



Today we'd like to introduce you to Mary Brogger.

Thanks for sharing your story with us Mary. So, let's start at the beginning and we can move on from there.

I was influenced at an early age by my mother who was a costume designer for civic theater and by my father who loved to tinker with anything that fell in his path. I studied Sculpture, Installation and Performance at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1980's and taught in the Sculpture and the Fiber and Materials Studies Departments there in the 1990's. And then, I continued working in Chicago doing public and private art commissions and exhibiting nationally and internationally.

I moved my studio to Los Angeles in 2009. Having diverse interests and skills has allowed me to work across disciplines, from design for the home, sculpture and fashion, to prop making for film and television.

Overall, has it been relatively smooth? If not, what were some of the struggles along the way?

I doubt any artist can boast a smooth road. The nature of being an artist includes a constant desire to invent and re-invent. This alone is a struggle. Taking risks is our stock and trade. And it takes a confluence of circumstances for ideas to succeed and open the door for flow. Personally, I have been fortunate to have an idiosyncratic imagination that resides somewhere on the edge of conventional thought; a place rich with potentially fresh ideas. But having a

predisposition for self-doubt puts a big bump in the road right out of the gate...And yet the creative impulse persists.

Tell us about your business/company. What do you do, what do you specialize in, what are you known for, etc. What are you most proud of as a company? What sets you apart from others?

I've worked freelance and by commission for decades; sometimes through a showroom such as Dana John Inc. and JF Chen and currently Garde, but often on my own by word of mouth. By nature of my broad abilities and interests it would be hard for me to name any one thing I am known for. I am known for different things in different worlds. I am for instance known in the Chicago art world, I suppose, for my teaching at SAIC, and for my sculpture in the permanent collection at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. But another sector knows me for a very prominent public sculpture in Chicago that marks a site where history took a turn towards the formation of labor unions; The Haymarket Monument is recognized by people concerned with workers rights who journey there from all parts of the planet. And I incorporated an ongoing element to that work that keeps the monument growing and vital. I would say that that is my most important accomplishment. Here, in Los Angeles, I have for the most part focused on Design for the home- which I love. My twisted wire sculptures come to mind first. But I have also made large bronze gates and some bronze "lean-to" candlesticks which have been successful, as well as large burnt black fiber sculptures that people are just getting to know. What sets me apart in this world might be the fact that i am not of it. I am not trained as a designer, I'm trained as a sculptor and form is almost everything to me. I say "almost" because Design whose function suffers for its form drives me crazy!

What is "success" or "successful" for you?

Ha! Well, that's a difficult question that perhaps loops back to your question about struggles. I am of a culture, American Midwest born, whose mindset thinks success is having just a little bit more than what you have right now. And for an artist; I know for myself that misguided psychology can get mixed up in the generally positive creative impulse to always be striving for something new to explore and make. Success as a grand unified theory so to speak is an overwhelming idea to me and has to be measured in increments: i.e., did a sculpture turn out beautifully; did others connect with it; did I get through the day without yelling at the computer! Hahaha. Generally, I keep my head down with regard to that idea which is not always useful and why representation has been so important to me.





Image Credit:
James White, Mary Brogger



Curious Crystals of Unusual Purity

Jun 27 – Sep 27, 2004 | MoMA PS1

P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center presents an exhibition based on the idea of a Wunderkammer, a cabinet of curiosities, with more than 100 works by 35 artists. The curators set out on an adventure/experiment, with no other goal than to encounter many strange and beautiful objects and bring them back for others to examine. The title of the exhibition, taken from a song recorded by Bridget St. John in 1969, influenced their choices. The show took shape organically, forming over time and with many facets: each work a world of its own.

Artists included are Lisa Beck, Carol Bove, Matthew Brannon, Sebastiaan Bremer, Mary Brogger, Alex Brown, Bruce Conner, Bjorn Copeland, Darinka Jeff Davis, Jeremy Davis, Steve Di Benedetto, Trisha Donnelly, Jim Drain, Mark Dwinell, Amy Gartrell, Joanne Greenbaum, Erik Hanson, Peter Huttinger, Jutta Koether, Christopher Lucas, Billy Miller, Christopher Myers, Ara Peterson, Adrian Piper, Joe Scanlan, Michelle Segre, David Shaw, Harry Smith, Stephen Sprott, Barbara Sullivan, Fred Tomaselli, John Tremblay, Kelley Walker, B. Wurtz, and Peter Young. Bridget St. John, the No-Neck Blues Band, and White Magic are scheduled to perform at the opening.

This exhibition is organized by P.S.1 Curatorial Advisor Bob Nickas and guest curator Steve Lafreniere.

SHOUTOUT LA

Meet Mary Brøgger: Sculptor & Designer

1 June 2021



We had the good fortune of connecting with Mary Brøgger and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Mary, can you share the most important lesson you've learned over the course of your career?

I have come up with an axiom for myself that summarizes one of the most important lessons I have learned about my creative endeavor. The axiom is this: "Everything you make is an alteration." That is to say that everything you make is the result of an earnest intent to embody and evoke a mystery. And that by placing this work in the world it automatically stands in direct or sympathetic opposition to all other creative propositions.



Please tell us more about your work. We'd love to hear what sets you apart from others, what you are most proud of or excited about. How did you get to where you are today professionally. Was it easy? If not, how did you overcome the challenges? What are the lessons you've learned along the way. What do you want the world to know about you or your brand and story?

I think I share a lot more in common with other creative people than possess qualities that set me apart. What excites me, and an untold number of artists, is discovering the strongest and

most interesting qualities of a material or technique and then somehow, through an idiosyncratic process, shaping a setting in which those qualities can suggest broader implications either metaphorically or psychologically. I've produced myriad works over the decades but only a relative few have really caught long term attention from an audience. So my success, such as it is, is in thanks to a persistent drive that continues to forage for new ideas and materials while full well knowing that you win some, you lose some in terms of recognition. Timing and luck have a lot more to do with it than most people recognize. And maintaining a drive through it all is far from easy. What do I want the world to know about me? Mostly that I am here and I have a website! Hahaha! The work will speak for itself. It is a diverse body of work including sculpture, furniture, light fixtures and fashion design. When I was a kid I dreamed of having a studio in the back of a storefront which featured anything I felt like making that day or week. And that people would come just to see what new thing I was up to. It kind of worked out that way but without quite as much overhead thanks to the internet. :)

If you had a friend visiting you, what are some of the local spots you'd want to take them around to?

I love having guests come visit but I'm certain I could not be a travel guide for an entire week. But a (post Covid) itinerary would certainly begin with a morning hike up one of the south facing trails of Griffith Park that look out over the city- just to get a lay of the land. Afterwards I would take them to Viet Noodle Bar for an "off menu" mushroom omelette with extra carrot/jicama slaw. There would be museums and galleries to visit: MOCA, LACMA, Hauser and Wirth, Regen Projects, The Getty, The Pit, Various Small Fires, Night Gallery. Secret beach spots followed by Oysters and Bloody Mary's at Blue Plate Oysterette. I like to cook for my guests so there would be dinners on my deck with a panoramic view of the sunset. Though at some point we would have to have dinner at Lucques on Melrose. As a farewell, and if the timing is right I would guide them on a moonlit night hike in the Angeles mountains to a spot overlooking the glittering city to dine and dwell on its beauty.

Los Angeles Times

ART REVIEWS : Industrial-Strength Sculptures by Mary Brogger

BY DAVID PAGEL

JAN. 30, 1992

A steel Persian carpet mysteriously floats just above the bare concrete floor of the Christopher Grimes Gallery. It is accompanied by a functional settee made from a thinner gauge of the same material, a rusting chandelier whose ice-cube coating drips like a slow-motion, low-tech shower, and the silhouette of a curtain sprayed in enamel on a 10-foot-square roll-up garage door.

These industrial-strength sculptures make up the first West Coast solo show of Chicago-based artist Mary Brogger. Like the other works she has exhibited over the past eight years, they infuse their surroundings with the aura of domestic tranquillity run hopelessly amok.

By carrying the demand for the comforts provided by a stable refuge to their illogical extremes, her installation gives form to the deathliness that underlies the desire to preserve an aristocratic notion of the home. Elegant, yet menacing, Brogger's steel renditions of woven wool, silk cushions, lace tapestries and strung glass expose the perversions built into the pleasures of refinement and taste. At the same time, they play upon the fact that these satisfactions have all but vanished from contemporary living.

The rug that partially covers almost 130 square feet of the floor stands out as Brogger's best piece. Its intricate forms are both beautiful and threatening, clearly the result of a process of violent transformation, executed for no other purpose than aesthetic effect. Unlike the chandelier, it is absolutely static. Unlike the door-painting, it is too big and aggressive to function as decoration.

Brogger's see-through carpet stunningly combines the attractions of pattern-and-decoration painting with the impersonal severity of minimalist sculpture. It succeeds as both painting and sculpture because it deals effectively with illusionism as it denies the dominance of utility. Paradoxically, it thus dominates the space.

Brightly lit, its shiny metallic plane lacks the substantiality of the shadows it casts on the floor. Brogger's two-dimensional sculpture seems both weightless and ponderous. It slips into the realm between reality and fantasy, disappearing as a physical presence as it gives concrete form to intangible ideas and undeniable fears.

The myriad, nearly invisible three-inch pins that support the weight of the steel rug symbolize the menace at work in Brogger's sculpture. With grace and understatement, her work insidiously and powerfully assaults the foundations of representation and pleasure, giving substance to the pain at the basis of each.

* *Christopher Grimes Gallery, 1644 17th St., Santa Monica, 310-450-5962, through Feb. 15. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*

READER

Art People: Mary Brogger, heavy metal mama, gets pragmatic

by Deanna Isaacs — June 9, 1994

Mary Brogger was cruising the spines at Myopic Books last winter—a conceptual artist on the prowl for concepts—when she picked up William James. Eureka! It was love at first read. “No absolutes, truth depends on practical outcomes, process is all;” she says, rattling off the charms of James’s old line on pragmatism. “I was predisposed to it. It’s what I had been practicing all along.”

Brogger, a motorcycle mama with ice blue eyes and a pixie’s grin, had already established a body of sculptural work that stood certain “absolutes” on their ears. Her delicately patterned Persian rugs, brocade chairs, and damask curtains, all cut out of steel, defied traditional, constraining women’s roles.

For her current show at N.A.M.E. gallery, Brogger employed a Mobius strip to evoke the Jamesian idea of “no absolutes,” twisting a piece of paper with two distinct sides into a single, endless surface. She also rigged the show’s opening-night performance to give herself something to do when she came face-to-face with her public. Guests at the reception found her installing the show—hauling a drill around, lifting 14-foot mirrors into place. There’s a conceptual rationale for this, but the practical outcome was that she was purposefully engaged.

“Part of me is an egomaniac,” she says. “I love to be the center of attention. But the reason I’m in sculpture is that I don’t feel I can communicate verbally. The only way I can be a public person is if there’s a role to play.”

Brogger’s show, “Strip,” consists of three hinged seating arrangements, two mirrors, and a video of a faceless mason grouting a brick wall. The lighting from the previous show has been left in place, Brogger says, to suggest continuity. If that’s a tad too subtle for some viewers to pick up on, she doesn’t mind.

“Strip” continues at N.A.M.E., 1255 S. Wabash, through June 25. Gallery hours are noon to 6 PM, Tuesday through Saturday. Call 554-0671 for more information. For a look at one of Brogger’s sumptuous iron curtains, visit Oak Tree Restaurant on the top floor at 900 N. Michigan.