



# Tile Heritage Foundation

for research and preservation of ceramic surfaces

Founded in July 1987 Tile Heritage is celebrating its 31st anniversary this year. Supporters like YOU... members, major contributors, industry sponsors, generous grantors... everyone... have made possible the *continued fulfillment* of the Foundation's mission to Document and Preserve tile history in the U.S., both past and present. THANK YOU!

## *E-News for Winter 2018*

### *Here's What's Below*

Merola Tile Sponsors Hand-Print  
Mural Workshop

Global Monument Hand-Print Mural:  
"You can have a HAND in it!"

Landmarking Empire State Dairy

A Statement from the Artist:  
Katia McGuirk

Eric Rattan: Born to Dance

New Book: *Banking on Beauty*



Merola Tile sponsors a Hand-Print Workshop on National Tile Day. Katia and Katie get their HANDS in it!

## **Merola Tile, Sponsor of Monumental Mural, Holds Workshop!**

On Friday, February 23, 2018, **National Tile Day**, the first of many Global Monumental Hand-Print Mural workshops was organized for the 90+ employees at Merola Tile in Manalapan, New Jersey. The full day event was organized by Katia McGuirk, mosaic artist, tile maker and THF board member who had this to report:

"The Merola Tile family is extraordinary! Diverse, kind, gracious, happy at work, loyal and eager to share their stories. All expressed and experienced the joy of creating! It was with joy in my heart that I touched and was touched by so many wonderful folks who loved their short/sweet conversation with clay. The Merola magic is real!"

## Merola “tilers” put their hands to work...



Andrew finds that clay is firmer than it looks.  
“Let me help!”



Jennifer sees that four HANDS are better than two!



The table is set for HAND-PRINT production at  
Merola Tile Company.

### For Individual & Studio Participation:

Tile Heritage provides detailed specifications and instructions to assist you in making your own “Hand-Print” tile! See: <http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Hand-print-tile-details.pdf>.

For more information about this amazing collaborative tile project, visit THF [website](http://www.tileheritage.org).



## Merola “tilers” have their HANDS in it!



This 9" x 9" clay masterpiece says it all!



“Tilers” Michelle, Andrew, Pete, Dan and Denis definitely have their HANDS in it!



Brent welcomes a little help from his friend!  
“Thanks Chris!”



Note the baseball in Noel’s mitt.  
That could have been a home run ball!

Photos courtesy Merola Tile Company.

## PLANNING on ATTENDING COVERINGS'18 - Atlanta in May 8-11th 2018?

You can [REGISTER NOW](#)... and grab your opportunity to [PRE-REGISTER](#) to participate in the [GLOBAL MONUMENTAL HAND-PRINT MURAL PROJECT!](#)

GO TO: <http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Participant-at-Coverings-sign-up.pdf>

*You can have a HAND in it!*

***This is a DONOR wall for POSTERITY to be installed at Tile Council of North America, Anderson, SC. Sponsorship supports the production and installation of the Monumental Mural.***

Participation details: <http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Donor-Wall-Contribute.pdf>

### *Current Hand-Print Mural Supporters and Sponsors include:*

COVERINGS'18, TCNA, Taffy Event Strategies, Freeman Company, Merola Tile/Somer Tile, Katia Tiles, InterCeramic, Clay Squared, Doty Tile, Mudfire Studio, Highwater Clays, Alfredo Ratnoff Art, Georgia Tech Industrial Design Dept., Volunteer Match.com



<http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Participant-at-Coverings-sign-up.pdf>



<https://registration.experientevent.com/ShowTIL181>

### ***NOT ATTENDING COVERINGS?***

***Participation Station Workshops can be established at multiple***

***locations*** providing an evening or weekend venue for pressing hands, logos & names in clay. Tile Heritage offers detailed guidelines to follow for fun and successful events.

Go to: <http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Hand-print-Participation-Station-details.pdf>

***Individual & Studio Participation:*** Tile Heritage provides detailed specifications and instructions to assist you in making your own "Hand-Print" mural tile!

See: <http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Hand-print-tile-details.pdf>

***Purchasing a T-shirt supports the industry archiving work of the Tile Heritage Foundation in addition to contributing to the Monumental Mural to be installed at TCNA honoring all who participate in and contribute to the Tile Industry today!***

<http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/T-Shirt-HAND-order.pdf>



# Landmarking the Empire State Dairy and AET tile murals

## A Personal Account from Michael Padwee



In 1999, while driving along Atlantic Avenue, through the East New York section of Brooklyn toward JFK Airport, I stopped for a red light and looked up at a building that had two very large and colorful murals under the cornice. I got out of the car and was startled to see that they were tile murals of rural scenes, one with a man in lederhosen leading a bull, and the other with a woman leading cows. I took some photos and went into the plastics manufacturing company on the first floor. I spoke with the owner of the company, and he showed me the original building plans from 1913 that he found when he bought the building. The drawing of the front elevation of the building showed the two murals indicating that they were site specific. I took photos of those, also.

I researched the building and the architect listed on the plans, Otto Strack. I discovered that the Empire State Dairy Company built the building, not the Borden Dairy Company, whose sign was on the building. Otto Strack was a well-known architect from Milwaukee who worked on the first Empire Dairy Company building in 1907. I told **Susan Tunick**, the founder of "Friends

## Landmarking the Empire State Dairy continued...

I told **Susan Tunick**, the founder of "Friends of Terra Cotta" (FOTC), about the murals, and she took photos that showed markings on the obverse of one tile. We deciphered the markings which said "Made by the American Encaustic Tiling Co." and gave its address. Later, I discovered that ceramics designer and colorist, Leon Solon, had been hired in 1912 as the Art Director of AET. (He would later decorate the facade of the AET building at 16 East 41st Street, Manhattan entirely with AET tiles and faience. These were completely ripped off the facade in the 2000s to prevent the building from being landmarked.) Solon would have supervised the designing and making of the dairy murals, and may have designed them, himself.

In 1999 and 2000 I sent letters to the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) asking that they consider the building and murals for landmark status. The LPC was not interested in the building and murals until the current mayor promoted business and residential development in the outer areas of the borough. This, however, angered many residents who saw this as a give-away to real estate developers and a prelude to gentrification and a loss of the area's architectural history. East New York residents, mostly working class and poor people, were usually neglected by various city administrations. Also, while most areas of Brooklyn had landmarked historic buildings, East New York had NO landmarked buildings. In 2015 a group of residents formed "Preserve East New York" (PENY) to address the loss of their architectural history.

Over the years Susan Tunick and I tried, unsuccessfully, to have the Empire State Dairy landmarked. It wasn't until the city administration's plan to rezone East New York for commercial development clashed with the community trying to protect its historic architecture that the LPC began to hold hearings to consider landmark status for the dairy complex. After the owner of the plastics company died in 2012, the complex was purchased by another party who flipped it to a developer. The latest owner wanted to raze the five-building complex because it would be less expensive to complete a toxic waste remediation on the site if there were no buildings. The developer might have been able to raze the buildings without LPC approval if the community hadn't become aware of their historic value through PENY and its founder, Zulmilena Then.

The LPC decision landmarked two of five buildings in the complex--the first buildings in East New York to obtain individual landmark status. The first building was designed by the architects Theobald Engelhardt and Otto Strack in 1907. Both men were well-known--Engelhardt in Brooklyn where he designed many factories, breweries, churches and residences; and Strack who was from Milwaukee and designed many breweries and residences there. The other building was designed by Strack in 1913 and was completed by 1915. The tile murals complimented the dairy business of the complex, even after the Borden Dairy Company bought the buildings in 1924.

**Editor's note:** A special Tile Heritage salute to **Michael Padwee** and **Susan Tunick** for their sustained dedication over these many years and to the foresight of the commissioners on the **NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission** to save the historic American Encaustic murals. And to all those who at strategic moments along the way made their voices heard, thank you!



## A Statement from the Artist: Katia McGuirk



Winter

Thematically, most of my studio work is about exploration and discovery of familiar domestic and indigenous animals in a whimsical way. I use clay to intuitively explore, in a playful manner, to create ripe earthy storybook scenes with the timelessness of a magical realism. I was raised on a large working farm and am the 12th of 15 children. I spent much of my childhood with my many animal friends, caring for and imagining them as characters in stories.

I use traditional tile production methods and industry standard setting techniques. For me, the allure of clay is the directness of touch and feel in exploring texture and surface while I free my mind to sculpt one of a kind bas-relief tiles of flora and fauna. I roll slabs of clay, draw on it first and then use additive methods to build up the surfaces. The four Animal totems that are placed in the lower right corner of each panel are over sized, so I cut them into shapes that will fit into the kiln. I also make plaster molds so that I can press repeat elements (leaves, holly and pine cones). I use a mid range, frost proof clay body and I fire in large electric

The “**Four Seasons**” of Artman Lutheran Home in Ambler, Pennsylvania is a site-specific installation that explores the seasons as a metaphor for the stages of life. Directors of this senior residence hired me to 1. Create a permanent artwork on the exterior of a new building that would be a celebration of 100 years of senior care. 2. Involve the community in the work. 3. Create a timeless design.

Through my work, I seek larger meaning at the intersection of arts, education and social justice. The conversation, engagement and connection with community inform my work. I bring communities together to beautify, personalize and make more meaningful the spaces they inhabit. Often our seniors are no longer valued as productive members of society and subsequently are stripped of their self-esteem. It is my passion to re-frame these stereotypes by freeing up their creative potential. Together we become a culture that mutually values and benefits from the ‘work’.



Spring



## From the Artist: Katia McGuirk...

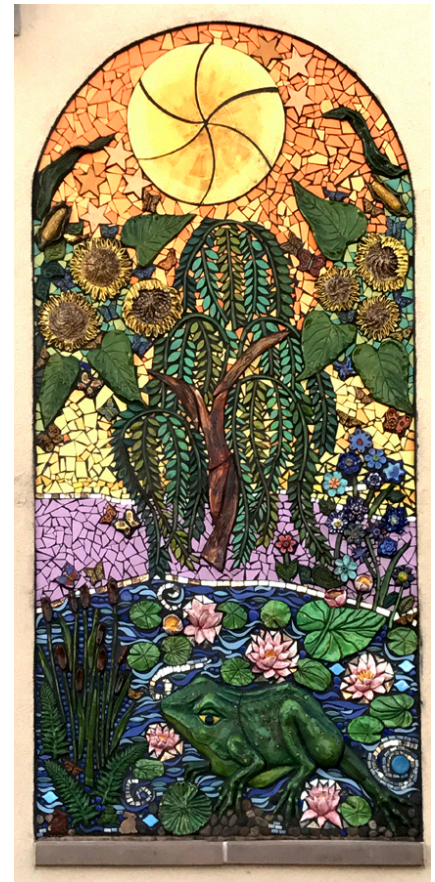
production kilns. I rely on 36 years of professional experience with clay and tile making to guide me through the technical and scientific aspects of the clay, glaze, firing and setting.

My community involved programming is built around creating a safe environment for the social and emotional exploration of clay. On this project I was able to guide the staff, residents, and their families through a series of simple exercises, using simple and familiar tools for our seniors (rolling pins, lace and cookie cutters) to create wonderful tiles that embodied their stories.

Though the empathy for the material is still there for me, making tiles and tile systems for traditional residential settings became meaningless for me after 15 years of making tiles for high end showrooms around the country. Part of it was a lack of connection, as I rarely saw the tiles in situ. Making tiles to be sold individually in galleries also didn't

keep me engaged or inspired as they were "one offs" not connected to anything. I have always had a consistent and strong studio practice and have been creating tableaux of work. In the last 20 years I have been exploring "mosaic art." I like large-scale projects and I surround my handmade elements with shards of colorful tiles that fill out the negative spaces to create a painterly backdrop that unifies the picture. I continue to be inspired by Henry Mercer since my early development as a tile maker in the '80s.

**From the artist:** Thanks to Katlyn McKinney, the Administrators and residents at Artman Lutheran Home. Thanks to Vinny Malzone and Brooke Conroy for workshop assistance. Thanks to Tracey Patrick and Kelsey Jackson for studio assistance. Big thanks to Trish Metzner and Beverly Godfrey for studio assistance and installation expertise.



Summer



Fall





Eric Rattan (1951-2017)

## Eric Rattan (1951-2017)

### Born to Dance

We last saw Eric in Doylestown in May 2017. He had come, unexpectedly, to celebrate with us during our 30th Anniversary Gala. A friend for over twenty years, he came forward during the party to speak to the assembled in his booming voice praising Tile Heritage.

Two months later we received the following:

Dear Friends,

I hope this note finds you well and in good spirits. I write to let you know that my life is in its final chapter. Stage IV cancer of the pancreas.

I accept this news stoically as all of us have a time to "go" on the calendar. However, at age 65 I'm feeling a bit rushed! I am fortunate to be back home in Madison, WI under the care of my two lovely daughters, Leslie & Lisa, son-in-law, Kris,

wife, Lindsay, and "stand-up" comedy team grandchildren, Wally (4) and Celia (3). They all keep my spirits high.

Fortunately, I have had time to reflect on the many adventurous chapters of my life. In my youth, adventure was defined by hitchhiking across the US, Canada, and our beloved Latin American neighboring countries. I thank the many fearless and ingratiating strangers who extended their kindness. While I knew at age 7 exactly what career choice I was to make, the many art commissions/installations, back roads, friendships, and clients were to unfold a little at a time, offering great excitement anticipating what artistic challenges were right around the next corner. I was blessed to have such talented and eager apprentices who at times propped up the old man as age began to take advantage.

My father was an honorable man who informed me from time to time of our obligation to leave this world a better place, to offer kindness, true give and take, empathy, and love. I hope I have lived up to his wise counsel.

Farewell, so long, so good to know yah! Love Eric

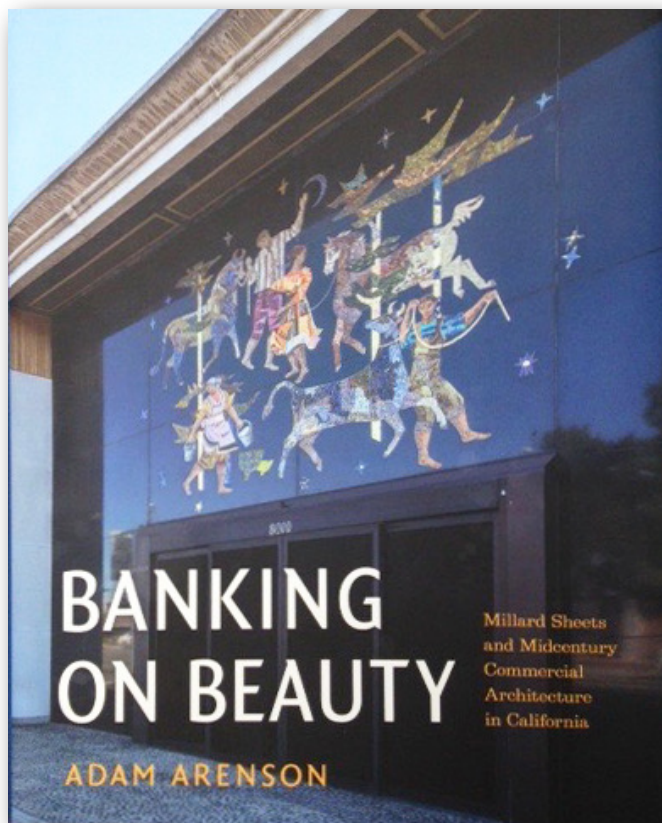
Handwritten on the back of the note: *"Did not want to mention this in Doylestown, as surely this was your day, 30 years crankin' our medium!! Be well, be happy, take time off - more time off as surprises are at times not welcome. Memories of you make me happy. Love you, Eric"*



"Born to Dance" (4' x 8')  
Indian slate mosaic, part one of a triptych.

Photo by Stacey Meanwell

See: [http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Eric\\_Rattan\\_continuum.pdf](http://www.tileheritage.org/pdfs/Eric_Rattan_continuum.pdf)



## *Banking on Beauty*

by Adam Arenson

**Millard Sheets and Midcentury  
Commercial Architecture  
in California**

University of Texas Press, 2018

This enchanting story that celebrates the relationship and achievements of an artist, Millard Sheets, and his patron, Howard Ahmanson, originated in the mind of a child, a fantasy engendered by a picture on a building, a mosaic mural on a Home Savings branch in La Mesa, California.

From the author, Adam Arenson, from his Introduction: "The book chronicles the business of art production and the history of business arts patronage, joining a new trend in histories of the intertwined concerns of art, design, business, politics, urban and suburban planning, and popular culture in postwar America. The Home Savings commissions shaped the corporate and cultural landscapes of Southern California. The time has come to tell their history, to demonstrate their significance, and to argue for their preservation -- before it is too late."



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