

Cotter, Holland "How the Guggenheim Got Its Groove Back," *The New York Times*, 29 July 2021.

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In most big, general-interest art museums, a midsize show like "Off the Record" would be one item on a variegated tasting menu, its arguments and urgencies forgotten as you move on to the next attraction. (The roots of the modern art museum lie in the modern department store, and that model remains strong.) But at the Guggenheim, in its present pandemic-forced "experimental" mode, all the exhibitions feel connected by a shared political charge, including the small historical survey called "Knotted, Torn, Scattered: Sculpture After Abstract Expressionism."



Maren Hassinger, "Untitled," 1972/2020, in "Knotted, Torn, Scattered: Sculpture After Abstract Expressionism" at the Guggenheim. Credit...George Etheredge for The New York Times

Organized by Lauren Hinkson, it's a snapshot of a late-1960s American movement – Post-Minimalism – as sampled through the work of six artists: Lynda Benglis, Maren Hassinger, Robert Morris, Senga Nengudi, Richard Serra and Tony Smith. The work, made of rubber, ropes and bodies, was considered innovative in its time, a thumb in the eye of Minimalist monumentality. And the mini-survey has its own innovative (for the Guggenheim) features.

Three of the six artists are women; and of those, two are African American; and of those two, one, Hassinger, has only fairly recently, after a long career – she's in her mid-70s – begun to attract the institutional attention she deserves. Her piece in the show was acquired by the museum only last year, and it's a beauty: a graceful, ceiling-high, drawing-in-air network of draped rope that could double as a dance set. (She's a performance artist as well as a sculptor.) And today, in a Black Lives Matter world, it's impossible not to see that many of the lengths of rope she uses end in nooses.

Black Lives Matter has permanently changed our cultural institutions. Covid-19 and the disinformation campaigns around it have changed them too. So, in ways yet to be clarified, has Jan. 6. There's no going back to an old "normal." Normal is not what art is, if it's any good. I like to think that the post-lockdown Guggenheim, home to the single most charismatic art space in town, is a looser, less-in-love-with-normal museum than it once was. We'll see. Meanwhile, its summer lineup gives a taste of what could be.