

SECTION 2

OCTOBER 1994

Arts & Entertainment

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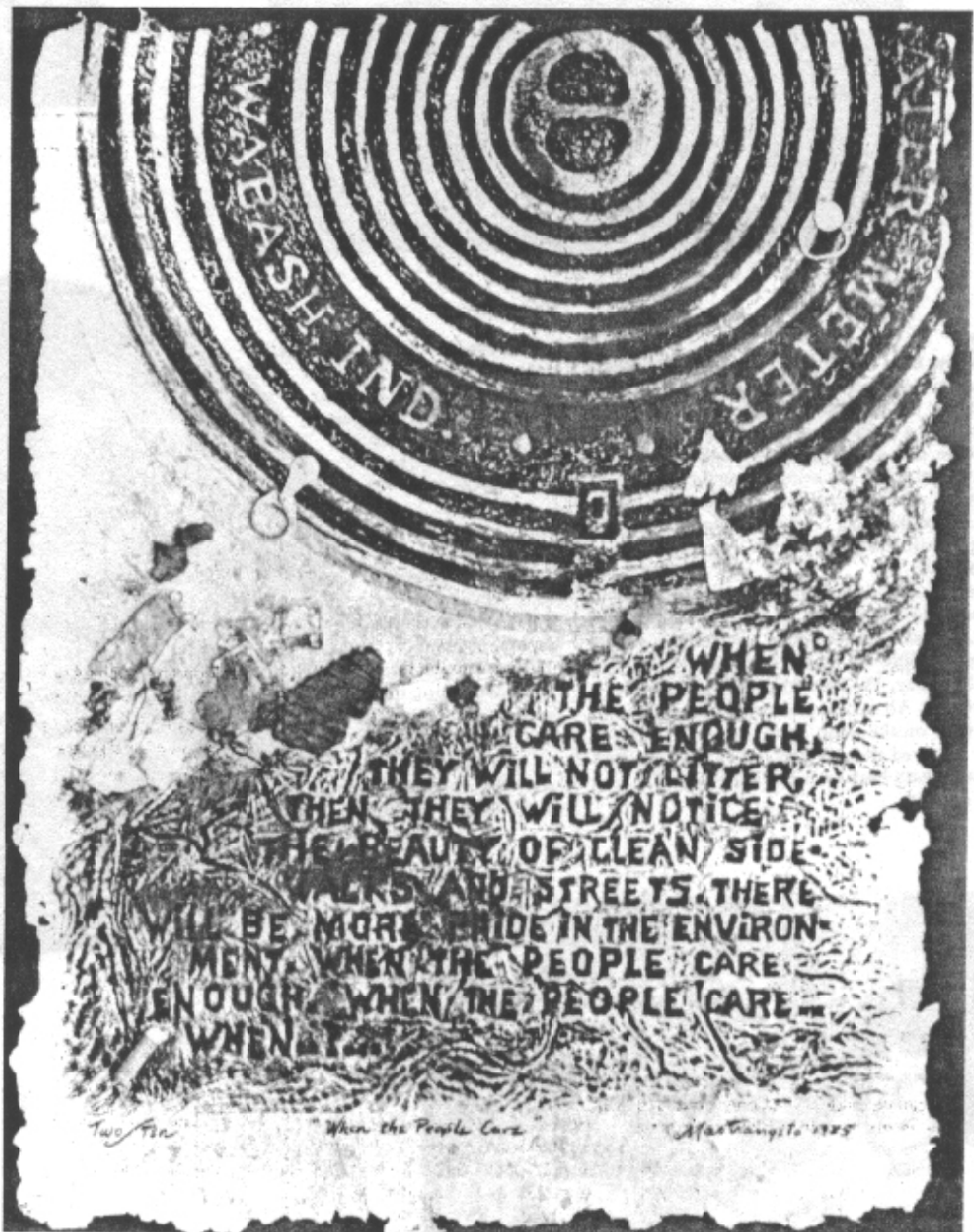
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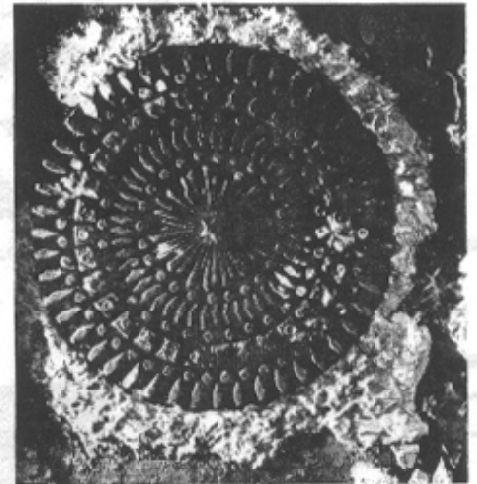
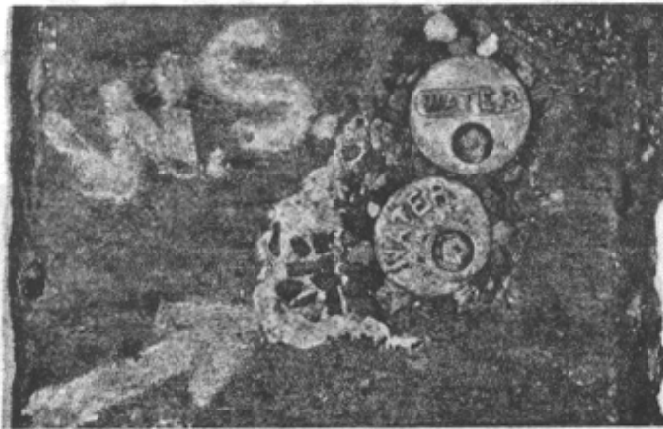


by Artist Bobbi Mastrangelo

LOOKING AT THE GRATER PICTURE

a profile of Long Island Artist Bobbi Mastrangelo

by Danielle Hayduck

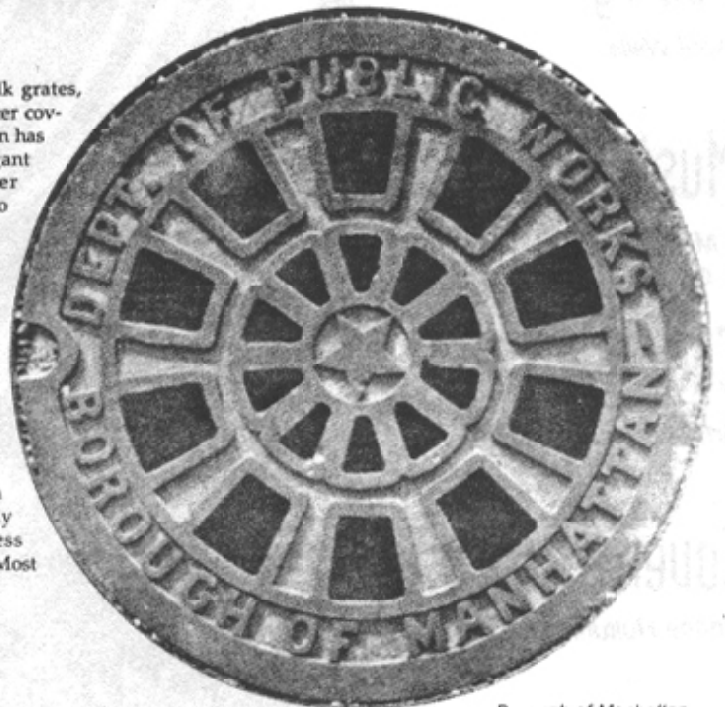


Ever tried to describe a person in one word? Focused is what came to mind within the first five minutes of my interview with Bobbi Mastrangelo. As she took a quick phone call I wandered around her home, decorated almost exclusively with her grate works. It felt like being allowed free reign on a film set, where Styrofoam boulders and paper mace sidewalks bring on that wondrous feeling of being a child taken in by the magical effect of trompe l'oeil.

Perhaps you've read on occasional article about the lady who does manhole or water covers, you know, sidewalk grates. Bobbi's scrapbook is quite impressive, filled with articles from her local paper, from Newsday, The New York Times, Who's Who in American Art and on and on. She's been on TV, she's been on the radio. Actually, even if you've never followed the arts you've heard of her anyway, and that's because Bobbi Mastrangelo is...you got it, focused.

Focused on sidewalk grates, manhole covers and water covers since 1979, Bobbi even has a full closet of extravagant and fun manhole cover outfits that she wears to the opening receptions of her shows. As you walk into one of her work spaces, you are greeted by a sidewalk scene woven into the carpet...complete with manhole cover.

As I sit here writing, Bobbi's business card stares me in the face, and it deserves a mention. Artists usually have the worst business cards I have ever seen. Most



Borough of Manhattan

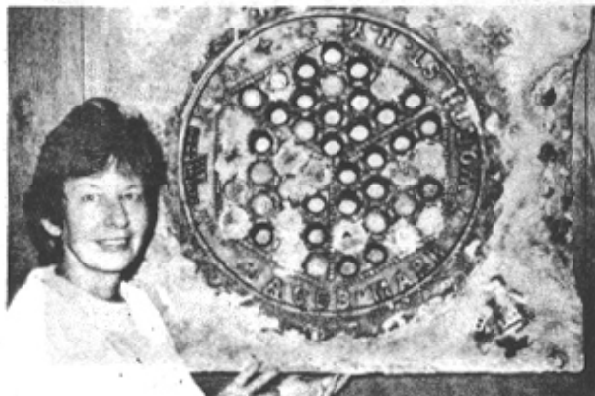


Photo Credit: Al Mastrangelo ©

Artist Bobbi Mastrangelo with Jacob Mark 1987

artists' cards have either a long list of everything they have ever done, from silk screening to portraits, oil and watercolors, tarot card readings; even knew one who wanted to add: cement mixing. Bobbi, on the other hand has a "...you guessed it... water grate, and the name of her specialty almost looks like a company name: Grate Works. By all standards, here is someone who appreciates the value of marketing herself, and so does in many ways.

Her latest show, *Waterworks*, opened on September 17 at the Paramount East Gallery in Peekskill, NY., where thirty artists are exhibiting works related to the protection and preservation of open space and the responsible use of land and water. How did she manage to get her work included in this show? By keeping up with what's happening in the arts. She belongs to many arts associations all over the country, such as the Artist Space, in New York City; the East End Arts Council, in Riverhead; and the Whitney Museum in New York City. She learned about the opportunity of submitting her slides to the jury for *Waterworks* through the Art & Science Collaborations, Inc., in Staten Island, which she has found to be one of her best sources of information on shows.

For Bobbi art is definitely a full-time commitment and it is almost as if her part-time teaching job were, instead, her hobby. Nothing is left to chance although the hosting association is publicizing the exhibition, the evening I visited her, Bobbi's office was strewn with invitations to her own private list of collectors, fans and followers. The location of the exhibition determines how large the mailing is and who will be invited. When her work was exhibited at the New York Hall of Science she sent out 500 postcards—and was able to cover the expenses with a grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the East End Arts Council.

Do these things come easily? Certainly not. Bobbi knows how important it is to be visible—indeed, when I asked my secretary to arrange for the interview she said, "I know Bobbi. I own a piece of her work," a piece that was donated to a fundraising auction. She has donated plenty of pieces over the years, to good causes, to friends, to business acquaintances. By getting her work out there, she is planting seeds that one day may result in a recommendation, a referral, an exhibition. That's how Bobbi's Borough of Manhattan, an actual reproduction of a portion of Manhattan sidewalk, was accepted into the permanent collection of the National Association of Women Artists. Bobbi is also a masterful networker, and her willingness to constantly meet new people and cultivate her existing relationships has played an important role in her success.



Outdoor Installation Sculpture now - Islip Museum Hazardous Waste Site

So, what part does talent play in all this? Of course, talent is important, but how many talented yet totally unknown artists do you know? I bet at least one or two. True talent is important for success, but knowing what makes people tick is essential. Believe it or not, Bobbi's Grate Works strike a chord. It's fun-loving art that brings a smile to your face and a sense of awe to your mind as you wonder how anyone could think of doing so absurd, so downright hilarious.

Bobbi's attic and basement both serve as workshops and the number of pieces in the making was extraordinary. Intrigued as to how she manages to juggle her family life, her part-time job and her art, she mentioned that she never cooks, and eating out every day of the week frees up a considerable part of her schedule.

As I got ready to leave I couldn't help but ask, "whatever made you focus so much on manhole cover? With a big smile Bobbi replied, "I just follow my intuition, and go with it."

Here are some of the associations that you might want to contact to keep up to date with what's happening in the art world:

National Association of Women Artists
41 Union Square West- Room 906
NYC, NY 10003
(212) 675-1616

National Museum of Women in the Arts
1250 New York Avenue NW
Washington DC, 20005
(202) 783-5000

Smithtown Township Arts Council
Mills Pond House
660 Route 25A
Smithtown, NY 11780
(516) 862-6575

Art & Science Collaborations, Inc.
Attention: Cynthia Panucci
P.O. Box 040496
Staten Island, NY 10304

Source for small grants for all artists on Long Island
East End Arts Council
133 East Main Street
Riverhead, NY 11901
(516) 727-0900

For information on all art associations and museums get a copy of:
Museums and Historical Societies on Long Island

Danielle Hayduck works extensively in the arts as an art curator and currently represents and manages several New York City artists.

She is also president of **IN-TOUCH PUBLISHING**, a Patchogue based firm specializing in executive newsletters, promotions and marketing. In addition, she is publisher and editor of the internationally distributed magazine *Rabbits Only*.

About The Artist ...



BOBBI MASTRANGELO

Mastrangelo inducted into alma mater hall of fame

Bobbi Betschen Mastrangelo of St. James was the 1994 inductee into the Maryvale High School Hall of Fame in Cheektowaga, New York. She was chosen on the basis of her achievement in the arts and environmental action. Listed in R.R. Bowkers *Who's Who in American Art*, Mastrangelo has exhibited her work in a number of galleries and museums throughout the United States and Canada. On the local front, she founded the grassroots organization Committee for Litter Elimination and Neatness (CLEAN) which promotes antilitter actions, education and beautification in Smithtown Township.