

# City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Room 402, City Hall  
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 050085)

## RESOLUTION

Honoring artist Isaiah Zagar for his 35 year commitment to make Philadelphia a “labyrinthine mosaic museum” and his dedication to saving Philadelphia’s Magic Gardens.

WHEREAS, Isaiah Zagar was born at Philadelphia’s Osteopathic Hospital in 1939 and received his Bachelor’s of Arts from the Pratt Institute in 1959; and

WHEREAS, In 1959, Isaiah was introduced to the folk art environment of Clarence Schmidt’s, *My Mirrored Hope* in Woodstock, New York. In 1960, at the Museum of Modern Art, he witnessed a groundbreaking exhibition that included assemblages of artists like Pablo Picasso, Jean Dubuffet, Curt Schwitters, Antonio Gaudi along side of untrained brickaleurs Clarence Schmidt, Simon Rodia and Joseph Ferdinand Cheval that gave him the rationale to include their concepts as manifestations of fine art. At a crucial time in his life, Isaiah discovered the influences that allowed him to begin his life's work and truly helped transform the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Isaiah returned to Philadelphia’s South Street in 1968 when much of the Street and the surrounding area was blighted. Over the past 35 years, Isaiah’s creativity and zeal has helped revitalize South Street and make it Philadelphia’s 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited tourist attraction; and

WHEREAS, Adults and children, residents and visitors marvel at Isaiah’s more than 73 different mosaic murals throughout the City including the Painted Bride Arts Center, the Eyes Gallery Façade and Interior, the Clay Studio’s entranceway, Church of the Crucifixion, St. Maria Goretti’s High School, Robin’s Bookstore and the South Street Magic Garden; and

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*RESOLUTION NO. 050085 continued*

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program has commissioned Isaiah to create a 729 square foot mural at the intersection of Berks and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets that will transcribe the Institute for Safe Families pledge, a writ recited by men with histories of family violence. The piece will be made up of porcelain, glass, ceramic and mirror and will contain 742 letters, each of which will be constructed from an equal number of focal point tiles; and

WHEREAS, Isaiah and his work have been recognized throughout the world with public collections located at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Hirschhorn Museum in Washington, DC. He has also received awards from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the National Endowment of the Arts and has been honored with residencies in India, China and throughout the United States. He and his work have been included in several books and he has been the subject of magazine articles in publications all over the world; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, Isaiah opened his studio at 1020-22 South Street. At the time, the adjacent property, 1024-26 South Street, was an abandoned lot littered with trash and inhabited by rats. With the owner's permission, Isaiah transformed the properties into what they are today, a wonderment of ceramic, mirror and glass; and

WHEREAS, In May 2004, the owner informed Isaiah that he would have to destroy the iconic Magic Garden or purchase the property. Isaiah began a grassroots campaign and gathered over 14,000 signatures to help save the property. Recently, Isaiah has formed a non-profit organization to raise money for the Garden, but in the meantime, he has mortgaged his own home in an effort to save this artistic treasure from the wrecking ball; now therefore

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors artist Isaiah Zagar for his 35 year commitment to make Philadelphia a "labyrinthine mosaic museum" and his dedication to saving Philadelphia's Magic Gardens.

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*RESOLUTION NO. 050085 continued*

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the third of February, 2005.

Anna C. Verna  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Patricia Rafferty  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers DiCicco and Blackwell

Sponsored by: Councilmembers DiCicco, Blackwell, Ramos, Council President Verna, Councilmembers Mariano, Kenney, Rizzo, Clarke, Tasco and Kelly