

A Children's Art Project On a Pretty, Grand Scale

By SUSAN HODARA

THROUGHOUT Westchester, children are creating Delftware-inspired tiles. An anticipated 2,000 to 3,000 elementary, middle and high schoolers from more than 30 school districts, Scout troops and summer camps will be participating in the Public Tile Project, the creation of a mile-long walkway in Peekskill lined with more than 500 Dutch-style ceramic tiles.

The genesis of the Public Tile Project resulted from a challenge faced by the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, the Peekskill-based nonprofit arts and education organization founded in 2004. In that year, as well as in 2005 and 2006, the center sponsored the Peekskill Project, featuring the work of local artists displayed in public spaces around the city.

But "visitors had trouble actually finding the artwork," said Livia Straus, the center's co-founder with her husband, Dr. Marc Straus. "We made art maps, but the question remained: how to delineate an art trail from the train station, through the city, to the museum."

Public Tile Project Benefit, May 30, 6 to 9 p.m., at Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, 1701 Main Street, Peekskill; \$35. (914) 462-3275; www.hvcca.org or e-mail info@peekskilleducationfoundation.org.

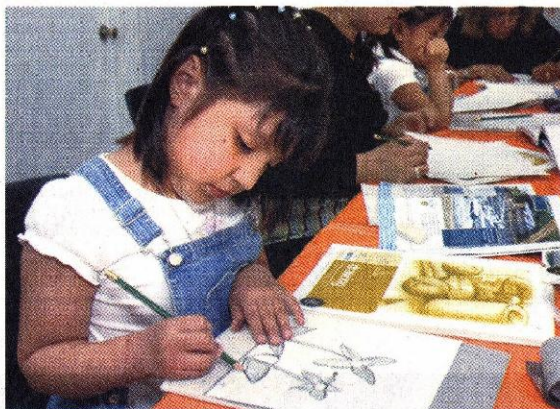
The solution emerged when the Westchester Arts Council released its call in early 2008 for participation in All Fired Up!, the annual countywide ceramics exhibition project held in the fall.

The Public Tile Project is the Center for Contemporary Art's contribution to this event. And since the tiles are designed to reflect the Dutch influence on Peekskill and the Hudson Valley, the project serves other objectives as well. One is marking the quadricentennial in 2009 of the discovery of the Hudson River by the British explorer Henry Hudson, who sailed to the region under the Dutch flag. Another is to coincide with the opening of the center's 2009 exhibition, "Double Dutch," presenting the work of several contemporary Dutch artists.

Mrs. Straus, who has a Ph.D. in Judaic Studies and is the center's president and acting director, said the project also involved educational aspects since students would "create tiles relating to the history of the Dutch in the Hudson Valley."

On Friday, a benefit for the Public Tile Project will be held at the center's 12,000-square-foot exhibition space in Peekskill. Special guests include Kees Van Twist, the director of the Groninger Museum in Holland and the Dutch cultural attaché in New York; and Robert Kloos, the director of visual arts and architecture at the Netherlands Consulate General in New York. Both men, who are working with the arts center to de-

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



SUSAN FARLEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

GOING DUTCH Brenda Serrano, 7, works on her contribution to the Public Tile Project. Designs inspired by the region's history and landmarks, right.

velop "Double Dutch," will discuss the area's Dutch history at the benefit, which is being cosponsored by the Peekskill Education Foundation.

"The Tile Project is ideal in terms of fulfilling our mission," said Jeffrey Stern, president of the foundation, which was established in 2002 to finance projects that enhance education in the Peekskill school district and to foster partnerships with other community organizations.

Sarah Haviland, a sculptor and art teacher at Westchester Community College, along with the sculptor and teacher Jo-Ann Brody, both of Mohegan Colony in Cortlandt, are the lead teachers

for the Public Tile Project and work with students and other teachers in schools throughout the county.

The tiles themselves are 8-by-10 inches; all designs use Larkspur and Blue Bonnet glazes made by Duncan, with yellow and red accent colors on a white background. Participating schools that have kilns are firing the tiles themselves; the other tiles are being fired through the Center for Contemporary Art, at the Westchester Art Workshop in Peekskill and at Ms. Brody's studio.

With the support of the City of Peekskill, the tiles will be embedded in sidewalks, roads and walls at intervals of about 18 feet. Student tiles will be in-



terspersed with traditional Dutch tiles donated by Royal Tichelaar Makkum, a ceramics factory that is the oldest business in Holland, also celebrating its 400th birthday in 2009.

Mrs. Straus said that some 50 student tiles had already been completed, including representations of the Underground Railroad; 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'; the local landscape; and the Half Moon, the ship Henry Hudson sailed while exploring the region in 1609.

"Each tile will be signed and titled by its maker," Mrs. Straus said.