

Norma Minkowitz

Norma Minkowitz, trained in fine arts at Cooper Union Art School in New York and long involved in the fiber field through her knitted and crocheted figures, objects, and wearable art pieces, has in the last year and one-half turned to the making of vessels. Her methods remain tied to her past: crocheting is the primary technique she employs. But her subjects have departed radically from the comic, almost Pop-related imagery, to earth-rooted, universal themes. Using cotton or wire, and sometimes incorporating objects (natural elements such as rocks, twigs, nuts, or other materials), Minkowitz has already explored a variety of shapes and forms within this new body of work.

Triggered by the long illness and threat of death of her mother, Minkowitz first crocheted a vessel that contained her mother's face and another incorporating her white gloves holding an egg - speaking to the conception but also fragility of life. The vessel, as a metaphor for the earth, a protective shell, an element of enclosure and entrapment, has served well as a vehicle for the maturation of Minkowitz's ideas and art. From its wider, open rim to tapering, closed base, the vessel also conveys a sense of passage: from the sky or earth's surface to the depths below, from life to death, from the known to the unknown. Often the cavity of these vessel-sculptures is made inaccessible; the only openings, the only means of escape, is through the perforated (crocheted) surface. The lacey delicacy of these crocheted works makes the vessels appear fragile, and on one level projects a quality of femaleness. But the method by which Minkowitz constructs these vessels also makes them in actuality very sturdy. Hence there is a paradox between the strength and seeming fragility/vulnerability of the object or life or female that the vessel represents. Here, unlike in Minkowitz's earlier work, the inherent quality of crocheted fabric is given meaning which lends to Minkowitz's beautiful basket forms a potency and import.