

THE WAVES OF NARRAGANSETT 2008

Mika Seeger & Peter Geisser



Overview

The Waves of Narragansett, by artists Mika Seeger and Peter Geisser, is a 92 foot stoneware and porcelain relief made entirely by hand and fired in Seeger's Tiverton kilns. The piece took over a year to complete. The artists began working on the commission in the spring of 2007, meeting in design sessions with executives from Gilbane Development Company, town councilors, artists and historians from Narragansett. They spent many months researching the history of the town and talking with local experts.

The mural consists of six vignettes that chronicle the town of Narragansett's history.

Vignette Descriptions

The first panel shows the imagined pre-history of the town, depicting its flora and fauna.

In the second panel, perched on the wall is a young boy who is handing a Native American girl a quahog, which was a customary Narragansett Indian greeting.

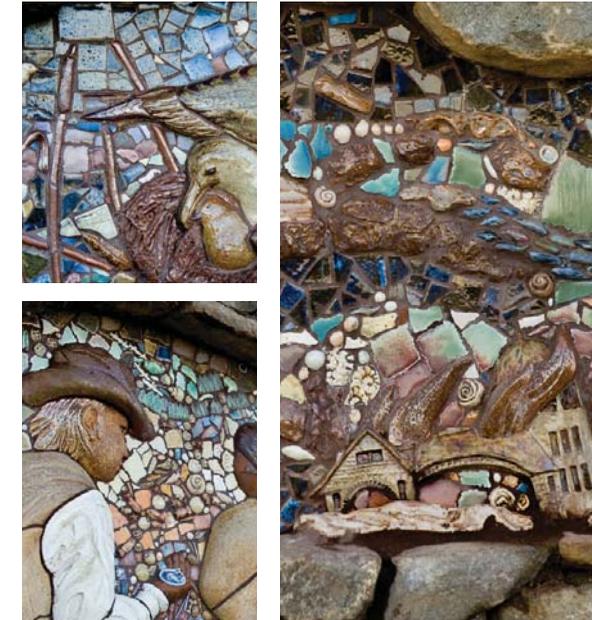
The third panel depicts a farming scene. In old Narragansett, farmers used to harvest seaweed to put on their crops as fertilizer. Access paths to good seaweed farming were closely guarded. Farmers used to pile the seaweed on hayricks to haul it back to their farms.

The fourth panel shows the heyday of Narragansett, when a large casino and many successful hotels lined the shore. Narragansett was a vacation destination for

people from all over the world. Women in hoop skirts holding parasols are pictured walking along the shoreline. At one time Narragansett had 3 piers and was a scene of bustling activity. People summured there every year, arriving by boat, and also took the ferry across the bay to Narragansett's sister city of Newport. The famous casino and many of the hotels were wooden and were lost to fire over the ensuing decades.

The fifth panel depicts the hurricane of 1938, with ships being tossed about on stormy seas. The picture of everyday objects, wooden barrel staves, parts of ships, all being violently tossed about gives a wonderful feeling of motion to this portion of the work.

In the sixth panel, a modern day fisherman sits quietly mending his nets, and things have settled down again.



THE WAVES OF NARRAGANSETT



A 92' long ceramic sculpture / tile history of Narragansett, Rhode Island

By Artists:
Mika Seeger & Peter Geisser

Commissioned By:
Gilbane Development Company

Located at the corner of Beach Street and
Narragansett Avenue | Narragansett, RI 02882

THE ARTISTS

Mika Seeger

Mika Seeger is a ceramic artist of 30 years experience. She has been commissioned to make work for the Chester Barrow School, the Essex Library in Tiverton, Hope Highland School in Cranston, the Wyman School and the Oakland Beach School in Warwick, and India Point Park in Providence.

Peter Geisser

Peter Geisser has worked in the arts and arts education for 40 years. He received the Pell Award For Artistic Excellence in June, 2008. His commissions include Hasbro Children's Hospital, the Cancer Center at Rhode Island Hospital, AS220, the Providence River Pavillion, and India Point Park in Providence.

Mika Seeger and Peter Geisser are currently working on a Rhode Island State Council On the Arts commission for the RI Youth Detention Facility. They are noted for their work in bringing people together to create community and public art.

The Waves of Narragansett, As described by the Artists...

To picture the history of Narragansett on a wall is as impossible a task as to put a chart of the universe on the back of a turtle. This is a place where the ocean meets the southern tip of Rhode Island under the enormity of an ever-changing sky. As the Native Americans who once abundantly populated this land believed, no one owns this place any more than one owns time or eternity. We are merely passing through. Going back to before we can imagine a history, the ocean has changed these shores and continues the creation and reclaiming of human efforts. The Waves of Narragansett are an apt metaphor for our attempts to define our history and ourselves. Like the changing waves, there is no one history, and as history may swell and seem to create a grand moment, it will also disappear in the very humour from whence it came.

Researching the "history" of Narragansett soon made us realize that we could not simply look at accounts of the King Philip

War, or of the grand hotels that lined the shore in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There were times that people came to these shores to find food from the ocean, seaweed to fertilize their fields, recreate their lives by building grand mansions, cottages and simple churches or to play on the beaches. The tides bring bigger questions. Philosophers, scientists and artists of every generation ask, "Where have we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?"

The Waves of Narragansett do not presume to answer these questions, but rather to ask them again. In the images that you will find, we hope that you will be curious and wonder as we have, why a humble horseshoe crab can go back seemingly unchanged into prehistoric time while the stone-towered firehouse and sea wall

have been replaced again and again. We listened to people's stories of Narragansett; some were passed down in oral tradition others were written on postcards, while others were recorded in documents that have hidden secrets for centuries.

We have filled our skies with things past: moons, longhouses, wigwams, grand hotels, ancient towers, tools, quilts, harvests, vessels, simple canoes, cargo ships, surfboards and Teddy bears. There are also tales of people and creatures: those who dreamed and those who worked, rescues, journeys, friendship and children at play. These waves bring, people with onion blossoms and shared quahogs. As we hear each wave of history, we also begin to hear the rhythm of Narragansett, which like the earliest of birds and sea creatures walks through yesterday to this place. Earth, water, sky and eternity make the tales of an old fisherman a history that all creatures must come to hear.

The foreground sculpture is made in wood-fired stoneware clay while the background mosaic is handmade wood-fired porcelain clay.

There are many people who have contributed to the stories told here. We hope our rendition does them justice and that those who enjoy these Waves of Narragansett will see that their story is part of a bigger whole.

Gilbane Development Company would like to thank the Narragansett Town Council, the South County Museum, and the people of Narragansett for their help and support.

