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RINA PELEG

ARTPARK 1982

In recent years, Rina Peleg has been well known for her clay baskets. These are vessels woven out of extruded pipes, coils or ribbons, using traditional basket-weaving techniques. Peleg's low-fire pieces are unglazed, taking their color only from the various earthenware bodies that she uses.

Clay pots and woven fiber baskets are the oldest known vessels, and the seat of their development was the vicinity of Peleg's native Israel. Fascinated by the way clay was used to seal the ancient baskets and how baskets were used in the process of the earliest pot-making, Rina Peleg developed her own interface of the two techniques and traditions. The complex surfaces and volumes created by woven clay present a rich visual paradox and raise some interesting questions about the practical and aesthetic relationship of the two ancient materials.

Woven clay also poses many technical problems. In her New York City studio, Peleg is able to regulate the drying time effectively--a critical factor in preventing the long extruded forms from cracking as they're slowly woven into walls. She supports the various complicated structures by building many of them in plaster forms and by sometimes using ceramic fiber as one of the weaving elements. The size of her loft studio and of her electric kilns limited the size of the baskets, however, and they

remained within a vessel format. With a much larger woven sculpture in mind, Peleg accepted an invitation to be an artist-in-residence at ArtPark this past summer in Louiston, New York. There, she accepted the challenge of weaving a large clay sculpture and firing it on site. In the building stages it had to withstand heat, rain, wind, and curious onlookers. A kiln had to be constructed around it, and it finally had to stand outside as a finished, durable, and visually successful piece. The finished work took 3 weeks to build with the technical assistance of the ArtPark staff and that of Carborundum Co. who donated softbrick and ceramic fiber for the kiln.

Peleg began her project by leveling the surface and laying down four silicon carbide shelves to form a 70" square (1). Next, she set down a slab base marked for the first placement of the weaving elements (2) and began the weaving process (3). As she continued to build, larger tubular elements used at the corners strengthened the structure (4). The weaving continued and the walls developed a curvy configuration that further reinforced them (5). Firebrick was used to shore up the growing walls of loose, wet coils. Here (7), Peleg reinforced the back side of the piece. As work continued, the bottom had to be wrapped in plastic to control its drying rate (8), and at night, the entire structure was covered in plastic held by duct tape (9). When rain threatened, a plastic teepee was built over the piece. After it had dried uncovered for about 2 days, Peleg and her assistants built a softbrick kiln around it. Here (11), they are shown placing the burners. After the kiln walls were

completed (12), a ceramic fiber roof was placed over the four walls and held in place with bricks. After a 44 hour firing to cone 04 the kiln was cooled and dismantled. The successfully fired piece remains standing on its site (13), a 6'tall, 4' wide white basket made out of a half a ton of clay.

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