

Lynne, Jessica. "Fertile Ground: Huma Bhabha, Joan Jonas, Maren Hassinger, and Naima Green in Parks and Art Spaces Around New York," *ARTnews*, 18 October 2018.

Fertile Ground: Huma Bhabha, Joan Jonas, Maren Hassinger, and Naima Green in Parks and Art Spaces Around New York

BY Jessica Lynne



Maren Hassinger, *Monuments*, 2018, eight site-specific sculptures in Marcus Garvey Park, Harlem, installation view. ADAM REICH/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY

On a quiet weekday afternoon in Harlem, a young girl and an older woman sit on a bench near the baseball field in Marcus Garvey Park staring quizzically at a large sculpture comprising tree branches, wire, and rusted fence parts. With a curiosity tempered by caution, the girl rises from the bench and slowly begins to approach the sculpture, glancing backward at the woman, perhaps her grandmother, as if asking for permission, before finally reaching the form. Standing at the base of the sculpture, she leans down to touch the branches and as she does so, she smiles. Without speaking, she stands up and walks back to the bench, satisfied with her moment of wonder. However, on this particular day, the girl seemed to be alone in her explicit fascination as I watched people from various locations in the park, hoping to glimpse interactions with **Maren Hassinger's** creations.

The series, "Monuments," is a yearlong installation of eight site-specific pieces that respond to the park's landscape and, in turn, invite the public to share in the artist's meditation; it is part of the "inHarlem" program presented by the **Studio Museum in Harlem**. "Monuments," which is on view through June 10, 2019, fits squarely within Hassinger's legendary oeuvre. Having long worked at the intersection of abstraction, performance art, sculpture, and fiber arts, she probes the boundaries of our relationship to the natural world. The sculptures bear her signature elements of material blending and manipulation, in some instances alluding to or taking on the shape of sites within the park itself. A circular form rests near the entrance to the public swimming pool. An immense woven cube form mimics the chess tabletops nearby. Generous in scale, they exist as elegant, understated additions to the park's landscape, built by Hassinger in collaboration with participants from the museum's Expanding the Walls high school program and Teen Leadership Council.

These pieces' very lack of spectacle is part of the intended effect. I returned to the park on a busy Harlem weekend to find that, amid a flurry of picnics and pool visits, the sculptures faded into the background. Hassinger's forms cultivate a space of introspection and reflection: the natural world is informed by our actions even as we are informed by changes in its architecture. In what ways are we entangled with our environs, Hassinger asks. What do we do with these connections and the memories of these connections?