

HAVERSTRAW

Sculpture to reflect brickyard history

Nebraska artist, in effort to link art to place, did homework

Ron X. Gumucio
The Journal News

Brick by brick, an art installation created in Lincoln, Neb., is beginning to take form near the entrance to Rockland County's Haverstraw Bay Park.

Sculptor Michael Morgan, 48, and his assistant, Andy Witkowski, both of Nebraska, worked yesterday on the 23-foot-wide site that will house the sculpture. The project consists of seven carved, brick columns, ranging between 6 and 8 feet high, a seating area made of bricks and a brick path cutting through it.

A pebbled walkway will lead to the sculpture from one of the paths that wind through the 27-acre riverfront park. The project will cost \$76,190.

"We started it a week ago last Tuesday," said Morgan, wiping sweat from his brow yesterday. "We hope to finish it by the end of the month."

Morgan was selected from among 85 artists nationwide who submitted proposals for the county's Art in Public Places project for the park in March 2003, four months before it opened.

A committee narrowed its search to five artists before making its final choice in August 2004. The Art in Public Places program was established in 1986 by county Legislator Harriet Cornell, who is now chairwoman of the Legislature, as a way to provoke thought and discussion through art.

Morgan, who has done brick sculptures in his hometown and in Texas and Florida, was chosen for the project because of his use of brick and its ties to the community. Haverstraw was once considered the "brick-making capital of the world" and home to a brick-manufacturing plant in the 1800s. About 2,000 bricks are being used for the sculpture.

Morgan, who moved to Nebraska from England 14 years ago, said he wanted his most re-

cent sculpture to appear as though the bricks had washed ashore from the Hudson River and formed a monument.

"I wanted to make the sculpture relevant to the place," said Morgan, who did some Internet research on Haverstraw before submitting his proposal. "I'm a brick sculptor. The Art in Public Places project seemed like it had my name written all over it."

The Art in Public Places program is funded through the county's capital projects. One percent of the construction budget of county projects is set aside for public art, with \$150,000 being the maximum. About 10 percent is appropriated for the maintenance, C.J. Miller, a spokeswoman for County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef, said yesterday.

Erin Martin, a member of the Art in Public Places Committee, said Morgan's piece was appropriate for the county park and would serve a purpose.

"It's a sculpture that has a use," said Martin, who is also the director of the Rockland County Historical Society. "It's a place to rest and contemplate. It also reflects the history of that area, the brickyards."

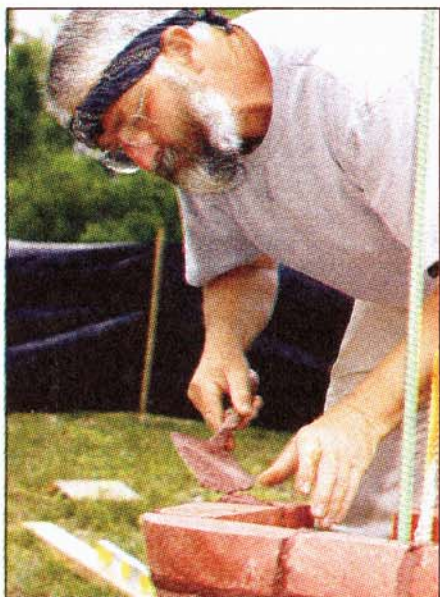
Allan Beers, the county's coordinator of environmental resources, said it was a competitive contest that drew several unique designs from a number of artists. Beers was in charge of reviewing the final designs for safety hazards and conflicts in the park. It is home to the county's Sept. 11 memorial and contains a playground, fishing piers, a footbridge over a river inlet, trails and a picnic area.

"I've seen the beginning stages of it," Beers said. "I'm impressed. It's going to be a nice added feature to the park."

Before leaving his studio, Morgan lettered and numbered each brick of the sculpture so that he could reassemble it when he got to New York.

"It's a slow process, but you got to take your time with it," he said.

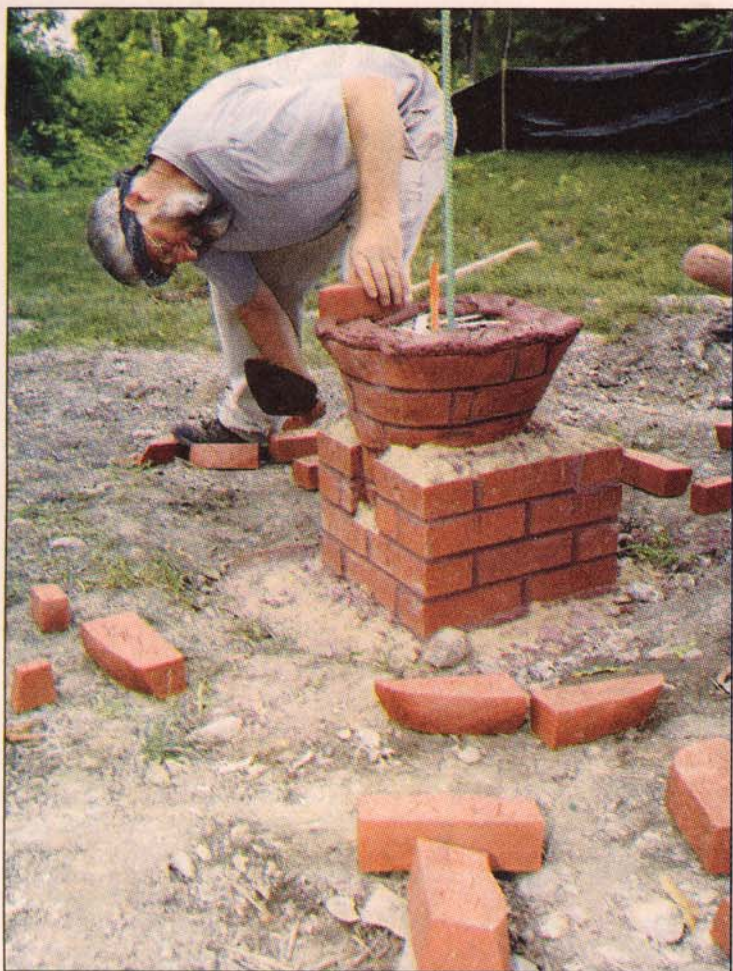
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Karen Vibert-Kennedy for The Journal News

Installing art

Sculptor Mike Morgan of Lincoln, Neb., works on a brick structure yesterday near the entrance to Haverstraw Bay Park in Haverstraw. **Details, 3B**



Karen Vibert-Kennedy for The Journal News

Sculptor Mike Morgan of Lincoln, Neb., works on a brick structure near the entrance to Haverstraw Bay Park in Haverstraw. Morgan was commissioned to build the sculpture through the county's Art in Public Places program.



Haverstraw Trophy
by Michael Morgan



Modern Arts
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