day with the changing sunlight.

The cool toned mosaic is about 40 feet tall, and 5 feet wide, built on 3'x5' GoBoard, while the hot colored mosaic is about 20 feet tall and 6 feet wide, built on 4'x6' GoBoard (cut down from 4'x8' sheets).

For a project that is permanently installed outdoors, like Cosmic Flow, the substrate had to be able to handle the variety of weather that Indiana sees, including rain and snow. Being waterproof as well as resistant to freeze/thaw cycles, GoBoard was the winner.

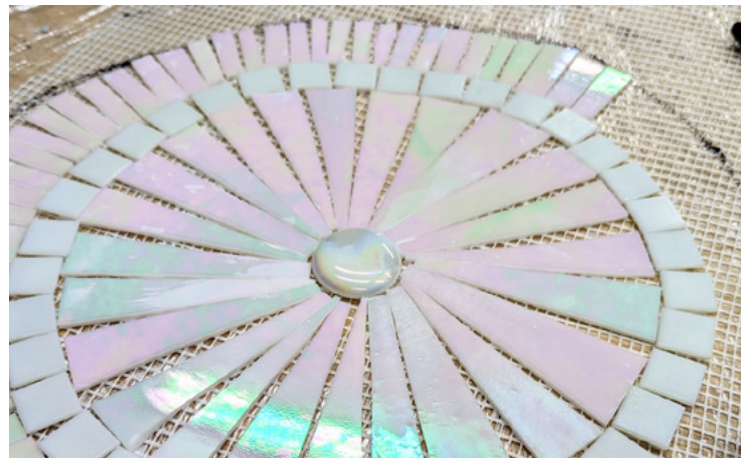
"When I called up reps for other backer boards on the market and talked to them about the project, they really poo-pooed an exterior application, said that's not what it's for," Keating recalled.

PRODUCT
GoBoard®

LOCATION
Carmel, Indiana

INSTALLER
Poynter Sheet Metal





"I called my GoBoard representative at JM and the folks there were so nice and said yes, of course, outside was no problem. JM's tech people were really wonderful when I called and needed advice."

One of GoBoard's great traits is that it is lightweight, making it easy to use. However, Keating knew that when she added all the mosaic glass and mortar to it to create her art, the substrate would need to be a little sturdier to handle the weight.

She engineered a type of frame on the backside made of PVC, adhering it with GoBoard washers. It could then withstand the weight of the mosaic, and the framing also assisted with installation. The city helped create a system of clips, somewhat like a French cleat system, on the sides of the building for the mosaic boards to connect to, giving it about 2 inches behind the mosaic for airflow.

The majority of the mosaic glass was sourced from Kokomo Opalescent Glass in Indiana. The factory has been manufacturing art glass products since 1888 and is a "treasure of Indiana," which Keating said added to the commission of her artwork since she'd be using locally sourced materials.

"My adhesive is thin-set mortar, and thin-set mortar loves GoBoard!" she said. "It's a great combination."

The entire project took around a year from concept to installation. Keating does all the work – from selecting and cutting the glass to adhering everything – herself.

"I'm big on fabrication, and on fabricating it right," Keating said. "You can make a beautiful mosaic, but if it falls apart, then it's not pretty. So 50% is doing it right and the other 50% is the art. That's the easy part. Choosing and using the right products, doing it right, that's really important."

Discovering GoBoard

Keating started "fooling around" with mosaic art in the early 1990s. She'd been fascinated by a mosaic table that she purchased, saying she knew it "could have been done better" so she started experimenting. Back then, there was no YouTube, no classes, not much to guide her. She eventually discovered the Institute of Mosaic

Art in California (the only place teaching such art at the time) and then continued working at her craft.

For years, she'd been using a different backer board that was "a lot heavier and harder to cut and three times the price!" When Keating had some bathroom remodel work done in a rental property she owns, there were some scraps of GoBoard left.

"I asked my installer, 'What is this stuff?' and he said GoBoard," Keating said. "I'd never used it and from then on it was like, 'Give me all your scraps!' I didn't realize there was an alternative to what I had been using."

She purchases ¼" and ½" GoBoard from her distributor, Louisville Tile in Fishers, Indiana. Keating uses GoBoard for many of her personal art projects, and also uses it for her students. She offers workshops, usually three to five sessions in length, every couple of months.

"My niche is these women who are empty nesters or have just retired and have the time and income and want to do something for themselves," Keating said. "I also offer kits, which include precut glass and the grout and I use GoBoard in those as well."

The kits started during the Covid pandemic, when galleries and art festivals were closed and teaching in person wasn't an option. She filmed a 30-minute tutorial in her studio for the beginner mosaic kits, and they flew off her shelves. Thanks to the kits, GoBoard is part of artwork created all over the country, including Alaska and Hawaii.

"I can tell you with my students, everyone wants to put something outside, and with GoBoard I tell them, yes, you can put it outside!" she said.

Keating noted she is "certainly not the only mosaic artist out there using GoBoard." She's happy to have found a product that is easy to work with and can hold up to her rigorous demands so that she can continue to bring beautiful artwork to her community and beyond.

Learn more about Nancy Keating's art at [MosaicsGarden.com](https://www.mosaicsgarden.com).

For JM customer support or technical assistance, call 1-800-293-3393.