



Educational Resources

HISTORY OF PHILADELPHIA'S MAGIC GARDENS

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- A brief introduction to the history of Philadelphia's Magic Gardens (PMG)
- Reading materials created by PMG
- A virtual tour of PMG's outdoor sculpture garden
- Newspaper articles about the creation of PMG
- A 10-minute video of the history of PMG and Isaiah and Julia Zagar
- Educational videos about PMG
- Crafting videos related to creating mosaics and the materials used in them

INTRODUCTION

Philadelphia's Magic Gardens (PMG) is an immersive mixed media art environment that is completely covered with mosaics. It is the largest public artwork created by the Philadelphia-born artist Isaiah Zagar (born 1939). The site, which covers five city lots, is made up of two indoor galleries and a bi-level outdoor sculpture garden. It is constructed from handmade tiles, salvaged building materials, bottles, bicycle wheels, mirror, and international folk art. Isaiah also describes the work as a journal of his life, including images of friends and family, significant words and phrases, and artistic influences.



PHILADELPHIA'S MAGIC GARDENS TODAY

Isaiah has devoted himself to beautifying the South Street neighborhood since the late 1960s, when he moved to the area with his wife Julia. The couple helped spur the revitalization of the area by renovating derelict buildings and, with other artists and activists, transformed the neighborhood into a prosperous artistic haven. (For more information, see PMG's Education Resources about Isaiah & Julia Zagar and South Street & the Community.)

Isaiah has created mosaic murals for more than five decades, resulting in hundreds of public artworks.



ISAIAH ZAGAR MOSAICKING
THE EYE'S GALLERY, CIRCA 1970S

ISAIAH ZAGAR MOSAICKING A WALL, 1970S



JULIA ZAGAR IN FRONT OF THE MOSAICKED COURTYARD OF
PHILADELPHIA'S MAGIC GARDENS, 1996

In 1986, the Zagars purchased the first building on the property that would eventually become PMG. Isaiah made the upstairs his art studio and began transforming the building as he had done with other properties he owned in the neighborhood. In 1991, Isaiah started working on the vacant lots located near his studio at 1020 South Street.

He first mosaicked the buildings on either side of the property, and then spent years sculpting multi-layer walls out of found objects. In 2004, the Boston-based owner of the lots discovered Zagar's installation and decided to sell the land, calling for the work to be dismantled.

Unwilling to witness the destruction of the now-beloved neighborhood art environment, the community rushed to support the artist. In 2008, PMG opened to the public and visitors now have the opportunity to participate in tours, art activities, hands-on interpretive experiences, workshops, concerts, exhibitions, and much more.



PHILADELPHIA'S MAGIC GARDENS BEING CONSTRUCTED, 1998



PHILADELPHIA'S MAGIC GARDENS' CONTINUED CONSTRUCTION, 2006

PMG RESOURCES

- [*Philadelphia's Magic Gardens: The Dreamwork of Isaiah Zagar*](#), a coffee table book edited by PMG Executive Director Emily Smith, including photographs by David Soffa
 - [*An Educational Guide to Philadelphia's Magic Gardens*](#), a brief overview of PMG history, materials, references and influences
 - A [brochure](#) that provides an introduction to Isaiah Zagar and PMG, as well as a map that shows the many murals Isaiah has created in the vicinity of South Street; it is available in [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), and [German](#)
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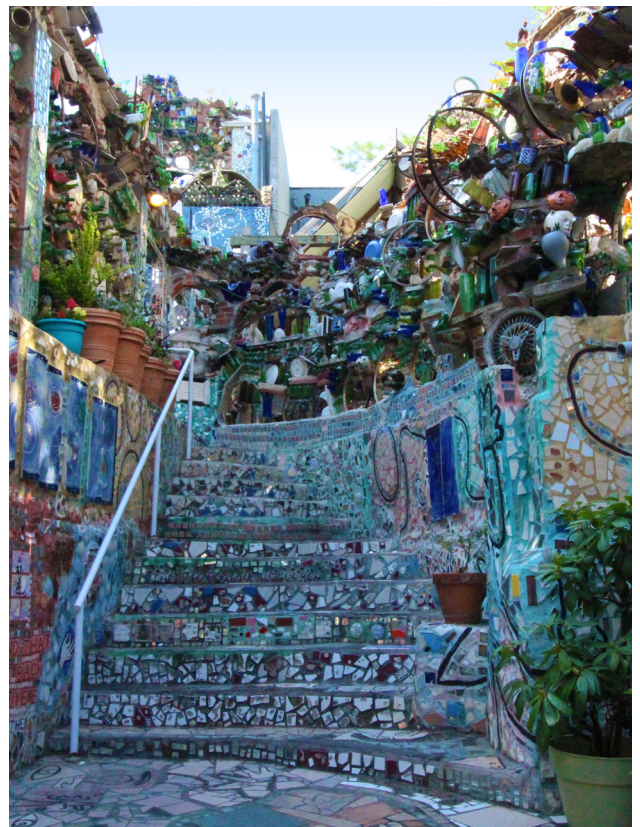
VIRTUAL TOUR

- [A web-based tour](#) that allows you to explore PMG's outdoor sculpture garden in high-definition
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NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* writer [Stephan Salisbury](#) wrote many articles about PMG over the years. These articles brought attention to the artwork and helped save the property from being destroyed.

- "[South St. Icon threatened](#)," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stephan Salisbury, May 11, 2004
- "[Plan to sell South Street lot brings artist support](#)," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stephan Salisbury, May 14, 2004
- "[Artwork may escape eviction](#)," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stephan Salisbury, June 27, 2004
- "[South St. Sculpture garden saved by unknown benefactor](#)," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stephan Salisbury, November 18, 2004
- "[Garden no longer secret](#)," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Julie Stoiber, December 17, 2005
- "[A Magic Garden Digs In](#)," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stephan Salisbury, October 25, 2006



VIDEOS

- [Introduction to Philadelphia's Magic Gardens](#), a 10-minute overview of the history of PMG and Isaiah and Julia Zagar
 - [You Belong Here](#), a video that demonstrates why spaces like PMG are so important
 - [A short tour](#) that explores the personal references Isaiah Zagar includes throughout PMG
 - [GoPro Tour of the Basement](#), a walkthrough of PMG's fully mosaicked basement which is opened only for guided tours
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CRAFTING VIDEOS

- [Paper mosaics](#), learn to create simple mosaics using materials from home
- [Lasagna mosaics](#), use pasta and shelving paper to make mosaics that look like stained glass
- [Mini tile mosaic activity](#), make a mosaic using school glue and colored sand (you can also use glitter!)
- [Mosaic medallions](#), make a miniature mosaic inside a jar lid

