

ART NEWS review, 2003  
Norma Minkowitz, Portraits and Passages  
One Person Show  
BELLAS ARTES, *Santa Fe, NM*

Norma Minkowitz is adept at manipulating the sometimes disturbing reality of natural beauty. In this absorbing show of new mixed-media work, all from 2002, the artist combined light, shadow, and mystery.

Minkowitz shapes crocheted fiber into human bodies, balls, and flowers and then fossilizes these forms with shellacs and resins. Often she introduces a single other element, carefully selected for dramatic effect. *In Root*, for example, that element is a bone-colored rhizome, its woody fingers reaching inside and encircling the exterior of a crocheted globe. Peering into the spaces of the intricate mesh of delicate threads that criss-cross inside, viewers can just make out their own image in the mirror placed in the bottom of the egg-shaped form.

In many of Minkowitz's pieces, the main body of the work tapers off into thick tendrils reminiscent of spider webs. *Rosemunda*, a woman's torso with a fully blossomed red rose for a head, also has a collar of green leaves and a lower body that seems in a state of earthy decomposition. It comes off as surreal, dangerous, and beautiful.

As if she were drawing, Minkowitz uses fiber to create intricate patterns of cross-hatching, tight weaves, and gaping holes. Though made of thread, the sculptures stand erect, glittering like caramelized sugar. As stand-ins for human flesh, they should be soft to the touch, but instead are hard and stiff, solid yet transparent, as well as dazzling, and a little frightening.

*Dottie Indyke*