Philadelphia’s Freedom Artist Spotlight
Interview with Jonathan Mandell

What made you want to submit artwork to the exhibition?
I wanted to show that artists are still plowing ahead, creating new work with the hope that the public will continue to embrace the visual arts.

How do you personally define freedom?
Freedom is the ability to provide and live according to one’s values with a respect for others and their journeys as well.

How would you describe your art?
I create wall mounted panels and sculptures using ceramic tile, hand blown glass shards and lapidary. My focus is on using my grout lines as drawing lines, so that they establish depth perspective and the volume of form.

How would you describe your process in making art?
I have a few different processes. With some pieces, I create “mosaic” drawings where I design the tile shapes in advance creating a template for me to transfer them on to tile. Some mosaics are created with a more spontaneous approach where I white-wash the surface and make my aesthetic solutions based on completed sections. Unlike most painting processes, I complete my art in sections, rather than gradually building up the surface.

What mediums do you primarily work with?
Mosaic has been my primary medium over the last thirty years. As an outgrowth of my process, I produce direct to digital “mosaic” drawings. Some are transferred into actual tile mosaics and others stay as stand-alone prints. Additionally, I have created a handful of paintings over the years.

How does the concept of freedom in this exhibition influence how and what you create as an artist?
It is rare that I am given complete artistic freedom, in that much of my work has been commission based. I embrace the idea of partnering with clients in the creative process. My belief is that there is an infinity of possibilities in developing a new piece of art. Whether my clients are setting the parameters, or I am, there still remains an infinity of choices.