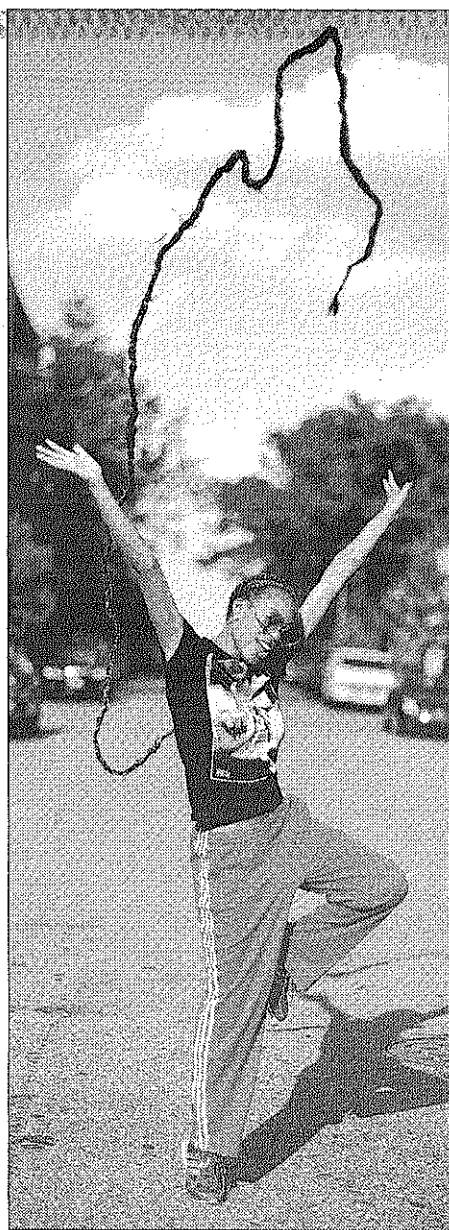




Young women show how their braids are linked together before performance, then one of them, Jay Wallacer (photo r.), does dance of her own.



DIVAS

Braids link performers in unique jump roping

BY PEARL GABEL

RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL, let down your hair. Then twirl it like a jump rope.

Aisha Cousins of Bedford-Stuyvesant combines the art of hair-braiding with double dutch, in a city-funded project called Diva Dutch.

"The braids go from one woman's head onto another's, representing the way black women's traditions of hair braiding connect us," said Cousins, who has been staging Diva Dutch with local performers and stylists for the past year.

"You can go to Brooklyn, New Orleans, Paris or Accra and the women may speak or dress differently, but when you go into hair salons, you have a lot in common," she said.

"The jumping rope is about shared memories. I'm trying to make my memories become your memories."

Diva Dutch came to the Corridor Gallery in Clinton Hill last month,

where dozens of people watched in amazement.

"I feel like a little kid," said Bazaar Royale, a musician from Clinton Hill, who tried out his jumping skills with the 15-foot braided ropes. "This is great."

Marissa Arterberry, a Diva Dutch enthusiast, said when she describes the project to people "they get excited."

"The first time I saw it last summer was really great. ... They were playing 'Purple Rain.' People were singing, jumping to Prince music. I just hung around. It always attracts such a good atmosphere."

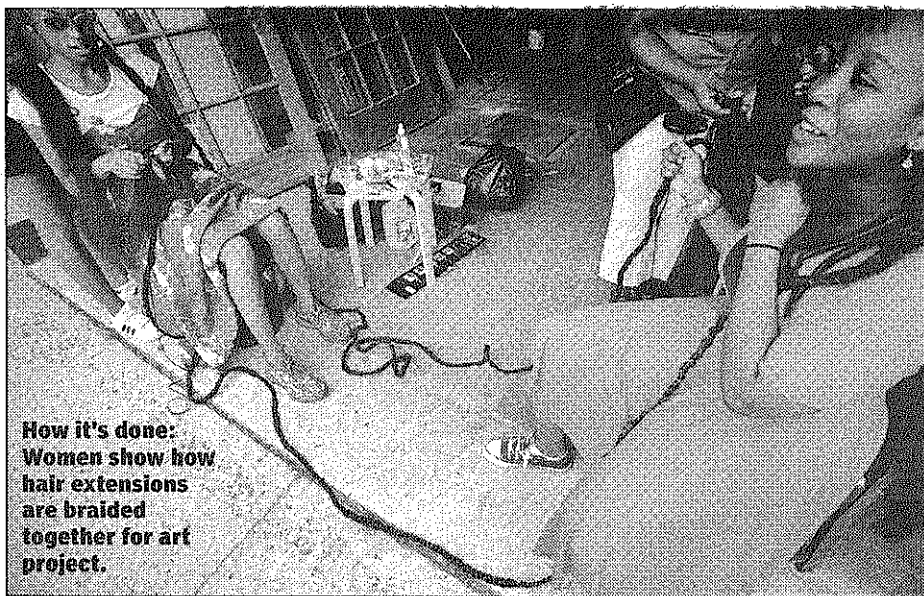
If you missed the Double Dutch Divas in Clinton Hill, don't worry. The next appearance will be on Sept. 19 in Bedford-Stuyvesant during the third annual Street Soiree on Lewis Ave.

For other performances, check out www.doubledutchdivas.com

Photos by Pearl Gabel



Performer tries his hand at leaping over braided hair extensions outside gallery in Clinton Hill.



How it's done: Women show how hair extensions are braided together for art project.



Kids try their hands, or, rather, feet, attempting to leap over the flying braided hair.

DANCE ON (H)AIR



Artist Aisha Cousins (c.) joins the Diva Dutch performance at Danny Simmons' Corridor Gallery in Clinton Hill last week.