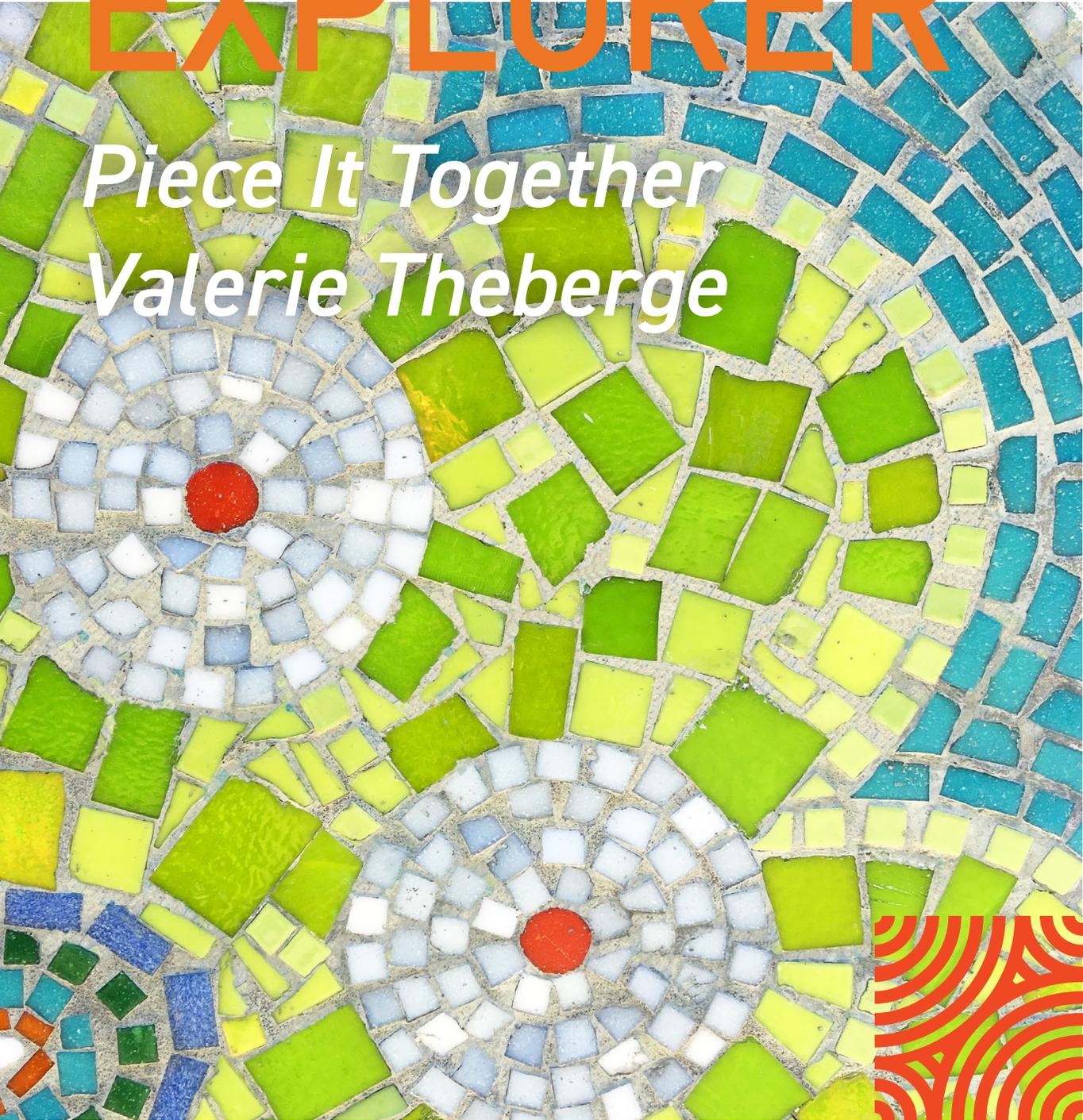


PUBLIC ART EXPLORER

Piece It Together
Valerie Theberge



PIECE IT TOGETHER

VALERIE THEBERGE (b. 1969)



Emerge

2010

Glass & mirror mosaic tiles, stained glass
Glade Drive Underpass
Map #1



Flux

2013

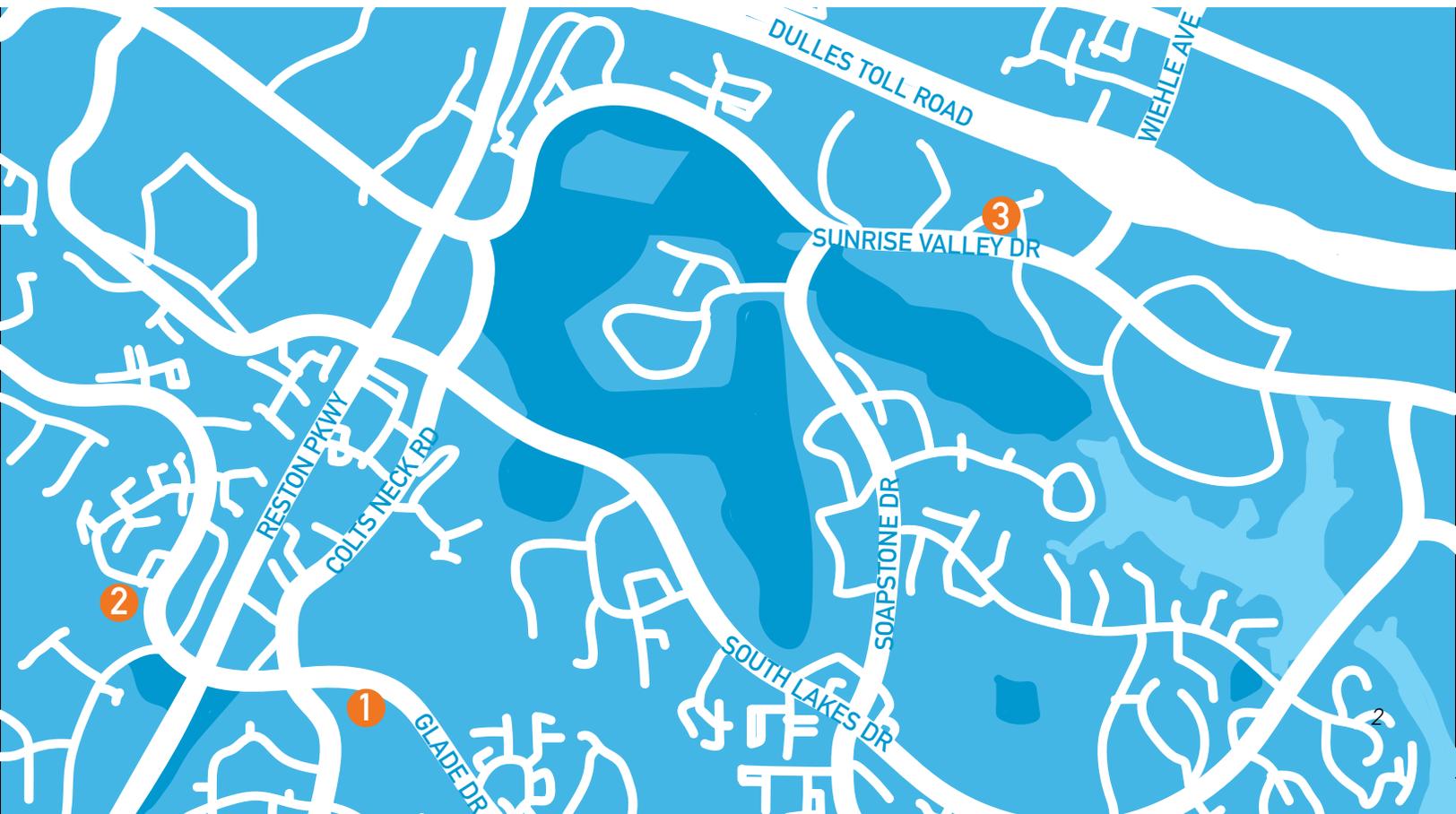
Glass & mirror mosaic tiles, stained glass
Dogwood Pool
Map #2



Continuum

2020

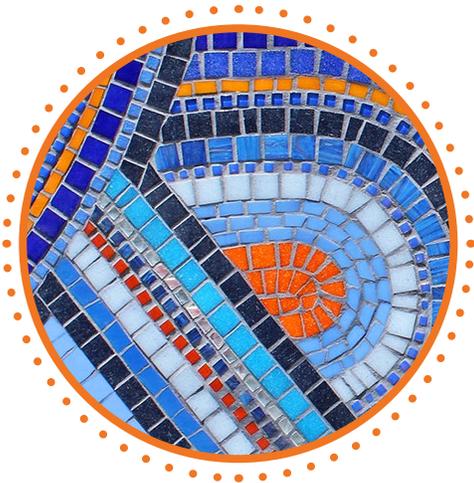
Wall: glass & mirror mosaic tiles; Bench: polystyrene, fiberglass mesh, glass & mirror mosaic tiles
Lincoln at Wiehle Station
Map #3



LEARN

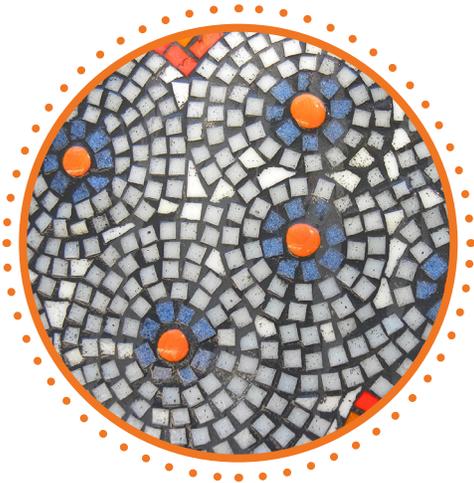


Who is Valerie Theberge?



A Mosaic Artist

This means Valerie Theberge (pronounce Teh-berj) is someone who creates images using pieces of things like glass tiles and mirror placed close together. The pieces of a mosaic are called **tesserae*** (pronounced tess-ah-ray). Theberge didn't set out to make mosaics. After graduating from art school, she spent time studying in China. There, she learned to make mosaics — and discovered that she loved doing them! Returning to her hometown of Washington, D.C., she set up a studio to practice her new skill and make works of art. With mosaics, she creates **abstract**, playful designs for **sculptures**, **murals**, fountains, and even benches in ways that bring her ideas to life.



A Shape Shifter

Now we're not saying Valerie Theberge can change her shape (although that would be cool), but rather her mosaics transform walls and three-dimensional sculptures into shimmering, lively surfaces. The brightly colored pieces of glass and mirror that make up *Emerge* at the Glade Drive underpass look different in sunlight and in the shade. The same thing happens when water sprays up and over *Flux* at Dogwood Pool. Both of these mosaics are made up of thousands of small pieces that join together to form interconnecting **organic shapes**, the kind without straight edges or equal measurements. Theberge likes to use curving and twisting lines that can feel like they are moving. Imagine your eyes and your body also moving when you look at them!

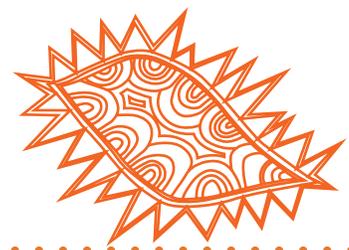


A Community-Minded Artist

Theberge likes to make **public art** in outdoor settings for all to see and enjoy. She also has fun making art with kids. For both *Emerge* and *Flux*, Theberge taught elementary school students in Reston to make mosaic pieces that became part of the final artwork (hint: look for the stars on the walls and squares in the benches.) Along with artist Shahin Talishkhan, she led workshops at two Reston elementary schools where kids helped create *Mosaic Birdhouse Poles* and a *Mosaic Birdbath* to attract feathered friends. For Theberge, mosaic is a great way to teach kids about using pattern and color in their own designs. To see even more of her artworks visit www.valerietheberge.com.

*Go to page 10 to see the definitions for the words in bold!

FUN FACT



Theberge's art is part of skate parks in Maryland and Colorado! She wanted these mosaics to capture the energy and movement of skateboarders. To do this, she watched them in action and observed, "To be airborne and fly – there's something really beautiful about that."

Imagine creating a mosaic for a skate park, the outside of your school or a place where you do a favorite activity. How could you capture the movements in that activity or say something about a particular place using patterns and colors? Make a collage in the space provided below using shapes cut out of magazines, newspapers and construction paper and arrange them close together like mosaic pieces to create your design!



WATCH

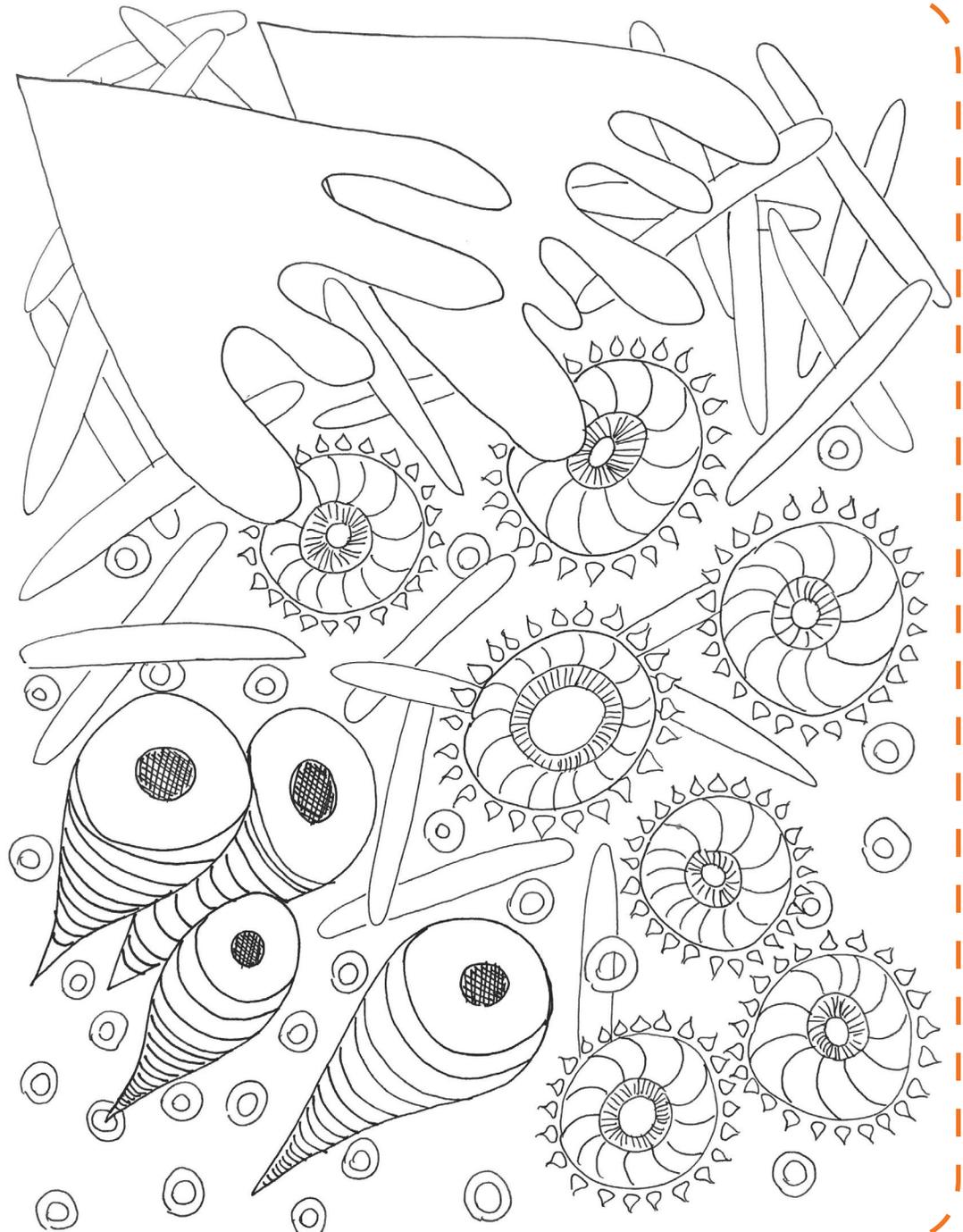
Click this [link](#) to see Theberge making *Emerge* for the Glade Drive underpass. This is an excerpt from the film "Emerge," accessible [here](#) on the Public Art Reston Youtube channel.

EXPLORE



Tiny, invisible **microorganisms** fascinate Theberge. A film called "[Powers of Ten](#)" also inspires her because the camera goes under the surface of our skin to see the tiny organism inside us. The **variety** of shapes that make up cells, amoebas, even viruses also inspire her art. Theberge likes the idea of turning shapes that feel like they are moving into

ones that are permanent and solid. She often starts by creating an outline of her shapes and then fills them in with different colors and more shapes to make patterns out of many small mosaic tiles, kind of like the way our cells look in our bodies! Let these shapes created by Theberge inspire you to finish the drawing with your own "microorganisms."



EXPLORE



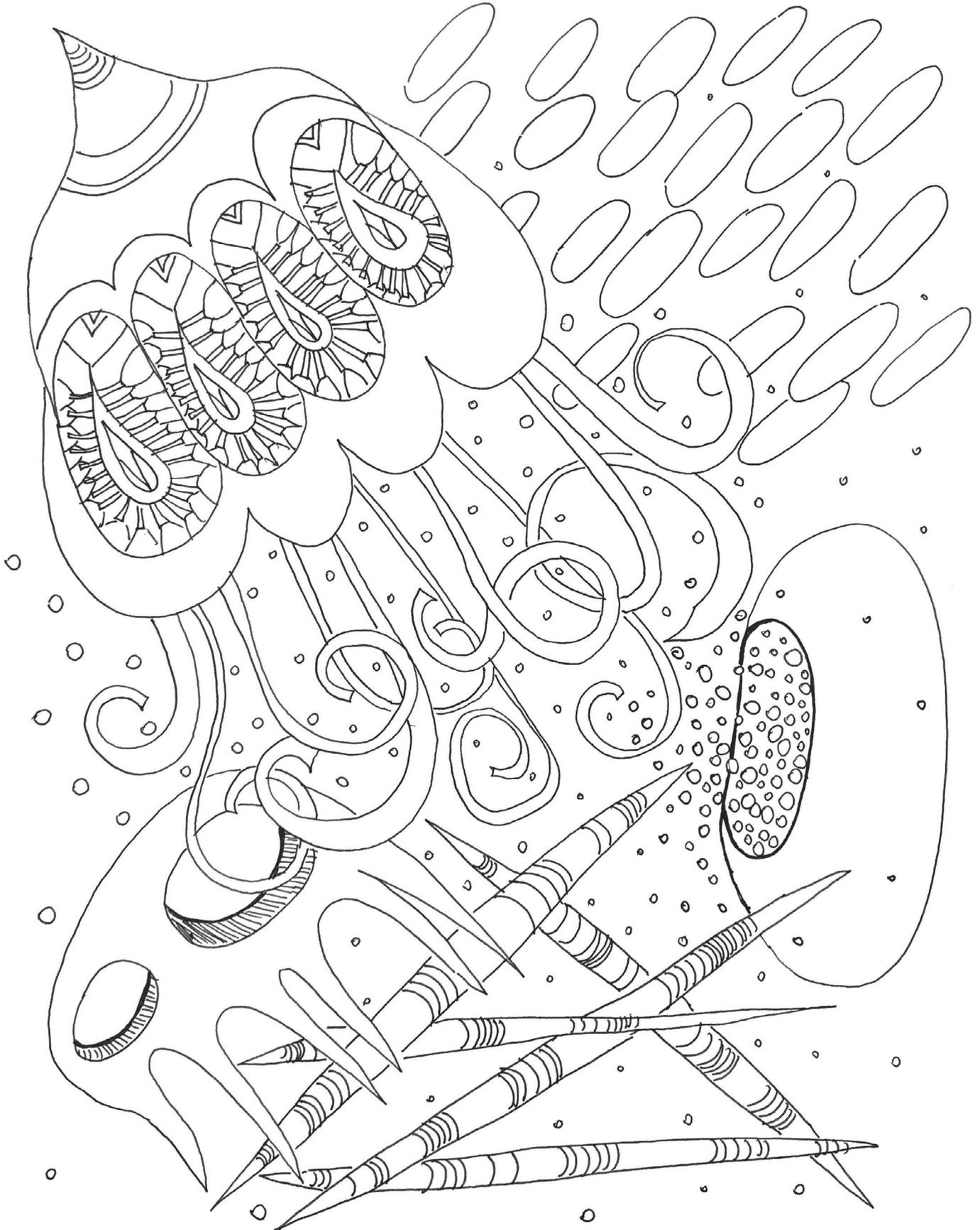
Here is another drawing by Theberge to inspire more of your own designs and colors.



EXPLORE



Color in this drawing by Valerie Theberge with your favorite bright and exciting colors!



CREATE: AT HOME

PIECE IT TOGETHER: MAKE A MOSAIC

(All ages, but younger children may need assistance)

Follow [this link](#) to watch Theberge demonstrate steps for making a simple mosaic mirror or freeform mosaic on a wood board with glue, glass mosaic tiles, mirror or other common household objects.

An even simpler mosaic can also be made with pieces of colorful paper, scissors and glue!

MATERIALS:

- A variety of glass mosaic tiles (can be found in craft stores and online), a small mirror (optional), and items like old keys, pennies, flat rocks/pebbles, metal washers and anything else that could work in your design
- A small wood board or a sturdy piece of cardboard
- Elmer's glue for applying the pieces

PUZZLE IT OUT

(All ages, but younger children may need assistance)

Make your own puzzle that will fit together without gaps – like the pieces in a mosaic! Using a sturdy piece of paper, create your own designs inspired by the shapes you see in works by Theberge or from your imagination. You can also use a piece of wrapping paper with a fun design pasted to paper or cardboard.

Create your puzzle pattern using a pencil and ruler to create straight lines or draw freeform lines that you will cut with scissors. Have some fun mixing the pieces up and putting them back together. Once you have completed it a few times, share it with someone else. It would make a fun present for your favorite puzzle lover!

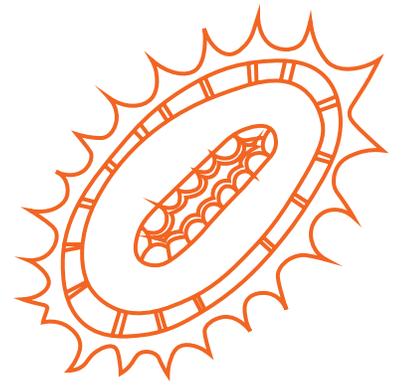
MATERIALS:

- Paper, wrapping paper
- Colorful markers, crayons or colored pencils
- Scissors



Photo: Detail of *Flux*. Draw some inspiration from its colors and patterns for your own mosaic or puzzle!

BE CREATIVE: ON-SITE



MINDFUL MOSAICS

Just as artists use their creativity, looking at art can also be creative. You don't need any special knowledge to understand a work of art, just an open mind, some extra time, and your imagination. Did you know that the average time spent looking at a work of art is around 20 seconds? Try looking at *Emerge*, *Flux*, or *Continuum* for 20 seconds. Turn away and using your memory, describe in words or a drawing what you noticed. Now look back at it and see how many details you remembered. Do you think it was enough time to really see it?

For Theberge, creating art is never rushed. To make her mosaics, she slows down her mind to focus on what she is doing and to be fully present in the moment. By doing so, she lets the work guide her to where the pieces should go. She uses her inner voice and her **intuition** to place the pieces one after the other until she senses that the mosaic is finished. Has your pencil ever told you where it wants to go?

What happens when we slow down and take the time to really look at art? We may only notice a few things the first time we look. What can we discover if we spend time looking more closely? While you are visiting *Emerge*, *Flux* or *Continuum*, take a moment to close your eyes and let all of your thoughts drift away. Clear your mind so you can be completely in the moment. Now spend five minutes looking closely at the artwork. When you are done, share your observations.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

- Pencil and paper
- Your eyes and some patience

Consider bringing portable chairs to make the experience of looking at *Emerge* more comfortable (*Flux* has built-in benches and picnic tables and *Continuum* has a bench beside it!)

While you look closely think about what the art makes you **FEEL**, **THINK**, and **WONDER**:

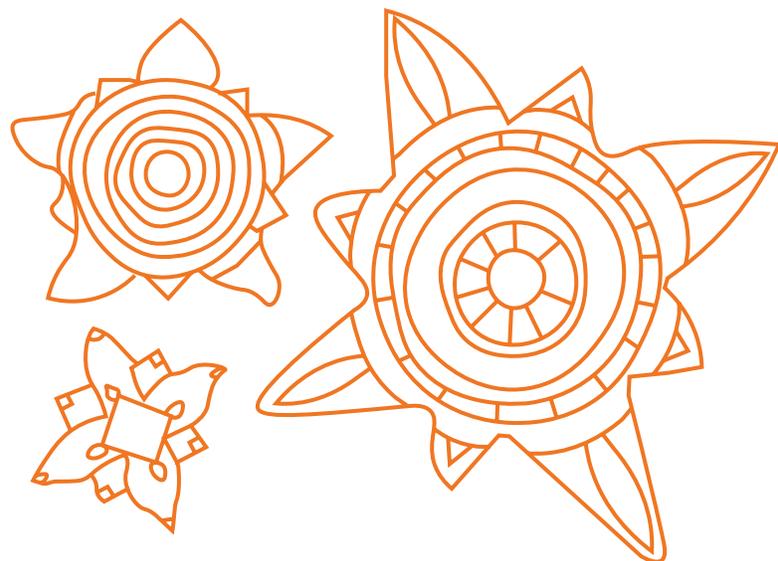
- What are some of the first things you notice?
- What do the shapes remind you of?
- What words would you use to describe them?
- How would you describe the color?
- What patterns do you notice?
- What would you like to ask Theberge about her work?



Photo: Valerie Theberge working on the design *Emerge* in her studio.

WORDS TO KNOW

- Abstract:** Art that does not try to look like things in our everyday world. It uses colors, lines and shapes, but they are not intended to look exactly like certain objects or living things
- Intuition:** Having the ability to know or understand things without any proof or evidence
- Microorganism:** Tiny life form, especially a bacteria, virus, or fungus that can only be seen with a microscope
- Mosaic:** Technique using small pieces of stone, glass, mirror and other materials and arranged next to each other to form a design
- Mural:** Large painting or mosaic made directly on a wall
- Organic:** Curvy or irregular shapes like those found in nature
- Public Art:** Any artwork purposefully made for and placed in a public site and accessible to everyone
- Sculpture** Three-dimensional artworks that are representative or abstract
- Tesserae:** Pieces of glass, mirror or other materials used to make a mosaic
- Three-Dimensional:** Objects with length, height and depth



Valerie Theberge worked with students to make *Emerge* – they made the stars! Color in the stars above and draw a few of your own!

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Project Director — Anne Delaney
Research and texts — Phoebe Avery
Design and illustrations — Abigail Fundling
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Public Art Reston seeks to inspire an ongoing commitment to public art and create a new generation of artworks in Reston.

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