

# Art is tied to a sense of humor

By Diana Loercher  
 \*Christian Science Monitor

NEW YORK — Although a cloud of solemnity and pomposity hangs over much of contemporary art, it is refreshing to encounter every now and again an artist who has a sense of humor.

This is not meant as a subtle endorsement of "gag" art, where the *raison d'être* of the work is a joke, gimmick or novelty, but rather art that combines mirth with serious intent.

Jane Greengold's work possesses this kind of balance, and it makes her one of the more interesting conceptual artists to emerge from the maelstrom.

Conceptual art, you will remember, is art that is more concerned with ideas, usually about the epistemology of art, than with the aesthetics of visual images. For example, an earlier work of Miss Greengold's entitled "Passages of Time," consisted of variations, meditations really, on the theme of time, expressed through clocks, photographs, old clothes, paintings of the seasons, a sundial, etc.

Miss Greengold's most recent collection, "The Baroque Rolodex," is similar in concept in that it brings different perspectives to bear on a single subject, rather like a cubist painting that shows all the angles simultaneously.

One can readily understand why she might want to apply such a complex process to time, but the rotary Rolodex?

Miss Greengold explains that she took the title from a quote from the

Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges: "I should define as baroque that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its own possibilities, and borders on its own parody."

Miss Greengold is preoccupied with transforming mundane objects into art, in finding the playfulness and the artfulness in everyday objects by imagining visual and functional possibilities not conventionally associated with them. One hears in this theory echoes of the irreverent Dadaists with their notorious found objects, such as Duchamp's bicycle wheel, which they proclaimed art. But Miss Greengold's attitude is really much more affirmative than that of the Dadaists. Instead of denigrating art by applying the label indiscriminately, she elevates the status of the objects.

Why the Rolodex? Because Miss Greengold found herself one day admiring its attractive shape as it sat on her desk in the law office where she works part-time as a lawyer, and, improbably as it may seem, the object captured her fancy.

It's difficult to think of an object more prosaic or less inspiring than a Rolodex, and that is part of the point. It is, after all, a tribute to the fertility of the human imagination that it can use the Rolodex as a creative point of departure.

Her collection includes two Rolodexes containing pictures of lions perched on statuary plinths as though they were high art.

Miss Greengold's lions are a takeoff on the lions of antiquity that flank the entrances to temples to keep out those who can't enter into a spirit of play, an idea borrowed from Joseph

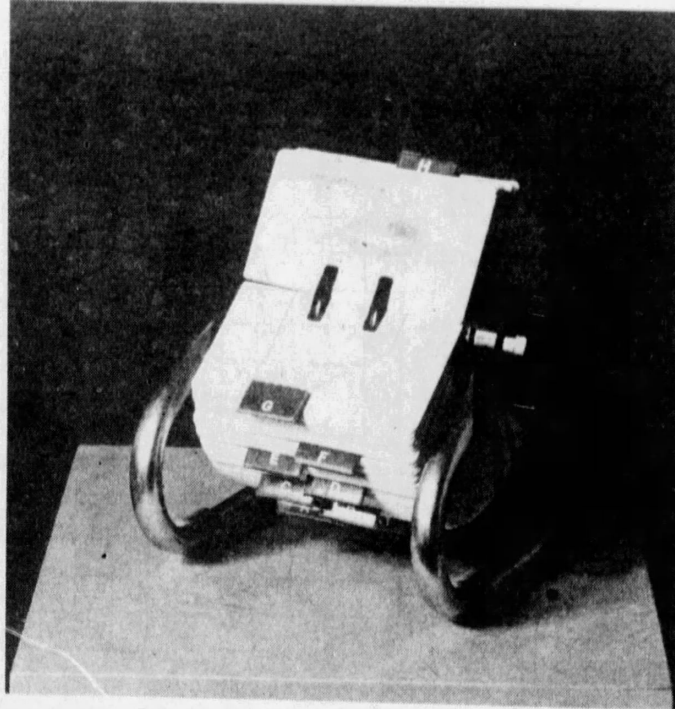
Campbell's book, "The Masks of God."

Some of the Rolodexes play on its functional aspects — one contains lip prints of Miss Greengold's friends rather than their addresses, another playing cards.

Others illustrate the visual and artistic potential of the Rolodex, and in their own way form an anthology of artistic styles. One file is a color world file, an alphabetical file of colors in color; some play with the shapes of

the notches, using them as sculptured towers, symbols for people, and abstract motifs in mini-paintings. A few are highly personal — her children's paintings on cards, for instance; others impersonal — cards cut in the shape of the male and female symbols.

And then there are those that are simply delightful, amusing inventions such as the Rolodex of pillows or of gloved hands, or the Rolodex as a chair on which a rag doll reclines.



Jane Greengold's 'Baroque Rolodex: Lips.'

— Christian Science Monitor photo



CLARENCE DAVIS DAILY NEWS

A balanced act: Artist Jane Greengold Stevens (holding Edward) and family (l. to r.) Ken, Rachel, Vanessa, Aaron.

## New book: 'Balancing Act'

**"The Balancing Act II: Five Women Reassess the Problems and Rewards." Chicago Review Press. Paper. 267 pp. \$8.95.**

What really happens when a professional woman adds a baby to her life? Does her husband share the work 50/50? Does her profession suffer? Does she go on double schedule? Is she permanently exhausted? And what about the child and its needs?

Five believers in the tenets of the women's movement, who first wrote about what happened to their work and marriages when they had babies in the early '70s, have just published a chatty nuts-and-bolts update.

Their careers include lawyer, artist, college professor, sculptress, head of a mom and pop publishing company, and running a vitamin distributorship from home. Between *Balancing Acts I* and *II* they found: "Babysitters come and go"; they all backed down on equal sharing of parental responsibilities; they all eventually rejected the male model of time commitment to work.

Only one took time out for full-time motherhood, and they all went on to have more than one child. This book is worth reading by all working women puzzled about whether or not to have a child. It is real material taken from day-to-day diaries of women, not memories or what-should-be rhetoric.

Listen to Jane Greengold Stevens, the only child of a professional mother herself and perhaps initially the most hesitant about having a child because of the demands of her dual career as lawyer and painter:

"When I was small, whenever I asked my father how he felt, he invariably answered that he felt fine because he was with me. At the time I thought that he was being insincere, and I often repeated the question wanting to know how he *really* felt. Now I understand that he was probably not being hypocritical, but that he really felt that way. When one of my babies cries and I am tired or involved in something else, I frequently resent having to drop everything and go to her. On my way to her side I am tired and sometimes bitter. But once I get to her, and pick her up and hold her small body close to me, I feel better, feel warmly towards her, and love her. And suddenly I do feel fine, and I am happy to be with her. It seems very odd."

At the time of the writing of the update she was pregnant with her fourth child, living in Park Slope and maintaining both careers. Now, some months later, this artist is the mother of twin daughters, 8½, and two sons, 4 years and 2 months, and preparing for her fifth New York art show (under the name Jane Greengold), which opens April 3 in SoHo at the West Broadway Gallery.

—Priscilla Tucker



# If you dig gardens, dig here

By MIKE SANTANGELO

There will be lot of mudslinging and dirt spreading around Borough Hall next week—and it will have nothing at all to do with Thursday's primary election.

The dirty work will get going at 1 p.m. Wednesday in Cadman Plaza Park. The object of it all is the construction of a garden designed by Park Slope's Jane Greengold.

Volunteers are needed to help out with the work so a call is being issued to all the closet farmers and frustrated earthmovers in the New York area.

The garden is the latest addition to the park area, which is already graced by five sculptures that were unveiled in June.

While the sculptures have received mixed reviews from people heading for the playing courts and government offices in the area, they have raised the intellectual tone of the park that once had nothing more to offer persons with time to kill than the cooing of pigeons.

Preliminary work on the park will begin Tuesday, when terracing will be filled with soil designed to nourish the plantings for the new scenic wonder.

After the volunteers set out the soil, it will be allowed to settle until November, when volunteers will again be asked to show up at the park. At that time, tulip bulbs will be planted in anticipation of a colorful spring.

All materials for the project will be provided, so don't bother to bring your own rake or shovel unless you just can't bear to work with someone else's implements.

The Artist's Garden is co-sponsored by the rotunda Gallery of Borough Hall and the Public Art Fund.

Greengold's design was picked over 24 other entries sent to the gallery. Earthworks and horticulture will create two trapezoidal structures rising from ground level. Eventually, both structures will be covered by flowers.

More than 1,000 cubic yards of earth will be moved into two wooden frames that will rise six feet above ground. By the end of November, more than 4,000 tulip bulbs will be planted in the frames.

To volunteer, call 643-7784 and leave your name and number. Borough President Howard Golden urges everyone who can to come out and enjoy the fun while working off some calories. ■



EDWARD MOLINARI DAILY NEWS

## **They like dirty work**

Park Slope artist Jane Greengold (foreground) and volunteers pitch in to work on new garden at Borough Hall Plaza. Greengold has designed two trapezoidal earth structures rising from ground that will be covered with more than 4,000 tulip bulbs as a "living sculpture."





Borough President Howard Golden and artist Jane Greengold get help from some sixth-graders in planting tulips for the artist's garden in Cadman Plaza.

## Bulbs to brighten bridge fest

More than 8,000 tulip bulbs, expected to bloom just in time for May's Brooklyn Bridge centennial, were safely snuggled in the soil between Borough Hall and Brooklyn Supreme Court yesterday.

Led by 18 students from St. Ann's School, a small army of volunteers crawled around on hands and knees installing the bulbs in the newly terraced Artist's Garden near Borough Hall Plaza over the weekend.

The bulbs, donated by the Netherlands Flow-

er Bulb Institute will be blooming in more than a dozen colors and shades as a horticultural hurrah for the bridge's first century.

The garden, designed by Jane Greengold, who won more than 24 competitors, was built with the aid of volunteer labor last month.

The tulips are planted in two wedges and different color bulbs have been used in each of the triangular plantings.

Greengold, a Park Slope resident, says the effect will be "gentle."

# Performers, visual art, under span

By ERIC V. COPAGE

An exhibit of art by 10 visual artists and a weekly performance series will be on view beneath the Brooklyn Bridge on the Brooklyn side as part of the Brooklyn Bridge Centennial Celebration, it has been announced.

The works will be exhibited and performed in the anchorage—the vaulted, cavernous, cathedral-like chamber at the foot of the bridge where the bridge cables are anchored. The artists have been commissioned to create a new work which will incorporate the historical and visual qualities of the anchorage.

According to Andrea Pedersen, a spokesman for Creative Time Inc., which is presenting the series, participating artists and art include:

- “Anchorite,” a work in which artist Jane Greengold has created a mythological woman, Agatha Muldoon, whose home, drawings, diaries and wall markings are displayed.

The work alludes to the history and import of the Brooklyn Bridge and the relationship between the outward, monumental aspect of the bridge and the interior secret life of the anchorage.

- A long black-bottomed pool, constructed by Sal Romano, where various stable and moving forms bearing blinking lights will be floating in water. The anchorage's enormous interior will be reflected in the pool along with the lights of the floating forms.

- “Arch Enemy,” a suspended, rotating figure with faceted, spiral surfaces covered with colored plexiglass which throws moving points of light to surrounding walls. It was created by Taro Suzuki.

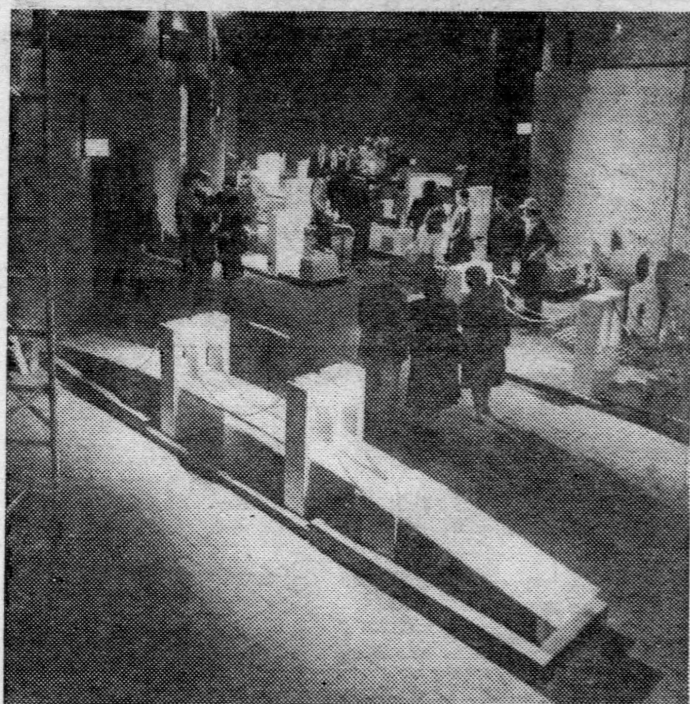
“Art on the Anchorage” will be exhibited between noon and 8 p.m. from May 25 until Oct. 10, except Wednesdays when the exhibition will close at 7 p.m. and reopen for the performance series at 8 p.m. Performances, which will include dance, theater and music, will begin on June 1. Participating performing artists will include the Mel Wong Dance Company, Rhys Chatham and Musicians and African Connection.

The event is sponsored by Creative Time Inc., a not-for-profit arts organization which takes vacant spaces of historical and architectural interest and makes them available to artists on an interim basis, enabling them to create new works for public exhibition.

Creative Time was involved in “Mass Transitscope” by artist Bill Brand, a permanent installation in the once-vacant Myrtle Ave. subway station. Passengers on Manhattan-bound B, D, N and QB local subway trains see 228 hand-painted images which turn into a 20-second animation.

Admission to the “Art in the Anchorage” exhibition is \$2. Weekly 8 p.m. Wednesday performances are \$5 or TDF. For more information, call (212) 571-2206.





ED MOLINARI DAILY NEWS

Models of the Brooklyn Bridge in various stages of construction are on display in the Anchorage, vaulted chamber at Brooklyn end of bridge.

# B'klyn Bridging the world of arts

By ERIC COPAGE and LARRY SUTTON

The Brooklyn Bridge, long considered an architectural work of art, yesterday became a home for other works of art.

A vaulted, cathedral-like chamber at the Brooklyn foot of the span was named the Anchorage and transformed into a mini-museum and performance center. It will be open for six months as part of the Brooklyn Bridge Centennial celebration.

Artists have been commissioned to create works incorporating the historical and visual qualities of the Anchorage. Among the works on display are the drawings, diaries and wall markings of a mythological woman; a rotating, multifaceted spiral with brilliant reflective surfaces,

and a mysterious black-bottomed pool with strange blinking lights.

"Art in the Anchorage," the works of 10 visual artists, will be on view from noon to 8 p.m. until Oct. 10. On Wednesdays, the exhibition will close at 7 p.m. and reopen for the performance series at 8 p.m. Dance, theater and musical productions begin June 1.

The event is sponsored by Creative Time Inc., a nonprofit arts organization that takes vacant spaces of historical and architectural interest and makes them available to artists.

Admission to the "Art in the Anchorage" exhibition is \$2. Weekly Wednesday performances cost \$5. For more information call 571-2206.



ED MOLINARI DAILY NEWS

Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden takes a look at work of artist Jane Greengold. Artists have been commissioned to create works for centennial.