

Artist enters the age of Cyberspace and all its benefits.

August 8, 2012 By [Michael Freeman](#)



Solivita artist Bobbi Mastrangelo (seen here at her printing press in 1987) is increasingly using the Internet to reach audiences for her sculptures based on manhole covers and grates.

POINCIANA – For decades now, Bobbi Mastrangelo has been pursuing her work in the arts in the same way artists always have – she creates, then searches for venues and galleries to hold exhibits of her craft.

Known for her sculpture relief works based on grates, drains, manhole covers and water covers, Mastrangelo has found numerous places to exhibit

her work, including the Orlando Museum of Art last January.

But the Poinciana resident also knew that the entire world of art and sculpture had changed dramatically when one of her sculptured images became the artwork for a sanitation firm. Sculptures based on manhole covers, and sanitation – that’s a link that certainly makes sense. What was more unique, she noted, is that the firm isn’t in Poinciana, or Orlando, or even Central Florida.

It happens to be in Switzerland, and it just so happens that the company Ecopsis found, and liked, what she had done.

“They found me on the net,” Mastrangelo said. “They asked if they could use the cover for their Christmas card, and they’re an international sanitation company in Switzerland.”

That’s how the work of this Poinciana artist came to the attention of Ecopsis SA, which provides consulting on sanitation matters, and as a result, Mastrangelo is now internationally known for her “Grate Works of Art” image. Ecopsis adopted her Reuse Sculpture for their home page on the Web as well.

It was at that point, Mastrangelo said, that she realized artists were walking into a brave new world: the ability to reach audiences worldwide via the Internet.

“You can search my name under Google,” she said. “If you search for me, there’s a lot of things under me and ‘manhole artist.’ “

That's why she now maintains a Web site and blog, www.bobbimastrangelo.com, that has enabled her to reach a wider audience – including, as it turns out, conservationists and environmentalists interested in her work.

“A couple of blogs ago, I did one on the streets where I used to live in New York,” she said. “I've preserved the history of the streets, especially the water covers and the utility covers. I have grates and drains that are my sculptures, and it has one of those drains that says ‘Do Not Pollute’ because it leads to groundwater. So I've done a lot with water protection and water conservation through my artwork.”

Mastrangelo, 75, is an artist who lives at the Solivita active adult community in Poinciana, and has pursued her manhole and “grate” art themes for more than three decades, presenting a visual history of the utility covers on the nation's streets and sidewalks.

She's listed in “Who's Who in American Art,” while the Heckscher Museum and Islip Art Museum on Long Island, N.Y. and Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers have her art in their permanent collections.

Her “Buckeye Water Meter” wall relief was on exhibit at The Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio last summer, and her work was displayed at the Orlando Museum of Art as part of the museum's ongoing 1st Thursdays Art Reception series last January.

Solivita, the retirement community on the Polk County side of Poinciana, has a lot of creative artists living and working there, and Mastrangelo is a part of the Solivita Artisan Guild. Now Mastrangelo is doing more with the Web. It used to be, she noted, the artists found galleries and contacted them to see if they were interested in exhibiting their work. Today, she said, the galleries often find the artists.

“It's the upcoming thing,” she said. “Many of us already buy many of our products on the Web. And now there are sites where you can access museum shows all over the world.” A gallery, she added, can go ‘shopping’ in much the same way. “If someone trusts a gallery, they will go along with the gallery and the curators and say ‘If you see the artwork and you trust this artist, okay, we will use them,’ “ she said.

As part of that, Mastrangelo has posted two short videos on YouTube, showing interviews she did in New York City, titled “Bobbi Mastrangelo Grateworks Beginnings” and “Manhole Covers Fascinate Bobbi Mastrangelo.”

“I put them on the Web because having done manhole cover art, it's become ‘grate’ history,” and the Internet has given artists options they never had when she first started out.

“I think the Internet is the answer,” she said.

To learn more about Mastrangelo's work, email her at grateworks@aol.com or log on to www.bobbimastrangelo.com.

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