

Hester Street Collaborative

Newsletter

Spring/ Summer 2004 Volume I Issue I



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Hester Street Collaborative is a Design/ Build community based non-profit, created to work with New York City communities to improve their neighborhoods

AN INTRODUCTION

In 1997 Leroy Street Studio was invited to collaborate with a Brooklyn-based Community Development Corporation, East New York Urban Youth Corp., on the design and fabrication of a new lobby and courtyard for a community center and affordable housing project in East New York. Working in conjunction with the future tenants and local volunteer artists, these public spaces were transformed with mosaic detailing and sculptural planters. The project's success inspired the foundation of Hester Street Collaborative, a design/build community-based non-profit.



MS 131 students fabricating mosaic "Wishing Wells" for the Wishing Garden

HSC: OUR MISSION

With a shortfall in both available affordable housing and in classroom space in New York City, optimizing economy and efficiency in the design of housing and school projects has been critical. Often funding for these projects has left limited opportunity to infuse their public spaces with creativity and delight.

Experience has shown that where community members are involved in the design and construction, projects are meticulously and conscientiously maintained over time; and neighborhood awareness, participation and pride are significantly enhanced.

Hester Street Collaborative was founded to bring together architects, artists, and community members to add a layer of joy and inspiration to these communal spaces. By working with tenants and students to improve their environments, this program aims to transform the way public spaces look, are used and are understood.



MS 131 Students back-fill soil around new corrugated steel "water element"

"GROUND UP" CELEBRATES THE OPENING OF THE WISHING GARDEN

Background: In 2002 Hester Street Collaborative started *Ground Up*, an educational program working with Public schools to develop students' awareness of their built environment. Through *Ground Up*, HSC has developed a syllabus that introduces students to architectural concepts through a series of design exercises and workshops geared toward building projects on their campuses.

Ground Up's first program was launched in conjunction with Manhattan's Middle School, MS 131, the Sun Yat Sen School on Hester Street between Eldridge and Fortsythe Streets. "The Wishing Garden," a sculpture garden on the northeast corner of the school's campus, is the culmination of two years of work in the classroom, in HSC's workshop and on site. Students from the classes of 2005 and 2006 conceived, designed and created the garden, with wishing wells of steel and mosaic; suspended aluminum "Dream Catcher" kinetic sculptures; collaged panels illustrating students' hopes for the future; and an undulating garden landscape with water abstracted in corrugated steel.

The Event: On Wednesday June 23, 2004 the garden will be dedicated by the students, the school and by Hester Street Collaborative to the community with an opening ceremony where students will discuss their work, the process of creating this project, and their inspirations behind it.

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View from Jamaica Bay in Canarsie, Brooklyn, site of proposed Sebago Canoe Club waterfront project

HSC, SEBAGO CANOE CLUB AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS KAPLAN GRANT

HSC and Sebago Canoe Club have been awarded a J.M. Kaplan Fund grant for \$50,000 to improve community waterfront access in Canarsie, Brooklyn.

Sebago Canoe Club is a not-for-profit paddling club that offers public access to Jamaica Bay through guided bi-weekly kayaking tours. They have been operating out of a derelict waterfront site since 1960 in an area that offers extremely limited access to the water's edge.

As part of a master plan developed by Shawn Watts and Rosemary Suh (with funding from the New York State Council on the Arts), HSC will be designing and building a promenade that will underpin and enhance existing public programs. The design will include a new gate, a landscaped footpath through the site, and a larger, safer dock that will accommodate large groups for instruction and launching, and a seating area that will allow dramatic water views. Once implemented, the project will increase the public's awareness of the local amenity and facilitate the safe enjoyment of the water's edge.

PROFILE: PETER DEMAS, PRODUCER, VIDEOGRAPHER, PHOTOGRAPHER, HSC VOLUNTEER

The first week Peter Demas moved to Hester Street in 2003, he came upon a workshop of children busily breaking tiles next door, in preparation for their *Ground Up* mosaic project. Intrigued, Peter offered to make a documentary of the evolution of the sculpture garden.



Documentarian Peter Demas at work

Demas is a filmmaker, producer and photographer who believes in giving back to the community. He has his credit documentary work for other non-profits, including "Donor's Choose"; his independent feature film, "Bloom" has been featured in several film festivals. Peter has made an enormous contribution to HSC, both recording the progress of the *Ground Up* project from the first soil delivery through the hanging of the dream catcher-mobiles, and by joining in with the work.

HSC FEATURED AMONG EMERGING ARCHITECTS IN NEW YORK

Hester Street Collaborative along with Leroy Street Studio were chosen as among New York's 15 "emerging talents" in the Spring edition of AIA New York Chapter's Oculus magazine. The firm has been invited to participate in the Center for Architecture's "Next" exhibit which will be on view at the HLW gallery from July 1st through August 7th 2004 at 536 LaGuardia Place, NYC.

HSC, FIFTH AVENUE COMMITTEE PLAN NEW ECONOMIC JUSTICE CENTER FOR BROOKLYN'S SUNSET PARK

HSC has begun planning for a new Economic Justice Center with the Brooklyn-based Community Development Corporation, The Fifth Avenue Committee, for a Brooklyn site near Sunset Park that has been donated by the city.

The concept behind the Economic Justice center grows out of the Fifth Avenue Committee's work through their Economic Justice Initiative. The building project, modeled on the Cuban microbrigade housing projects, will be conceived and executed by members of the community, skilled and unskilled construction worker; with the goals of the community creating spaces to suit their needs, of providing much needed job skills, and of strengthening neighborhood solidarity and cohesion.

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