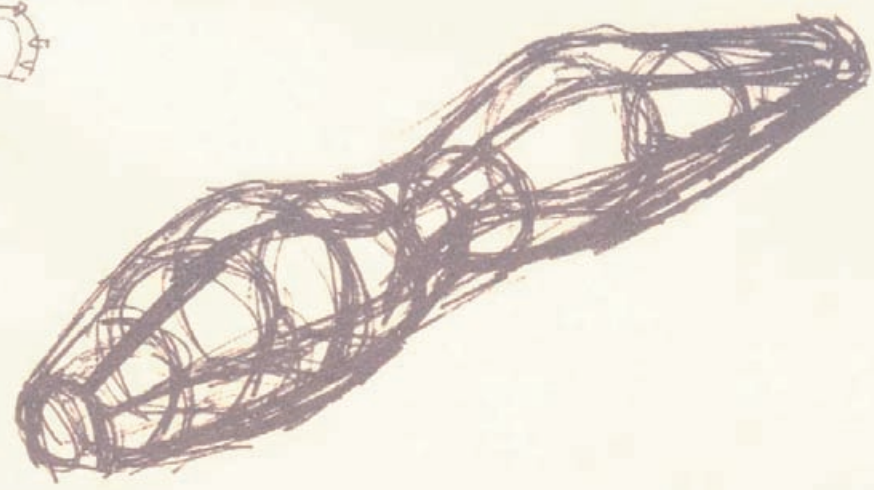



MAGGIE POOR



Ribs of diameter
element
+ notched



also:
rattan 
laid onto
curve
+ mod paste
on top (between
ribs)

translucent
mod paste
deep over grey



Two or three
times
+ water



also
latter
the bird
some
A
or top
the

transverse
the
the

MAGGIE POOR



MATRIX

MIXED MEDIA, 19 3/4" x 8 1/2" x 7", 1987

PRIVATE COLLECTION

MAGGIE POOR

Maggie Poor on a downtown street corner was a heart-gladdening sight. She was tall and athletically gorgeous, a little wild looking in a leather jacket that belied her gentleness. We would bump into each other on the street and run down the books we were reading, the art we had seen, and the way love sometimes tore us apart. She was a woman of great enthusiasms and sympathies. She didn't guard herself against the world, which enlarged her comprehension while leaving her vulnerable. But she almost always forgave the person or thing that blindsided her because she sensed with compassion the blindness we all share. And Maggie strove to see beyond, to what we blind ourselves from. This explains both why her art matters and why it feels a bit reductive to those of us who knew her to consider her primarily through her art. She had other, larger concerns which were reflected in her art, to be sure.

If I had to identify the most enduring quality, or feeling, in her artwork, it would be a penetrating tenderness towards forms as they

make their way through their temporary manifestation in our buffeting physical universe. Her imagery splits between organic and architectural and sometimes merges the two, as when she constructs models of multiplying units of a twisting skeletal framework that could as easily represent plankton or a post-modern geometric column. Her forms are invested with a figural presence, most obviously in her drawings. It's not that they all look like figures, though some of her vegetal and utensil images surely do, but their recurring singularity against a background that is either an indeterminate field of atmospheric color or else a theatrically schematized interior space casts them in the role of protagonists. As isolated forms their narrative must be of emergence and self-awareness. It goes without saying that there's a struggle involved.

Why do they hover there? I think it's because the sculptor in Maggie wanted to get a good look at them. If pressed, she would have probably identified herself as a sculptor and most of us who knew her would probably

do the same. She hardly made any paintings on canvas. Her work on paper, so much of it so beautiful in its own right, is largely devoted to forms she thought about making in three dimensions. But the work on paper also comprises the bulk of her artistic effort and it occurs to me that its relation to her sculptural intentions almost certainly incorporated a reciprocity by giving her a reason to make more drawings. Many of the drawings from the early 90s are really paintings on paper, at least a knifed oil ground color is laid down as a surface and backdrop for the more delicate tracery of an image or group of images.

A chronology of her images can be roughly constructed. In the mid 80s Maggie was envisioning a series of utensil and architectural elements in architectural settings: ladders, stairs, crucibles, etc. The work on paper was graphically bold, often rendered in black ink outlines and only slightly tinted. The forms would be depicted in bare interiors or in surreal outdoor settings. The monumentality of her drawing and the smooth handling of her sculptural materials actually owe more to the comparatively serene Italian Scuola Metafisica

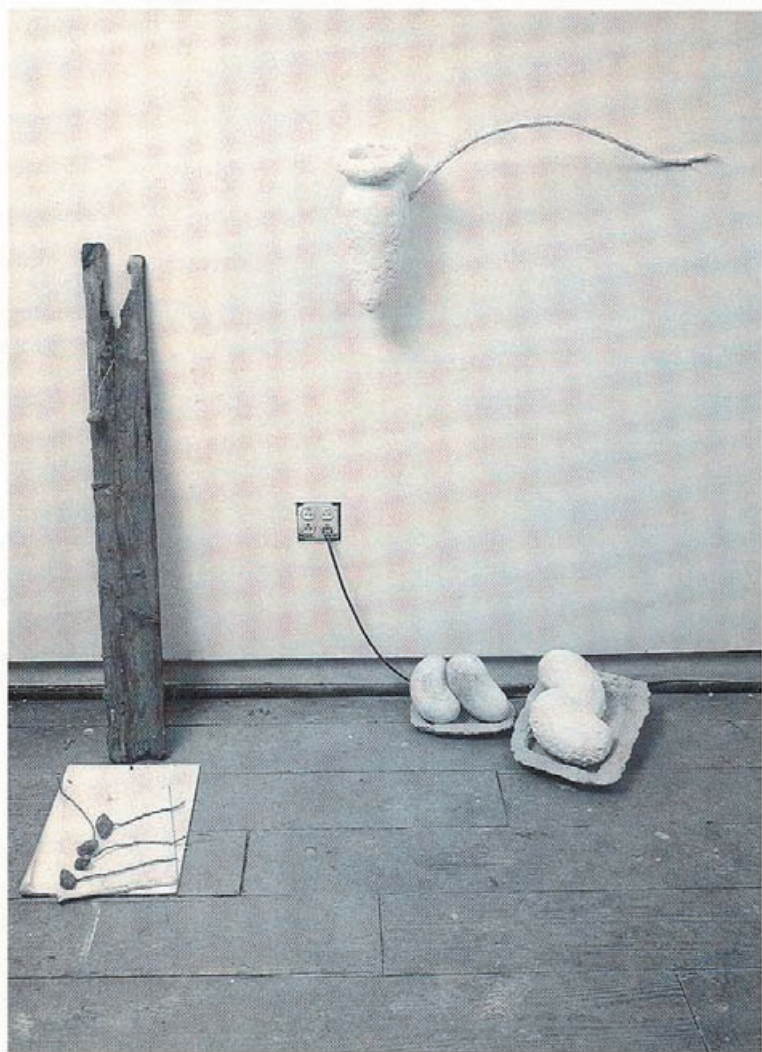
rather than to northern European and American Surrealism. While the conflation of the monumental and intimate is effected in her drawings by the vulnerable quiver that animates even her boldest line, her sculpture makes an outright appeal to intimacy through its small scale. But of course, something small can also be regarded as being huge and far away and this simultaneity of scale impressions is part of the haunting effect of these sculptures. The other part resides in the creamy smoothness of her touch with the modeling compound she was using. The tenderness that I spoke of earlier dwells in this touch and a knowing way with scale, and it is the touch, spare and caressing, that is wholly her own.

Vegetal and organismic imagery starts to appear regularly in the work of the late 80s and early 90s. A bean pod with a truncated stem is one of the more compelling characters, sometimes looking like a burnt and crisped Pinocchio head, sometimes a fetus, and other times a kidney. Pairs and clusters of forms appear more often in both the drawings and sculpture. The drawings become more painterly, looser and more expressionistic in

their handling. An interest in skeletal frameworks develops, along with collage. In the end her sculpture is employing found objects such as small carts and stands to display her forms as specimens. This latter work clearly relates to her encroaching illness but it is also indicative of a growing confidence in the accessibility of the world to her sensibility.

Maggie's great gift was to have it both ways, however briefly. Before her strength faded she had arrived at a mature level of craft and vision. She had also earned a life free of the conceptual and social straitjacket of the contemporary artworld. She was one of the most realized persons I have ever known.

—Stephen Westfall
New York, 1996



STUDIO, 1991

THE LISTENING OBJECT

The works chosen for this exhibition¹ show their origins in my study of natural forms and structures; and of all kinds of artifacts, tools, ceremonial objects of many cultures and times. A Stone Age axehead, a medieval alchemist's furnace, a weaver's shuttle, have been the starting point for pieces in the past.

Childhood memories of discovering nature are very present to me—exploring the woods, seeing the ways other creatures live, constructing my own worlds under trees. Today my New York apartment is filled with seedpods, bits of fossils, coral fragments brought back from my own or friends' travels. There's a force of purpose in the derivation of these forms, as with the tools I look at, that is an inspiration to me. Tenacity, the fierce compulsion to survive, shapes the line of the most delicate sprout.

Similarly, with much-handled objects like old tools, there is an energy, a richness of individual human history in their marks of wear—the wear of use, and the gesture of the particular user. It's the marks and scars that over time make an individual of a person or a tool—sculpted by life.

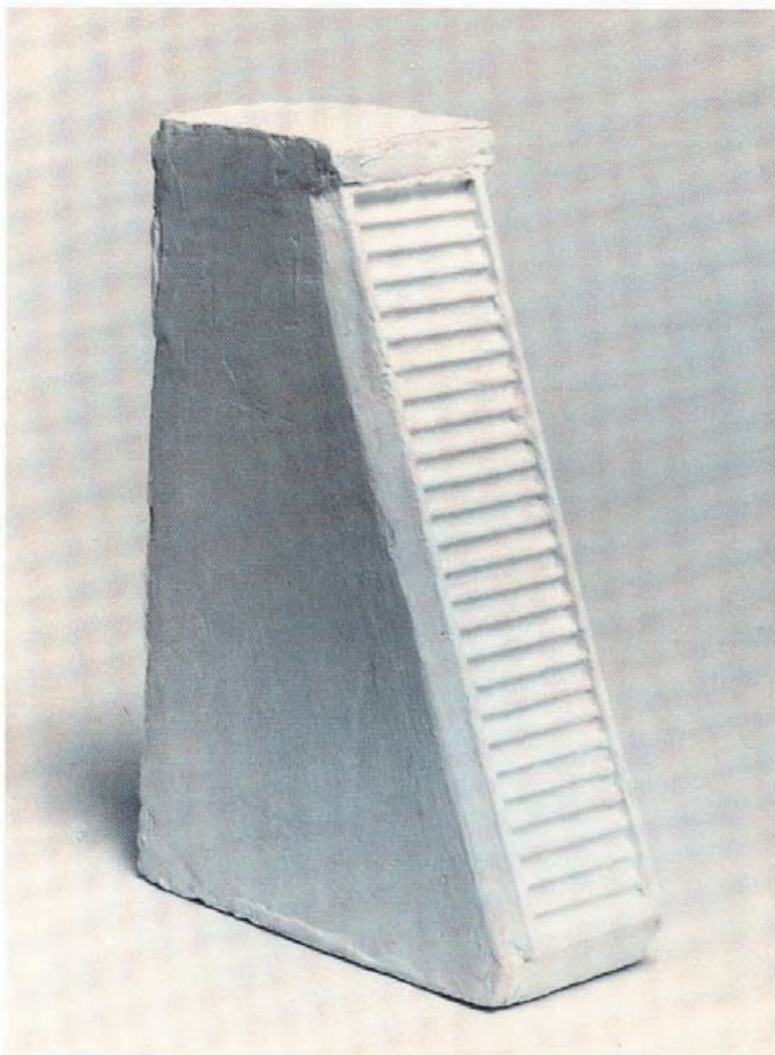
I think a lot about artisanry and the history of handmade things; the changing place of this kind of work in a modern world where so much is done by pushing buttons. How is our relationship to our bodies altered, our respect for the body's wisdom, its intrinsic timing and rhythms, as we need our muscles less? Without overromanticizing hand labor, there's something there I've wanted to explore. Whittling, chipping, sanding, rubbing; building up and wearing away the layers to find the form; feeling the muscular intelligence at work. It is deeply satisfying, the kind of reverie that repetitive work can release.

¹ This essay was written on the occasion of a solo exhibition at the Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 1993.

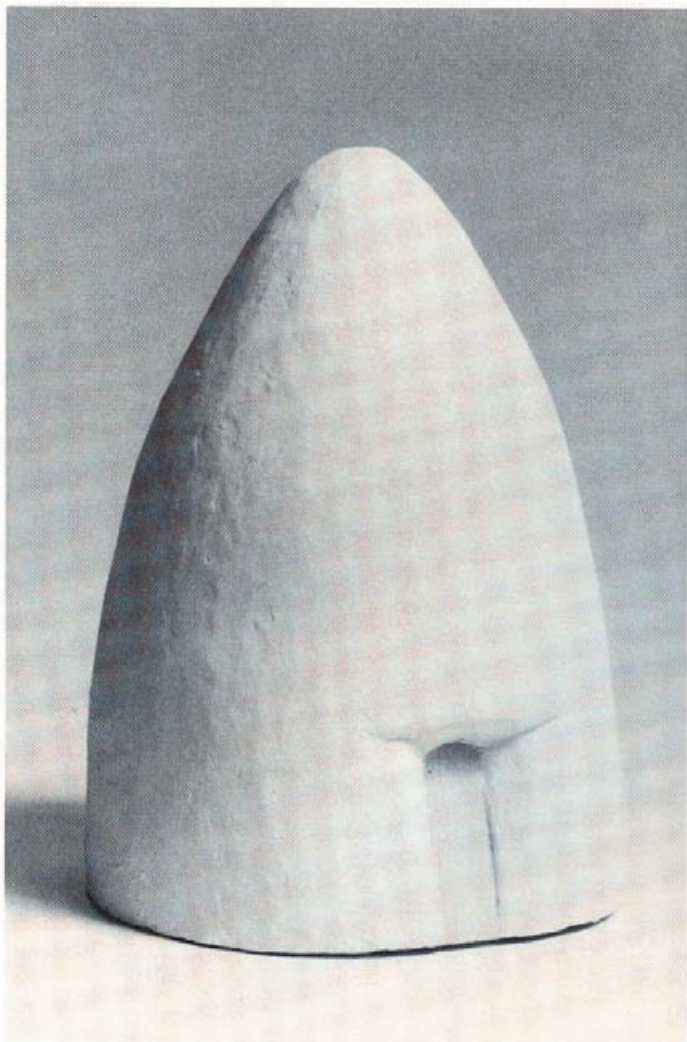
I work on many things at one time. Sometimes a piece comes together quickly; often it evolves over months, with many pauses. Drawing is an integral part of this evolutionary process, and of the development of a vocabulary of images through the years. In drawing there's a different kind of tactile pleasure: the responsiveness of the materials, the immediacy of touch.

Over and over I return to certain archetypal referents, images of connection with our physical surroundings: shelter, vessel, implement. Through the physicality of familiar objects an emotional texture is evoked, the desires and conflicts underlying daily life. All the forms that become my sources trigger associations, perhaps elusive memories of emotional states, perhaps allusions to human gesture. In following the train of intuitive associations—like dreaming—I find that hidden things, perhaps a detail, come to consciousness—revealing something new to me, making new connections. It might be about relationships with others, or with the inner self. It's a layering again, this time of insight. From it comes the next direction—recently, to work with strong contrasts of texture and of scale. As I work with a shape, feeling my way, literally, over time, it comes to reflect this investigation of inner experience. In this search, this pursuit of mystery, is the meaning of the work for me.

—Maggie Poor
January, 1993



ZIGGURAT
MIXED MEDIA, 15 3/8" x 4" x 10 7/8", 1987



HAVEN

ACRYLIC COMPOUND, WOOD, MIXED MEDIA, 11 1/2" x 7 3/4" x 8 1/4", 1987



PORTENT
MIXED MEDIA, 10" x 4" x 2 1/4", 1987
COLLECTION: LENNOX BLACK



KORÉ IN SPRING
MIXED MEDIA, 17 1/4" x 8 5/8" x 1 1/2", 1987
COLLECTION: LENNOX BLACK



RIGOLETTO

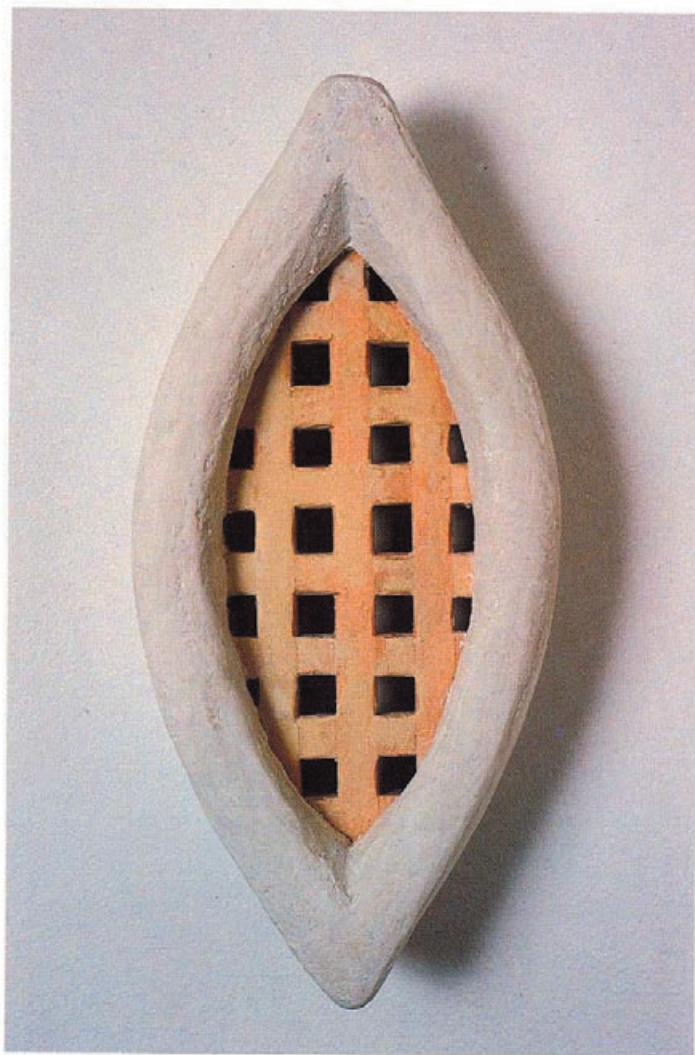
HYDROCAL, MODELING COMPOUND, 11" x 10 1/2" x 12", 1989



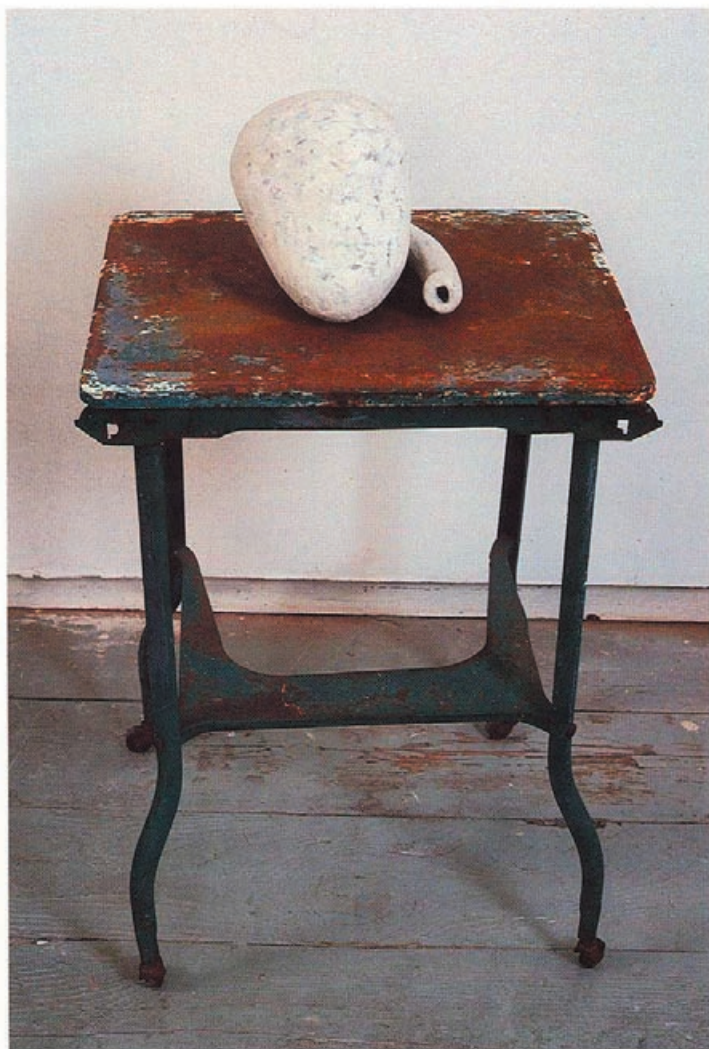
UNTITLED (DETAIL)

MIXED MEDIA, 1 OF 8 FORMS, EACH 9 1/2" X 3 1/2" X 3", 1991

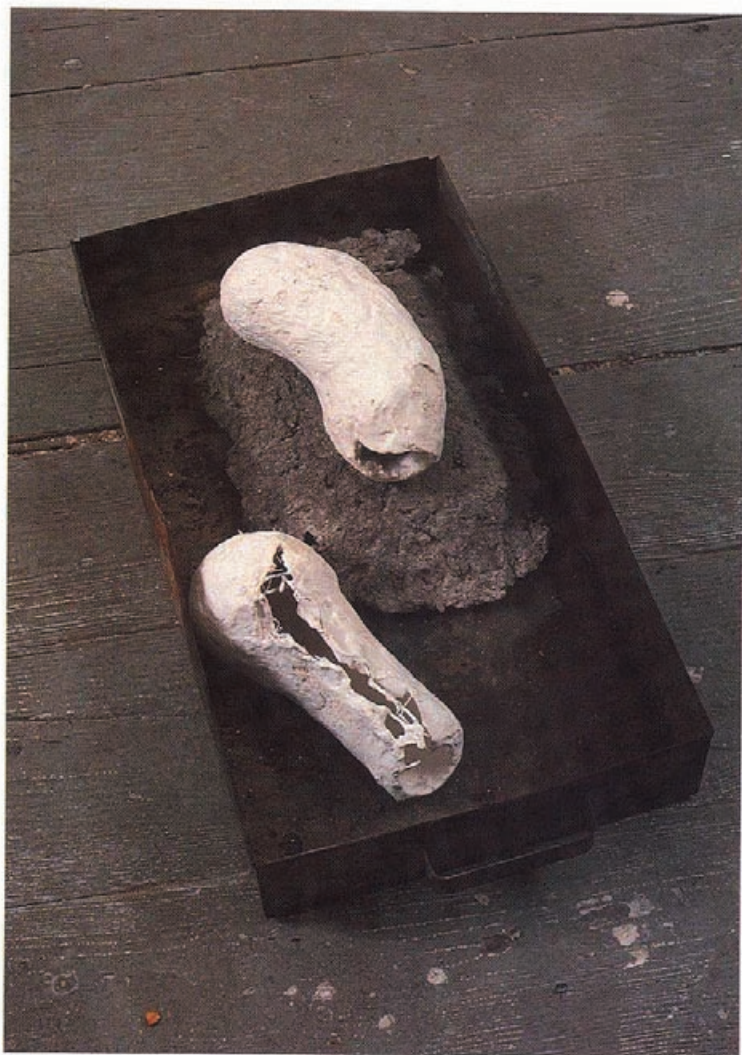
COLLECTION: PRISCILLA FURTH



REPRISE: SOTTO VOCE
WOOD, MODELING COMPOUND, 11" x 6" x 3 1/2", 1991
COLLECTION: BANCROFT AND MARY POOR



AFTER ENDGAME
MIXED MEDIA, 32" x 18 1/4" x 14 1/2", 1991
COLLECTION: MERRY CONWAY



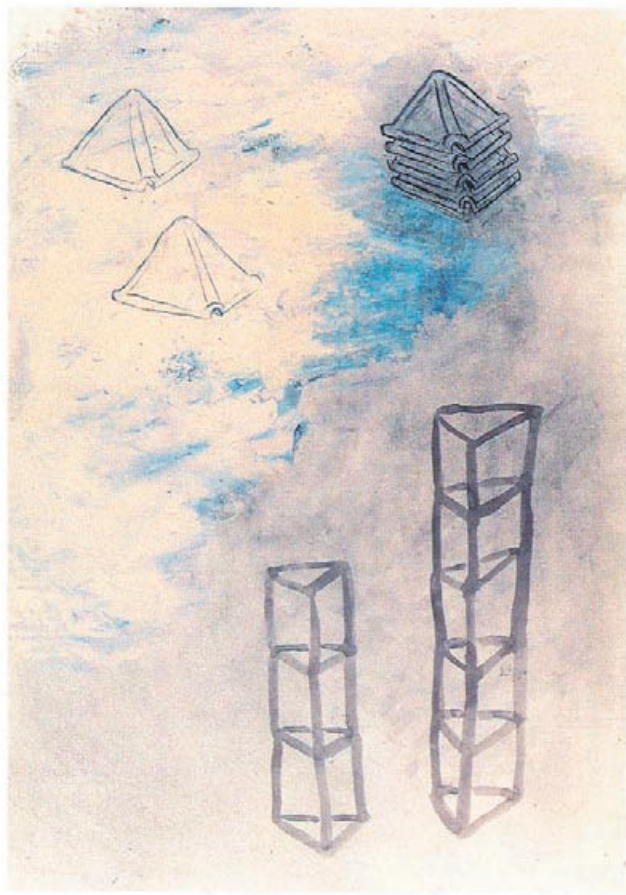
UNTITLED

MIXED MEDIA, METAL TRAY, 6" x 11 1/2" x 22 3/4", 1992



UNTITLED

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 15" X 11", 1988



UNTITLED

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 39 1/2" x 27 1/2", 1989



UNTITLED

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 30" X 22 1/4", CIRCA 1990



UNTITLED

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 19 5/8" x 13 5/8", 1990



UNTITLED

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 15" X 11 1/8", 1990



MAGGIE POOR, 1992

Since recognizing how fully our culture rewards emotional armoring, I've wanted to move deeper and deeper into its opposite, to express intimacy, vulnerability, tenderness. Increasingly my work addresses exposure and fragility, the passion and tenacity of survival, the wear and tear of living and continuing. Images of exposing, revealing: the paradox of shedding armor to find a truer, pliant strength within. Vessel shapes embody the self, or act as implicit shell/container/shelter for it. In some works forms are ordered, ranged, arrayed, as if categorized; being-as-vessel, the frail house of consciousness, linked to the vessels of the dissection room, its trays and racks. Contrasted with images of containment, elsewhere elements are piled, fragile, ungainly, achingly vulnerable.

In works on paper, cracked, fractured, stained surfaces play against delicacy of line and the exquisite beauty of botanical structures, or of the fragmented, occluded, yet eloquent human body. A collage sensibility has entered my sculpture, a need to work by combining disparate elements: the handwrought object, with dreamlike aura and serene, lucent surface of previous works; and the found object, with overlays of its history in the known world. The contrast brings the sense of discord: the absurd, the disjoint. To reflect this polarity, beauty and harshness side by side, irreconcilable as in joyous, mysterious life, is now very important to me.

—Maggie Poor
1992



STUDIO, 1991



UNTITLED
MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 14" x 10", 1991

MAGGIE POOR
1952 - 1995

EXHIBITIONS

- 1996 Interim Art, London, solo show
1995 Friendspace, New York, *Artists and Friends*, group show
1993 The Drawing Center, New York, *The Return of the Cadavre Exquis*
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, *The Listening Object*, solo show
1991 OIA, New York, *CoVarients: Abstract Painting and Sculpture*
1988 Rosa Esman Gallery, New York, *Small(scale)*
1987 Sculpture Center, New York, *Small Works*
A.I.R. Gallery, New York, three artist show
22 Wooster Gallery, New York, *Freedom*
1984 Kenkeleba House, New York, *Affirmations of Life*
Interim Art, London, inaugural show
1978 Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, *After Brown: The Seventies*
1976 HERA Gallery, Wakefield, Rhode Island, *Etchings by Ten Women*

THEATER WORK

Ongoing collaboration with Merry Conway and Noni Pratt; has included set elements, props, projected images, artists' book design for their original theatre pieces.

- 1991 *As a Dream That Vanishes*, presented by Creative Time and the Guggenheim Museum, performed at 575 Broadway, New York
1986 *Towards the Trickster*, performed at Washington Square Church, New York
1985 *Elements of Rare Earth*, performed at Washington Square Church, New York

EDUCATION

- 1976 Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, BA 1976

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1993 *Art New England*, February/March, reproduction of *Schema* (1989)
Christine Temin, *Boston Globe*, January 28, 1993, *Critic's Tip*
1992 Nancy Princenthal, *Print Collector's News*, fall issue, review of artists' book,
As a Dream That Vanishes

HONORS

- 1991, 1990 Residency, Cummington Community for the Arts, Cummington, Massachusetts
1974 M.H. Hicks Award, Providence, Rhode Island

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Maureen Paley
Katherine Parker
Peter Pinchbeck
Noni Pratt
Stephen Westfall

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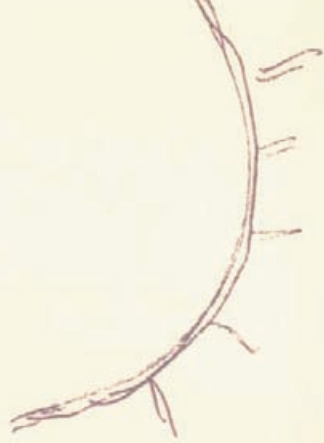
line +
2000?

turning?
a little line



something
down





line +
sided?

twinned?

or lath lined



painted
something
darker

1. 0 1 Cur var.



