



HERALD NEWS PHOTO | JACK FOLEY

B.M.C. Durfee High School senior Bianca Sousa talks about the artwork she and classmate and best friend Natasha Sousa helped to create. The tile mural is on display in the Nagle Auditorium at the school.

Tiles with style

Durfee honors city's heritage with Portuguese mural

WILL RICHMOND

HERALD NEWS STAFF REPORTER

FALL RIVER — Underneath the curtain a beautiful, brown-haired woman sat, surrounded by a large peacock and green tree waiting to be seen.

The scene was the final result of a month and half worth of work by B.M.C. Durfee High School students to create a Portuguese tile mural that now hangs in the lobby of Nagle Auditorium.

To inaugurate the project, students in foreign language and art came together

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Lucinda Haettich, DOE PORTUGUESE EDUCATIONAL ADVISER

for a ceremony Friday morning full of art, music and Portuguese culture.

Students began working on the tile project in February with the assistance of a guest artist, Portuguese ceramist Bela Silva. To complete the 4-by-6-foot mural made of 96 6-inch square tiles, students researched the history of tile art and used

computer skills to model the mural and graph it in real size. Math, English and engineering skills were also employed to supplement the art needed to bring the mural to life.

The project was also assisted by the state Department of Education through

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Mural: Portuguese tile art project unveiled

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Portuguese Educational Adviser Lucinda Haettich, Fernanda Coelho from the Portuguese Consul in New Bedford and business sponsorships by bcpbank and other local organizations.

Both Haettich and Coelho told the students they came away impressed by the finished product.

"Art is an expression. ... It's a way of telling a tale personal or collective," Haettich said. "The images in these tiles speak to

you in the language of your choice and the more you learn about other cultures, the greater understanding you'll have of yourself. You have done a remarkable job."

Coelho remarked that the project has already drawn the interest of Portuguese officials on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

"This is a symbol of Durfee pride and also of great pride for me to be involved," Coelho said. "It's great to see so many people get involved in something that

adds to the culture of Durfee. You can also be sure this project has reached Washington (D.C.), and our embassy knows what's going on, and they are proud."

After the mural was revealed, students who worked on the project were quick to take pride in the tile they had painted or had a hand in creating, some feeling the contours of the paint that colored the woman's hair.

"It was a lot of work," junior Waleska Guadalupe said after inspecting a tile that made up part of the tree's trunk. "It was

hard to get all of the colors correct, and we didn't always have what we wanted, but she still looks nice."

Junior Heidee Zuluaga said she was happy to have the opportunity to participate in a project with such significance.

"It was a lot of fun," Zuluaga said. "But we had to work hard."

Along with the unveiling of the mural, Friday's ceremony also included the performance of Portuguese selections by the Durfee Orchestra and music by

the Gera Sons. In between the musical interludes, groups of students also presented reports on the history of Portuguese tile art in both Portugal and in Fall River and on the work done to complete the mural.

"I believe all of the students involved learned a lot about the city's cultural background," Angela Dispirito said.

Other students talked about the work that went into the mural.

"We brought a lot of talent

together to put this mural together," James Marcione said. "It took a lot of hard work and dedication to make something like this come out."

A public inauguration of the tile project will take place Sunday at 2 p.m. in the Nagle Auditorium and include student presentations, music by the Gera Sons and fado singer Catarina Avelar.

E-MAIL WILL RICHMOND AT
WRICHMOND@HERALDNEWS.COM.

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