

Ty Gillespie & Town of Vail Design Team
Pirate Ship Park, 2005
Vail Village, East of the Vista Bahn

East of the Vista Bahn, Pirate Ship Park has been entertaining the children of Vail for more than 35 years. The original park, also a pirate ship, was constructed in the 1970s. In 2000 the Town of Vail began updating their playgrounds to comply with current playground safety guidelines. It is this playground safety and improvement plan that resulted in the present Pirate Ship Park through the collaborative efforts of artist Ty Gillespie and the Town of Vail's Public Works' Design Team.

Gregg Barrie, a Landscape Architect for the Town of Vail, was integral in this redesign project. "The process of updating one of Vail's playgrounds begins with hiring an artist to help develop the concept. We work closely with them to ensure the final playground meets the original design intent, while meeting safety requirements. We turn their concept into a reality."

Ty Gillespie of Minturn and Paonia, CO was contacted to assist with the redesign of this playground. Given his passion for sailing and art, the perfect team was assembled to redesign Pirate Ship Park. Gillespie, whose artistic hulls can be viewed at J. Cotter Gallery, spent 6 ½ years sailing around the world with his wife Helen, on their boat *Azura* which happens to be the name of their vineyard in Paonia.

Gillespie presented his scaled model of the new ship to the town. Through the use of AutoCAD software, the design team was able to create drawings in order to accurately construct the new Pirate Ship Park. Gillespie wanted the ship be more conceptual and fully enjoyed by the children, if it is running through the bow or climbing the rope ladder.

"Most of the playground's components are custom, except for the slide," explains Barrie. The façade of the ship is constructed in cedar and the steel frame was fabricated in Minturn. Other playgrounds redesigned with the Town of Vail's Design Team and commissioned artists include Ford Park, Donovan Park, and Bighorn Park.

- Molly Eppard, Art in Public Places Coordinator