

Peekskill to Cut the Ribbon on a Child-Crafted Trail of Tiles

By SUSAN HODARA

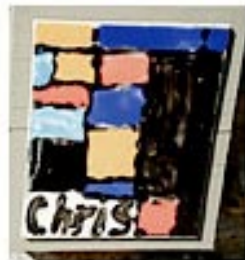
PEEKSKILL

EVEN first-time visitors to Peekskill will have no problem finding their way from the waterfront to the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art. All they have to do is follow the tile trail.

Delftware-inspired tiles, created by approximately 2,200 schoolchildren, are embedded in red mulch and tree wells and mounted on walls on Main, Division, South and Water Streets. And together with hundreds of traditional Dutch tiles, they adorn 16 new concrete benches along the route.

The tiles and the mile-and-a-half-long path they demarcate are the culmination of the art center's Public Tile Project, which will celebrate its formal opening on Sunday.

The Public Tile Project opens on Sunday at 1 p.m. at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, 1701 Main Street, Peekskill. The Tile Trail Walk to Riverfront Green Park takes place from 2:30 to 3 p.m. More information is available at hvcca.org or at (914) 788-0100.



ART WALK Tiles made by children adorn benches and line a route from the Peekskill waterfront to the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art.

Nearly three years in the making, the Public Tile Project trail — a permanent installation — follows the course of McGregory's Brook, which served as a delivery route for arms during the Revolutionary War. The tiles will also help identify artworks displayed during the center's Peekskill Projects, which present installations by local artists, many along the trail.

"Because the works are often subtle, it has been hard for people to find them," said Livia Straus, the center's president and co-founder. "We thought, why don't we do something to mark the trail?"

That notion coincided with plans for the 2009 quadricentennial of Henry Hudson's voyage up the Hudson River. "It was an opportunity," Ms. Straus said. "We thought, how do you get kids to understand the Dutch history in the region and its impact on American society?"

The art center developed a curriculum for grades 3 through 12, providing historical information and examples of Delft tiles to more than 30 school districts in the Hudson Valley, as well as to Girl and Boy Scout troops and summer camps. The resulting tiles, each 8 by 10 inches, por-

tray images ranging from Henry Hudson's ship, the Half Moon, to Hudson himself, to Harriet Tubman, who helped route the underground railroad through Peekskill, to the real yellow brick road, believed to be the inspiration for the one in "The Wizard of Oz" — all reflecting Peekskill's diverse heritage.

The Public Tile Project was financed by a \$25,000 grant from the Netherlands Consulate General in New York and contributions from ArtsWestchester, the Peekskill Educational Foundation, Entergy and others.

Sunday's opening will feature Dutch-themed craft activities and a treasure hunt through "Double Dutch," the center's current exhibition. A trail walk will be followed by refreshments at Riverfront Green Park, where certificates will be distributed to the children who made tiles.

Ms. Straus said the project, with its educational, artistic and cultural components, was a model for other communities. "It gives the city a little sparkle."