

Boats on the Bay

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Students Link History, Art and Civic Action

What happens when a group of high school students are given ten weeks to develop a major civic art project, from concept to final installation? Ask Casey Brennan, instructor for the Build San Francisco Institute. Her response? "They go to work." This is what happened when her students took on the creation of sixteen ceramic tile installations for the Port of San Francisco's new public Pier 14.

The Build San Francisco Institute, a partnership between the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco and San Francisco Unified offers courses in design and urban studies along with internships in major San Francisco design and construction firms for high school jun-

iors and seniors. The program emphasizes the process through which San Francisco develops by offering students an opportunity to manage a project of civic importance. This spring, the students tackled the Pier 14 tiles installation.

"When Dan Hodapp, the Port's Director of Development came to me in February and asked if we would be interested in helping the Port create the tile installations for Pier 14, I jumped at the chance," says Casey. "I knew that it would be a challenge, but I also knew that it would be a great opportunity for the students to demonstrate their skills and talents, while learning how a city reaches out to the public through art."



Alex Arevalo Sketches a 1930's Tugboat



Clipper Ship "Flying Cloud"

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- In Spring of 2006, high school students in the Build San Francisco Institute created a major civic art project: The Pier 14 Ceramic Tile Installations
- Students from six San Francisco High schools worked on the project
- Each installation is an original work of art, designed and created by the students
- Each boat depicted has a special significance for the history of the Port of San Francisco

Developing the Project

The timeline alone was daunting – ten weeks to create a concept, get it approved by the Port, create the designs, glaze and fire the tiles and deliver the finished project to the Port's carpentry shop for installation. "At

one point I wasn't certain we could be able to meet the deadline," says Will Fowler, Build San Francisco Program Director. "I forgot that the number one rule in project based learning is: "Trust the kids. "

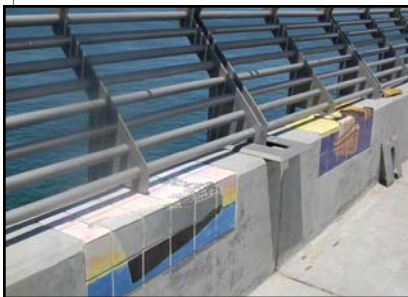
This group is one of the most dedicated bunch of students I've ever worked with. They were determined to succeed."



Fishing Boat

Organization is the Key

The organizational process the students developed was remarkable. Essentially they structured themselves along the lines of the design firms where they intern, with departments, managers, and clear cut task assignments for every student. Each student selected the department best suited to their talents. Thus the artistic / creative department managed the development of the artwork, a research department



The Tiles in Place

validated the choice of sketches as being appropriate for San Francisco Bay, a design department oversaw transfer of the sketches to finished tiles, and a tech department provided computer design work, imaging capabilities and documentation. The entire project was overseen by Justin Marks, a student who served as Production Coordinator. "The project challenged us to come together and submit our best artistic work for the Port," he states. "Just coming up with a common theme was challenging."

"We had to get our ideas approved by the Port, just like any design firm," says Casey, "But once the kids got rolling, there was very little for me to do, other than checking off finished pieces and delivering them to the kilns."



*Linh My Hoac and
Krista Thompson*

Learning the Trade

With the advice of Paul Lanier, noted Bay Area ceramicist, the students began work on the highly technical aspects of ceramic tile glazing and firing techniques. The sixteen installations comprised a total of 288 individual tiles, which had to be glazed by hand. The process required 22 bottles of ceramic glaze and six kiln firings to complete. "Each time we fired the tiles,

I held my breath," Casey says. "There was just no room for error."

The project required the students to use all of their academic skills, from research, to oral and written presentations, to mathematics, to art. While some students excelled at some of the skills, the group together had to work as a team so that all of these bases were covered. The result was a remarkable series of images, entitled



1930's Tugboat

"Boats on the Bay", a pictorial timeline of San Francisco's water traffic.

A Great Success

Alan Sandler, Executive Director of the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco states, "By bringing the process of design into the classroom, we help students make use of their academic learning in ways that make sense. The result is always the same – high levels of student success and achievement. "

On Friday, June 16, the students joined the dignitaries attending the

opening ceremony for Pier 14, a new urban space for citizens and visitors to enjoy. One of the best features of the space, besides its breathtaking views of the Bay Bridge, are the sixteen colorful ceramic tile installations that run along the low wall of the pier. . They are a testament to the colorful history of San Francisco's waterfront, and to the dedication and skill of the city's youth.

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