

This month's feature...



Judith Weber

The name Judith Weber is synonymous with art in Westchester County. For over 50 years, this professional artist has been a clay artist, a teacher, an arts space developer, and an advocate for the arts. As President of the New Rochelle Council on the Arts and as a board member at the Clay Art Center, Weber brings her years of experience to expanding the reach of the arts to individuals and the community. Most recently, Weber coordinated a project at the Ward Acres Community Garden, in which children from the Boys and Girls Club of New Rochelle were guided in creating mosaic tiles that were combined to create garden benches.

Weber began her career as a studio potter and teacher. Always searching for suitable studio space, she was the co-creator behind the creation of Media Loft. Established in 1978, this cooperative space began as a working environment for artists, designers, craftsmen and art-related businesses. In 1983, it moved to its current location, one of



the buildings which are part of the historic Knickerbocker Press Building Complex, in New Rochelle, to establish affordable work space for artists. Weber says, "I'm an old hippie. I loved the underlying commonality of all the residents. There was a shared sensibility and connection." In 2003, Weber oversaw the conversion of the property to a

Media Loft Artist in Residence Condominium

mixed-use Artist live/work condominium providing affordable living space for artists and art-related businesses. "The conversion provided greater security for the artist, with a sense of ownership," she explains. She admits that some of the communal feel was lost, but says that the 11 resident-owners and 10 studio space owners still share a common vision. "There are no strangers among us," she says. The artists share a common exhibition space, The Gallery at Media Loft.

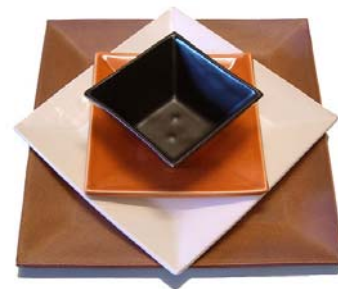
Weber sees her artistic life as constantly evolving. "I am at a transitional stage in my career," she says. "I'm in my seventies, but I'm still looking for ways to earn a living. As an artist, you can never retire on your pension!" she jests. After many years as a studio potter, Weber changed her focus to product design. She worked in the gift fair arena



Classic Teapot, in Dragon Red

for many years, always manufacturing locally in her studio. She designed her signature teapot, which expanded into a line of tableware and vases. She also worked as a designer for Dansk. About seven years ago, she grew tired of the wholesale business and transitioned to commissioned

work. She recalls, "I had no energy for throwing and began to do casting work." Describing her current artistic mood, Weber says, "I am enjoying a much quieter life. I am enjoying doing mosaic work, creating things that are there to be enjoyed,



Multi-colored beveled place setting

not to be used." She continues to teach, offering a mosaic workshop every week in her studio. (See our WORKSHOPS page for information about a special workshop at Ceramic Supply Inc. on Saturday, January 12.)

Weber's "quieter" life does not preclude her active community involvement. The Ward Acres bench project encompassed her passion for arts advocacy. In her role at the New Rochelle Council on the Arts, she worked to acquire the funding and materials for "Meeting Place," two benches located on the Ward Acres garden's central pathway. Under the expert guidance of ceramic artist Sarah Coble, about 50 students from the Boys and Girls Club participated in a series of ten classes. The children learned the technical skills of mosaic work and expanded their appreciation of nature and the creative process. Each child created his or her own tile, as an expression of individual creativity. Weber says, "I firmly believe in the enormous economic, social, and spiritual impact the arts have on the community. Arts increase job opportunities, promote creative clusters, increase property values, and can preserve historic buildings."



*"Meeting Place" mosaic bench, at
Ward Acres Community Garden*

About her current activities, Weber says that she is "trying it all on for size," waiting for some clarity about the next five years of her life. Westchester residents can be grateful that whatever form Weber's life takes, it will invariably enrich the artistic fiber of their community.