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Joanne Segal Brandford

Among those who made basketry their own was the scholar and artist Joanne Segal Brandford (1933-1994). Brandford, who earned a BA in decorative arts from Berkeley in 1955 and an MA in design in 1967, regarded “scholarship and art as one, her studio work connected to, not separate or isolated from, the rest of her life.”¹ As a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College (1971-73) and a research fellow on textile art at Harvard’s Peabody Museum (1971-78), she found support for curatorial work and teaching of textile history, while she explored weaving, dyeing, lace and sprang techniques on her own. Relocated to Ithaca, N.Y., in the late ‘70s, she worked with the Cornell Costume Collection and annotated a Native American basket collection further afield, at the Wadsworth Athenaeum, and also curated a show in Binghamton, N.Y. But with fewer professional opportunities there, she devoted more time to experiments with netting.

Red Apron (1983) is a freestanding work in sprang that looks like someone stepped out of a cape and left it behind. The title, however, gives that open form the implication of protective but unrestrictive nurturing. *Big Flowers* (1988) is a cloudlike monofilament wall piece.

Brandford became a member of a New York City cooperative gallery, and between there and fiber venues, she had 13 solo shows between 1978 and ’93. Except for the scholarly “Knots and Nets” show she organized in Ithaca in 1988, she devoted herself entirely to her artwork, feeling special urgency as her health began to fail. She was interested in physical and psychological space, ambiguity, illusion, translucency and transparency. Her later work often makes reference to the human form, and she implied the personal in titles such as *Body Scan* and *Heart*. She organized her own retrospective exhibition in Ithaca in 1991, yet one of her most moving forms

followed it: *Reclining Figure* (1992) is a painted rattan floor sculpture, approximately life-size, in which the generalized contours of the body are sensuous, languorous and poignantly vulnerable.