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The Spiral : East Bayside Community Mosaic

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East Bayside is a United States neighborhood of Portland, Maine that early on served industrial commercial and residential uses.

It has historically attracted immigrants from many nations such as Ireland, Scandinavia and Italy , but most recently, Islamic immigrants from Somalia, Sudan and Iraq have populated the landscape.

Due to the uncommon presence of Islamic culture and practice, many of the most recent immigrants have quietly existed with very little integration.

I was invited in 2016 to Portland as Artist-in-Residence by the University of Southern Maine to make an artistic attempt to ease the said integration of the Islamic immigrants in the area.

This work, The Spiral is a mosaic that permitted the involvement of all community members as well as the students of University of Southern Maine coming from various disciplines and serving as assistants and community mobilizers of the neighbors.

The mosaic technique used, permitted involvement through the use of an under-glass painting technique practiced in Senegal, which permits motivational words, poetry, painted images to be incorporated into the work and by the artist or participant.

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Donated objects were also made use of to further personalize the work. Many community members contributed a colorful footprint on glass that was incorporated into the work, spiraling out from its center representing the various members of this diverse community.

Many Islamic participants amongst others, were enthusiastically involved.
