

**W**hether way or wave Hill's Glyndor gallery over the last two weekends were surprised at what they found. It wasn't so much the fish tanks that dominate the first gallery that caught them unawares, but the fact that the life they teemed with came from the Hudson River, said Jennifer McGregor, Wave Hill's visual arts curator.

Darters, silversides, dace, sunfish, perch and bass dance in the water. Crabs, mussels and periwinkles rest on the bottom or climb the glass.

In the Hudson? Viewers exclaimed. The aquariums also held sewer pipe and a soda bottle, a brick and a twisted piece of rusting metal that artist Brandon Ballengée's seine net pulled out of the river along with the fish at the Dyckman Street pier.

That's what many New Yorkers would expect to find. What they don't expect is that right in New York City the muddy water conceals and sustains so much life.

While the aquariums and the blown-up digital images of some of the Hudson's denizens demonstrate the river's health, a computer and a series of maps in the galleries warn of danger. Visitors are encouraged to plug a zip code into the Environmental Protection Agency Web site, [www.epa.gov/epahome/commsearch.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epahome/commsearch.htm), to find air pollution and hazardous waste trouble spots, then to post red dots showing the hot-spots on large charts of the river and its shoreline. In Riverdale, the sites include dry cleaning establishments, gas stations, apartment buildings, schools and even a mansion.

Venturing on to the work of the show's other artist, Ève Andrée Laramée, viewers were surprised again, this time to find an ornate, 19th-century room half-drowned in golden granules spilling from a peak more than seven feet high into the fireplace and onto the window sill.

Entitled "Sugar Mud," the piece was inspired by the dredging last year of 80,000 tons of sugar deposited in the Hudson just north of Riverdale by the American Sugar Refining plant in Yonkers. Before the sugar was carried to a waste dump in the Atlantic off Sandy Hook (over the protest of some environmentalists) it was found to contain

Other contaminants.

Artists at Wave Hill frequently make witty use of the contrast between the stately Georgian rooms of Glyndor and their modernist pieces, but here we find something more. Like Mr. Ballengée's work, Ms. Laramée's, made from 1,500 pounds of dyed sugar, marries art and advocacy.

The sugar looks like it could eventually overwhelm the space. "That's not supposed to be here," we think. And that leads us to reflect on whether it's supposed to be at the bottom of the Hudson or the bottom of the ocean, either.

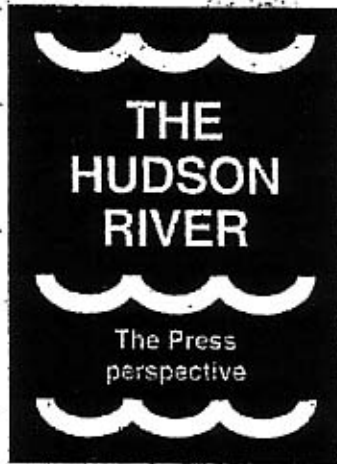
The way to safeguard the river is to know it. Yet how isolated from the Hudson we have grown, cut off by the railroad and by industries that once made use of the waterway, of which the sugar refinery in Yonkers is a vestige.

Art offers one path to knowledge. In an interview to be published in the show's catalogue, Mr. Ballengée says "I would like people to recognize that the river is not separate from their daily lives . . . I would like people to see that their daily activities have an impact on the life of the river."

After viewing Wave Hill's "Hudson River Projects," visitors are invited into Glyndor's sun room, where they can browse books about the river, from *The Little Red Light-house* to scientific and naturalist pamphlets, and can take away literature on places to visit and on environmental projects.

For Riverdadians, there will soon be another, more concrete, way to come to know the Hudson: Work is to begin next year on a small riverside park at the Riverdale train station that will provide the first opportunity for residents to get to the shore legally since the New York Central thrust its tracks northward 150 years ago. That park is the first step to opening the entire Riverdale shoreline.

The youngsters who venture to submerge a toe or toss a fishing line in the water will never be surprised to find it nourishes life; the adults who marvel at the majesty of the Palisades and drink in the beauty of the water as its color changes with the clouds and current will work to keep it from being despoiled.



## Editorial comment

THE RIVERDALE PRESS — Thursday, October 2, 2003

" WAVE HILL " ( NY STATE ) CATALOG ENCLOSED

## Hudson highland?

THE HUDSON River looks nothing like this — or does it? Ève Andrée Laramée's work in Wave Hill's latest exhibit recalls the dredging of 80,000 tons of contaminated sugar dumped in the river by a Yonkers factory. See Editorial comment.