

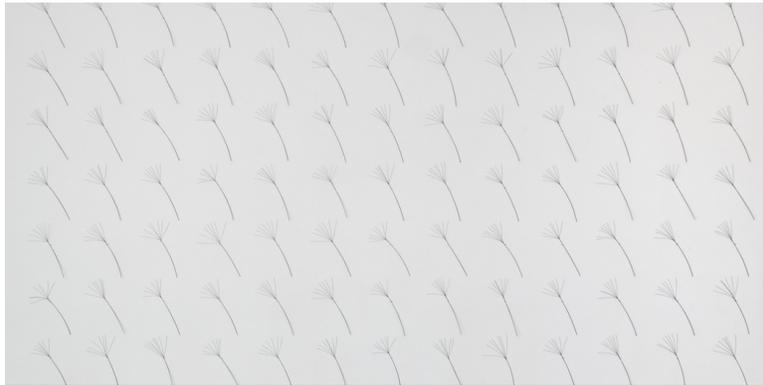
Bourland, Ian. "Interviews: Maren Hassinger," *Artforum*, 10 October 2019.

# ARTFORUM

## INTERVIEWS

### MAREN HASSINGER

October 10, 2019 • Maren Hassinger on her life and art



Maren Hassinger, *Consolation*, 1996, wire and wire rope, 16" each.

*Maren Hassinger very nearly became a dancer. As it happened, two fortuitous turns in her education in the 1970s led her to create sculptures hewn of fibrous metal and knotted detritus. From her early work in Los Angeles—including the 1979 installation of twelve wire rope “trees” near the Mulholland Drive exit ramp—to her recent “mandala” of repurposed pages from the New York Times, questions of ecological and spiritual consciousness have long underscored Hassinger’s practice. She is known for works in a range of media as well as for her collaborative bent. Following last year’s retrospective at Mark Bradford’s Art + Practice and the Baltimore Museum of Art, Hassinger’s first solo show outside of the United States, *Passing Through*, runs at London’s Tiwani Contemporary from October 2, 2019, to November 15, 2019.*

ANYTHING CIRCULAR, which has no beginning and no end, has harmony at its root, makes me tranquil. I hoped that if I made pieces like this, people would feel the same way, understand circularity in that way, and be able to grasp it. It’s a really old symbol—I mean ancient, ancient, ancient. Everybody understands that circles have no end.

A preparator once came up to me and said that my 1980 LACMA show was overhung. It was called “On Dangerous Ground,” and it had things on the wall—

bush-like forms that were really spiky, made out of wire rope—and everything was close together. But that was the point: It was supposed to be *dangerous*. And it was about being in the museum, a space with a fraught social history, of exclusion and insiderism. But “decolonizing”: That word suggests losing something, and when I’m making mandalas, and twisting all of these *New York Times* together, what I’m thinking, and what I’m hoping, is that there is no such thing as colonizing. It’s just us, all of us. Whatever we look like, wherever we came from, we’re together working together to make this a viable living place.

There isn’t a real throughline connecting work by black sculptors like David Hammons, Senga Nengudi, or Martin Puryear to my own—except maybe abstraction. The 1980s were highly racialized. You were not going to really have the opportunity to break through in the gallery world. I mean, we had the opportunity because we were considered the cream of something, and if PS1 had a show of black artists back then, then it would be us. I felt a lot of anger at white male contemporaries. But I was most angry at a market that would only identify white people as artists and buy their work. I mean, I resented the fact that they were the only ones who had a piece of the market. And I resented the fact that they didn’t have to work for that market. But I saw a value in seriality beyond whatever it was that they were doing.

At the same time, I was influenced, and challenged, by Minimalism. All the repetition in my work has to do with that. But it also comes from textiles, because if you’re making a tapestry, you just shuttle, shuttle, shuttle, shuttle. Nature is repetition. I just decided to open it up, to be more generous. I was thinking about nature from the very, very beginning. It allowed me to be kind of nostalgic about the way the environment once was, and to also help provide answers for the future, which became political as I began to understand the connection between disenfranchisement and the loss of nature. I’m really excited that the things I was thinking for all of the years when I didn’t show—the years that I didn’t have a gallery, didn’t have a following, didn’t have ongoing assistance—are now finding some validity. I’m feeling gratified.

The world has changed, and the people in this world must change. Part of the change that I envision is people understanding that differences of culture, of race, of all those things that we use as barriers to divide and conquer one another, have to begin to unfold and be erased somehow or another. Otherwise, without being able to work together, we’re not going to be able to solve this problem. We’re not going to be humans anymore.

— *As told to Ian Bourland*