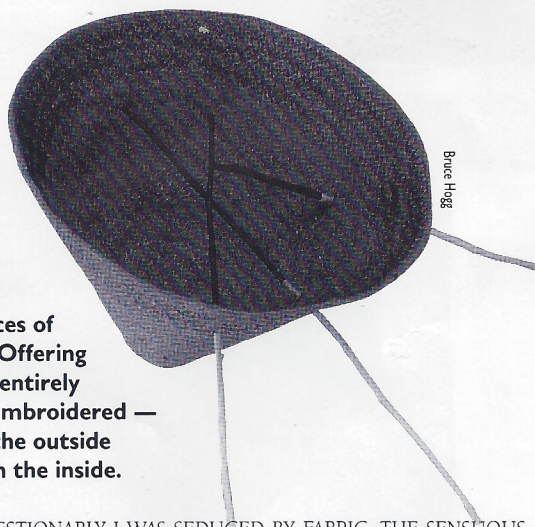




These forms are made of laminated burlap, covered in gesso and acrylic paint. The smallest stands about 1.4 m high and the largest 1.8 m.



Bruce Hogg

The surfaces of this 1987 'Offering Bowl' are entirely machine-embroidered — white on the outside and red on the inside.

UNQUESTIONABLY I WAS SEDUCED BY FABRIC. THE SENSUOUS textures, the rich colours, the infinite patterns were mesmerizing.

After graduating from art school in 1968 I felt directionless and limited by the rules I had internalized while studying painting and graphic design. But in 1976 I bought an old Singer and taught myself to sew. This freed me from a number of 'shoulds' that had been stifling my creativity.

I started using silk and velvet to make doll-like forms. At first I concentrated on experimenting with sewing techniques, colours, and shapes. Gradually, specific themes seemed to spring from my subconscious and work themselves into the soft sculptures I was making. Fears and anxieties grew into shadowy snake-like images. They threatened females who were alone and vulnerable but imbued with magical powers.

By 1983 my technical skills had become more refined and the work more intricate. However, I thought the technical complexity of the pieces was obscuring the ideas I wanted to express. Exploring these ideas led me temporarily away from soft sculpture and fabric.

I returned to my childhood . . . afternoons spent building twig houses in the mud. For the next two years I made twig structures, fragile dwellings enclosing translucent womb-like papier-mâché bowls. There was a joyful immediate connection to these non-precious materials.

The magic of play:

There is a ritual: the chanting of birds, the croaking of frogs, the rattle of sticks as they fall to the ground stirring some inner rhythm. (For Wisteria)

I intuitively create my own rituals. If the ritual comes from within, then it will connect to a greater understanding.

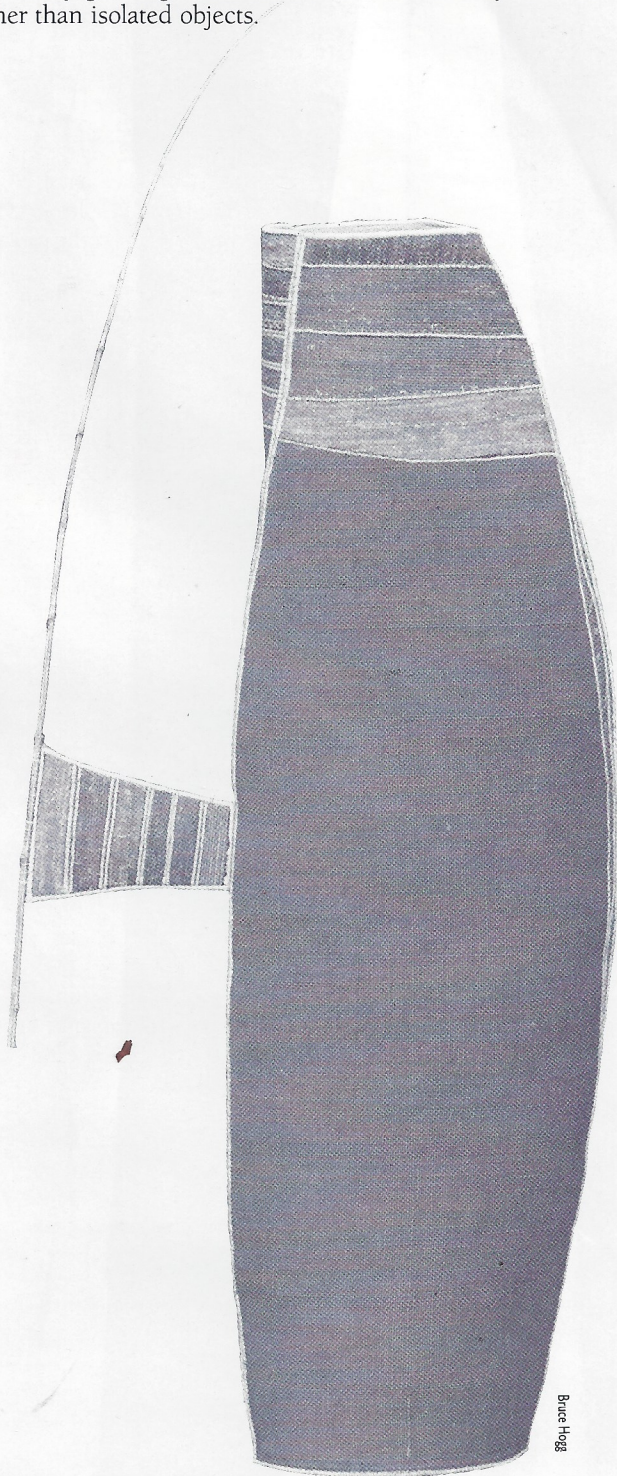
— Mary Corcoran's farm/Victor Tinkl's workshop, 1988

The twig structures brought me closer to the part of myself that makes me vulnerable. I made my first guardians and offering bowls for protection. To be aware of our own sensitivity and frailty connects us to one another, I realized, and it is this recognition that allows us to be truly human. I began to see vulnerability not as a weakness or threat but as a strength.

I was conscious of the dichotomy existing in each individual: the logical, methodical approach to learning and the layers of feelings and intuitions that give depth to our knowledge. There had to be a balance. For me, the female became a symbol not only of vulnerability, but also of intellectual-emotional struggles. Raw silk and twigs became the mode of expression.

By 1986, the simplified female forms I was making had a vessel-like appearance. I decided to use the vessel, — an emotional receptacle, a safe refuge, and a vulnerable reminder of the inner self — as a symbol for the female. I developed a technique for fusing layers of fabric into rigid slabs I then used to 'build' a form that could stand on its own.

I was moved by the quiet power and beauty of the 'bush people,' burlap-covered trees and bushes that lined the highways in winter, protecting a precious resource. I decided to work with burlap. The collective groupings of trees also fuelled my growing determination to show a body of work rather than isolated objects.



Bruce Hogg

Made of turquoise-coloured burlap and twigs, this 'Guardian' dates from 1987.

Feelings of insecurity from dealing with an unpredictable technique led me to make a series of 'protectors.' Using a variety of materials — sticks, cheesecloth, gesso, paint, burlap — I made guardians to ward off evil, offering bowls to appease the spirits, fetishes empowered with magic, and voodoo dolls. The protectors continue to be an integral part of my work.

I had visited Arizona in 1987. The rich layers of rock, sand, and all the silent mysteries of earth and soul poured into what I made.

The rocks of Arcosanti line the curving dirt road leading to Soleri's uncompleted utopian dream. The rocks, balanced, figurative forms against the desert sky, touch hidden memories of other unexplained testaments.

— Arizona, 1987

There were numerous possibilities in the laminated burlap technique. I experimented with machine stitching, creating layers of texture overlaid with paint. The subtlety of the colours enhanced the slow intricate movement of the surface.

By the ocean sitting on massive stones. Crevices worn smooth by the continuous motion of the sea are marks made by time. We are all marked by time. We all make our own marks in time.

— Rockport, Massachusetts, 1987

I wanted to be more definite about the surface treatment. Using the sewing machine I made linear drawings on the laminated burlap. In order to have a more immediate connection with the material, I started 'marking' the burlap with paint, pencils, pens, and knives.

I vacillate between total absorption in the manipulation of textures, colours, and forms, and the need to explore the intangible realness of feelings. Ideas and techniques grow from the challenge of expressing these feelings. In the past few years many experiences and memories have brought a new dimension to my work.

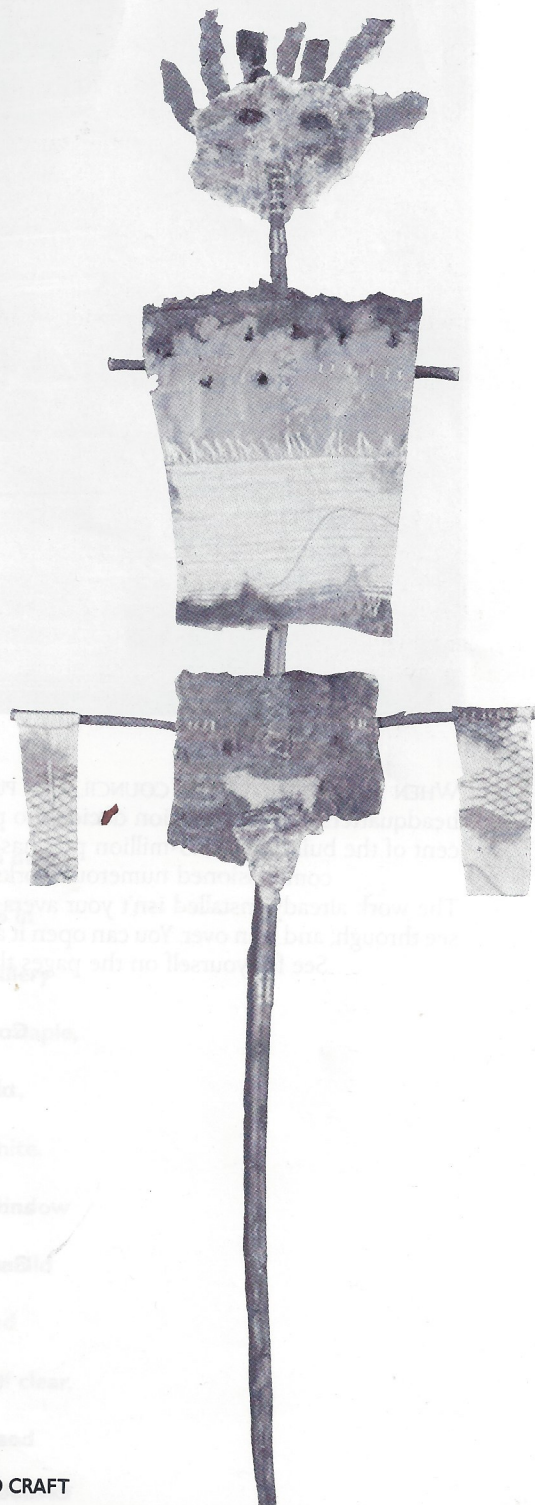
Shelley Fowler's beautiful city/forest figures are an inspiration. The show is a complete story within a specific environment. I walked away from the window and was lost. Everything seemed new/strange. I felt disoriented.

— The Apple Doll, 1981

No longer do I see the vessel representing the female or guardian but as an incarnation of both these forms and more.

I have become aware of the need to reclaim and reconnect our past experiences. What makes a form or image universally compelling? What draws my attention, clutches my gut, and penetrates my soul? What are the connections we make as individuals? As groups? What are our shared memories?

In my current body of work I attempt to give visual forms to these questions. I want to create a feeling that will evoke references to other objects, other places, other times. Sometimes I feel so close to the vision. . . then it slips away, elusive, seductive, tantalizing.



This 'Guardian' figure, formed as a protection against vulnerability, stands 60 cm tall.