

Maren Hassinger



Maren  
Hassinger

*...Dreaming*

## CONTENTS

6

Foreword

8

Acknowledgments

13

Maren Hassinger's Art Thoughts

KELLIE JONES, PH.D.

17

Passing Through

MAREN HASSINGER

23

Dreaming in Metaphors: Cultural  
Ecologies and the Art Practice of  
Maren Hassinger

ANNE COLLINS SMITH

39

Refrain

ANDREA BARNWELL BROWNLEE, PH.D.

55

Inside the Artist's Studio

CONSTANCE MALLINSON

69

Nature's a Good Place to Begin a  
Story about Maren Hassinger

LERONN PHILLIPS BROOKS, PH.D.

83

Nature as an Architecture for Equality

MARY JONES

95

In Retrospect: An Interview with  
Maren Hassinger

VALERIE CASSEL OLIVER

125

Critical Chronology

149

Publications and Catalogues

158

Exhibition Checklist

## Foreword

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is highly regarded for organizing and presenting meaningful exhibitions that expand the Spelman College academic curriculum. Our history of engaging visitors beyond the Spelman community contributes to a respected and growing reputation, and the entire campus community takes great pride in the museum's mission to emphasize art by and about women of the African Diaspora. *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming* typifies the museum's unique trajectory. This presentation of Hassinger's work highlights the incredible breadth and depth of works that Black women artists create.

Maren Hassinger's videos, sculpture, and installations transform the walls, floor, and even the ceiling to provide exceptional fodder for inquiry. Together, they invite us to reconsider our relationship to nature and physical space. Works featured in this thirty-year retrospective exemplify her relentless focus on equitable access to nature, our collective responsibilities to the earth, and her ability to get us all to consider the world around us more critically. As such, they underscore why she is a pioneering force.

First, I wish to thank Maren Hassinger for the privilege of organizing her retrospective and for reminding us to dream. From her meditative videos to her canopies made of such unexpected materials as paper, leaves, and branches, her subtle, beautifully nuanced work has provided new opportunities to contemplate and think deeply about visual art.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, director of the museum, and Anne Collins Smith, the curator of collections, who had the foresight to curate this important, original exhibi-

tion. I appreciate their expertise and willingness to go to great lengths to present an exceptionally innovative exhibition that has appealed to and fascinated audiences. We must also thank Makeba Dixon-Hill, the curator of education, who has spearheaded and further developed significant collaborations between the museum and various academic departments.

During my tenure as president, I have had countless opportunities to experience and witness the museum's growth and magnetic pull. It has been my great pleasure to visit the museum regularly. As I prepare for my retirement, I invite everyone, whether on the campus of Spelman College or beyond our gates, to visit often, support this unique institution, and continue to reap the benefits of this special treasure.

BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, PHD  
President Emeritus, Spelman College

## Acknowledgments

For more than four decades, Maren Hassinger has been recognized as a pioneering artist who mindfully explores nature, movement, and transformation. From her early years as an emerging artist working in Los Angeles in the early 1970s through her current role as director of the Rinehart School of Graduate Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art, in Baltimore, Hassinger has been disrupting hierarchical and patriarchal art-making traditions. Her highly meditative sculpture, performance, videos, and public art projects examine movement and our changing relationship to nature. In this original retrospective, featuring works made from leaves, branches, wires, newspapers, plastic bags, and a variety of other materials, Hassinger critically examines the physical space of art practice and presentation.

*Maren Hassinger... Dreaming*, featuring sculpture, videos, and installations—several of which were re-created expressly for this project—is a long awaited and timely examination of the artist's life and work. Her restorative works encourage visitors to imagine a range of emotional experience. They also challenge us to think about how we shift our behavior in light of life's ebb and flow, and ponder how we adapt and survive over time within cultural ecosystems that are constantly in flux. Her work prompts such thought-provoking questions as, What is the significance of creating art using materials that change or disintegrate? What is the impact of manipulating industrial materials so that they resemble items found in nature? What is the role of art in our cultural ecologies? What does it mean to dream? This original exhibition brought a substantial number of Hassinger's artworks to the Southeast for the first time to explore these and other related questions.

This exhibition would not have achieved fruition without the valuable space provided to pursue intellectual endeavors, as well as support from Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, president emerita of Spelman College, and Dr. Myra Burnett, interim provost. We also acknowledge and thank Dr. Ayoka Chenzira, the division chair of arts and humanities and the founding director of the Digital Image Moving Salon, for positioning the arts at Spelman at the center of a true liberal arts education dialogue.

The contributions of Makeba Dixon-Hill, curator of education, are valuable and manifold. We appreciate her working closely with faculty to create programs that made the Hassinger exhibition come alive for our students and for the general public alike. We extend heartfelt gratitude to Wyatt Phillips, the administrative assistant, for his involvement and care with logistical support and ability to coordinate many moving parts. Thank you to Kristin D. Juárez, the graduate assistant and newest member of the museum staff, for her keen eye and deft ability to coordinate essential and final details for this catalogue.

Unlike many of the museum's projects, a number of the works featured in *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming* were re-created onsite, and none could have been realized without the generosity and efforts of a cross-section of campus-wide stakeholders. We are indebted to Art Frazier, director of Facilities Management Services, for galvanizing his team, especially David Genarro, former horticulturalist. From harvesting red bud leaves to assisting with logistical support, they ensured that we had the required resources.

The Spelman College Department of Art & Art History was a staunch advocate for this project and an early partner. Dr. Arturo Lindsay, chair and professor of art, and Joseph Bigley, assistant professor, lent their support and assistance from the beginning. We thank them for creating meaningful opportunities for students in the New Genre Art Forms and Sculpture I courses to work closely with Hassinger and assist with the installation.

We are proud of the museum's student assistants: Briana Dixon, C'2016, Stephanie Goodalle, C'2014, Michele Pierson, C'2015, and Tori West, C'2015. Their involvement, which included interacting with the

museum's online community, conducting research, sewing red bud leaves for *The Dream*, installing *Consolation*, transcribing interviews for this publication, and preparing resources for the museum's outreach efforts, was significant and invaluable. We thank Delores Fields, mother of Traci Fields, the former recruitment assistant in the Office of the Provost, for sewing red bud leaves for *The Dream*. Members of the Alumnae Corps of Museum Ambassadors, the museum's stronghold, literally infused the pink plastic bags with their breath to realize *Love*.

We are especially grateful to exhibition designer Gary Super of Gary Lee Super Associates, Inc., Carolyn Dean of Rice Dean Graphics, and art installers extraordinaire Mike Fitzgerald and Mike Jensen, who consistently go the extra mile to ensure that the museum's exhibitions are visually arresting.

We extend a special thank you to Spelman College faculty, especially those with whom we worked closely to organize meaningful programs, and proudly list them individually in the back matter of this publication. From designing midterm projects to encouraging students to explore the visual arts as primary sources, faculty in various departments partnered with the museum to create meaningful curricular links. Partnering departments include: the African Diaspora and the World Program, the Department of Art & Art History, the Department of Dance and Drama, the Department of Music, the Department of Comparative Women's Studies, the Department of English, the Department of History, and the Education Studies Program.

Departments throughout the Spelman College cocurricular community were tremendous partners. They include the Spelman College Archives, the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Collaborative, the Social Justice Fellows Program, the Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Activism Conference, the Wellness Program, and the Women's Research & Resource Center.

We also express our gratitude to campus partners who were supportive resources, including the Office of Alumnae Affairs, Office of Public Safety, Office of Special Events, the Spelman College Office of Communications, the Division of College Relations, Educational Media, and the Division of Institutional Advancement.

A special thank you to the Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Activism Collective, which collaborated with the museum to present Hassinger's performance *Women's Work* during the annual conference in 2015. Dr. Veta Goler, associate professor of dance and codirector of the Teaching Resource and Research Center, led a restorative retreat that was inspired by the themes examined in *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming*. Aku Kadago, the 2014–15 Spelman College Distinguished Visiting Scholar, was exceedingly generous with her time, enthusiasm, and hospitality.

Members of the Museum Advisory Council continue to champion our efforts and serve as the museum's greatest advocates. We are pleased to acknowledge each of them accordingly and also single out Robert Brawner for his generosity and for providing equipment that was essential during the installation.

We are grateful to each of the catalogue contributors; they examine important aspects of Hassinger's life and work: Dr. LeRonn Phillips Brooks, Kristin D. Juárez, Valerie Cassel Oliver, Constance Mallinson, Dr. Kellie Jones, Mary Jones, and Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum. We thank editor Gerald Zeigerman for his critical eye and careful review of each of the catalogue contributions.

It is important to single out Pamela Council, Maren Hassinger's former assistant, who contributed to every phase of the project. For her dedication and relentless commitment, we are most appreciative.

Last, we extend our most heartfelt thank you to artist Maren Hassinger for entrusting the museum with her work—for the quality of experience she creates for all of our audiences, for challenging this institution to stretch its capacities, and for collaborating with us to explore a host of presentation possibilities. We hope that *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming* and this catalogue contribute to the record of her extraordinary body of work.

ANDREA BARNWELL BROWNLEE, PH.D., Director

ANNE COLLINS SMITH, Curator of Collections

## Maren Hassinger's Art Thoughts

KELLIE JONES, PH.D.



*Diaries*, 1978  
Performance.  
Presented at Vanguard Gallery,  
Los Angeles.

Maren Hassinger has been dancing for her entire life. As a child in Los Angeles, her focus was on modern forms and the aesthetics of improvisation, first with Paul and Anne Barlin, and then the methods of Lester Horton as taught by Yvonne de Lavallade and Leila Goldoni. This year, in New York, she's taken on Zumba and Yoga, excited by the body movement, but also what she sees as embedded dance vocabularies. It is puzzling, then, that when it came time for college, the place that enthusiastically accepted her in the 1960s—Bennington College, a pioneer in supporting modern dance—somehow seemed to think Hassinger was better suited for a career in sculpture. As she recalled to Lorraine O'Grady, "I couldn't figure out why I was supposed to be so much better at sculpture when I had just picked up a piece of clay."<sup>1</sup>

Intolerances that continued to haunt the black body forced Hassinger away from this type of formal dance study into sculpture in an era when minimalism was coming into its own. This would prove to be strangely fortuitous. A similar push from sculpture into fiber arts, in graduate school in the 1970s, occasioned another unanticipated turn, and one which pointed her toward postminimalism. What was to emerge from all this was Hassinger's own amazing creative voice, a confluence of what she has called "art thoughts"<sup>2</sup> and movement.

Such scholars as Carrie Lambert-Beatty have discussed minimalism's eruption in dance form at this moment. Simone Forti's *Huddle*, 1961, is one example of a dance that "performs" like an object, inviting viewers to circumnavigate a cacophony of bodies tangled together in a solid mass. The pared-down relation to gesture, to dance as task and as



object in Yvonne Rainer's classic *Trio A*, 1966, opened onto the prosaic and routine but also onto minimalism's notion of the serial. For Trisha Brown, the simplified action was an extraction, a reduction of one's own habitual acts, the kinesthetic memory that formed identity yet was honed down to trace. On the one hand, these currents flowed beneath minimalism's solid structures; on the other hand, they soon created a fissure in the armature of primary forms that were eventually to erupt in postminimalism.<sup>3</sup>

We find similar characteristics of seriality and pared-down movement in Hassinger's performance *Diaries (Part 1 of Lives)*, 1976, but also in actual objects that she, too, creates, such as *Walking: 148 Elements*, 1978, to the point that they appear almost as companion pieces. Then, there is her habit of performing *inside* her larger sculptural installations; for instance, *High Noon*, 1976, takes place within the gallery spaces of her show at the Arco Center for Contemporary Art, in Los Angeles. These pieces, which use materials both natural and industrial, where art thoughts and dance thoughts commingle, reveal the crossing of dance and sculpture, minimalism and postminimalism. In these convergences, we also see the rise of Hassinger's interest in the world's ecologies at a time when environmental activism gains traction, too.

Hassinger's art, as one mode of intervention into discourses of environmental activism, was brought to bear on the disintegration and destruction of life forces and communities in such a piece as *Pink*

*Diaries*, 1978  
Performance.  
Presented at Vanguard Gallery,  
Los Angeles.

*Pathways*, 1982. That year, she participated in "Transitional Use," a series of street projects by various artists that called attention to parts of a formerly vibrant area of Los Angeles County—Lynwood—that had been condemned to make way for the Century Freeway. This industrial road took more than a decade to complete, because of local opposition, part of widespread freeway and expressway revolts during the 1960s and '70s. Over that time, a gash, seventeen miles long and six blocks wide, of abandoned homes and communities became a magnet for illegal activity. Hassinger's action—painting unoccupied homeplaces and unused byways with a vibrant color—remembered through adornment an area where thousands of people had lived. In *Pink Pathways*, her art thoughts not only engaged her body but, where the audience followed her colorful trail, ours, too.

#### NOTES

1. Maren Hassinger, interview by Lorraine O'Grady, *Artist and Influence* 12 (1993), 28.
2. Maren Hassinger, telephone interview with the author, May 29, 1996.
3. See Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "More or Less Minimalism: Six Notes on Performance and Visual Art in the 1960s," in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), and Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).





## Passing Through

MAREN HASSINGER

I don't know where I came from and I don't know where I'm going. This is the life I share with everyone. We are equal in this predicament. We are all passing through. From this untenable place, I make things. So, what follows is how I got to this place. I wish the prose were more elegant and sensuous. But, after all, I'm a sculptor, not a novelist. Maybe you should think of each paragraph as a room in a midcentury modern (in my growing-up time that was the premier style) home. The construction is simple, minimal almost—with floating walls and sleek furniture. Lots of glass. An insistence on structure—recognizing the verticals and horizontals. From paragraph to paragraph, you will pass through—from room to room, from one life episode to the next.

As a child in Los Angeles, two seminal experiences were dance class and Camp Fire Girls. In dance, I learned the joy and abandonment movement could bring, and in Camp Fire Girls I learned about equality. Later, at Bennington College, I found sculpture. I had intended to be a dance major, but, alas, technically I was ill-equipped—or so I was told. But the sculpture teacher—Isaac Witkin, from South Africa—liked me and my work, and I was welcomed. I made a lot of welded steel modernist sculpture, and I also took photography and drawing seriously. There was no postmodernism then! It was modernist.

My first job after college was as an arts editor for a textbook company. I think I was hired to fill a racial quota; I never had much to do. I remember a particularly wretched encounter on the phone with someone from a museum in the South. I was asking about the Seventh Cavalry. I needed an illustration for a textbook. "Oh, those were the

Nigra soldiers.” Needless to say, not much art was done at this time, but I did take a drafting class.

Returning to Los Angeles in 1970, I wanted to get an M.F.A. in sculpture from UCLA. Nope, they said, but I could major in fiber structure. I did that and was the first student to receive an M.F.A. in that department, thanks to my professor Bernard Kester. During my time at UCLA, I discovered the material wire rope, which became a very important material. Wire rope is steel, and can be treated as steel, but it is also a rope, so it can be treated as fiber. The rope could look like many elements of nature—hair, vines, or water ripples. There was potential for the expression of motion, and you can see in the way that it’s made that there is a bound up, wound up potential energy twisted into the material. This also reminded me of dance.

For ten years after that M.F.A., I remained in Los Angeles, working and living in a great space with my husband, Peter Hassinger. I was in several shows, using lots of wire rope, and met Senga Nengudi, David Hammons, Ulysses Jenkins, Frank Parker, and Houston Conwill. I did public work. I made a lot of wire rope sculptures related to nature—bushes, trees, and hedges. There was a whole social component to this work, which also had to do with conversations that I had and collaborations that I did with Senga. Both of us at the time were creating work that had to do with performance. My work had to do with tenets of minimalism, like pattern, rhythm, and recognizing the power of the individual performer’s history. Senga’s pieces were based on certain social interactions, like, *Dance Card*, the eternal triangle, and a poster that she made of two lovers dancing. We both became part of Brockman Gallery’s CETA, Title VI program. What we both made is in perfect character. I made *Twelve Trees*, trees out of wire rope in a weed patch next to the San Diego freeway, northbound. I was talking about the industrialization of nature, and Senga was looking at interpersonal and sociological relationships. *Freeway Fetes*, the performance she did, was in that line because it dealt with cultural history, both remembered and resurrected. The thing that was great about our collaboration, which has

lasted all these years, is that we came from very separate sensibilities and used each other as personnel to great advantage and success.

That was L.A., but I longed for a larger venue. It was 1984, and my application for Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem was accepted! Off to New York! And I never returned to live on the West Coast! My children were born in New York. In 1991, we bought a house in the Springs, Long Island, around the corner from the former Pollock studio. I became entranced with film and video and learned a lot from a local TV station. I made *Daily Mask*, shooting it in 16mm, with the help of many worthy people, including my student Ford Allen from SUNY Stony Brook. This is when my early study of photography came back to me.

Then, divorce, illness, and financial problems consumed my marriage, and a move to Baltimore was necessary to keep eating. I assumed the position of director of Rinehart School of Graduate Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), the oldest accredited art school in the nation. Leslie King-Hammond, who was dean of MICA’s graduate school, and Lowery Sims and Richard Martin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art were on the selection panel. Rinehart was founded at the end of the nineteenth century by sculptor William Henry Rinehart, a European-educated artist who wanted to bring that culture to his hometown. And somehow, I and the students I have chosen have become his progeny.

I had a house in Baltimore with a fabulous red bud tree. That tree produced lots of leaves, which became a primary material for me in the 1990s. A highlight of that period is *The Dream*. There is a hominess and a bit of melancholy about Baltimore, which is within me now. All of us understand Baltimore’s sadness now.

During a sabbatical from MICA in 2010, I decided to move back to New York City for a year. I have remained. I am bowled over by the pace and the intelligence, the caring and the humanity. I like the business of art in New York. I feel my sculpture maturing. Last spring, Carrie Mae Weems invited several artists to participate in a days’ long presentation at the Guggenheim, where she was having a retrospective exhibition. I did something that challenged the norm of “presenter” and “audience.”

I left the pedestal of the stage to become one with the audience and, as a result, defied that power relation. My point was that the use of space in sculpture can define our relationships to one another. Additionally, I defined sculpture for the audience by showing and doing. The presentation became a piece!

Some people think I do abstract work, but I see myself as making things actual and site-specific. My work is responsive and it's making is inspired by my physical environment with its experiences. I change modes of working because of the subject and place. If I want the art to reflect relationships, or a real situation, it might become a film or video. If I'm talking about a vanishing nature, I've made wire-rope trees. If I want to talk about "love," I've filled pink bags with human breath. If I want to talk about consumerism, I've used masses of product boxes configured like the island of Manhattan. If I want to dream, and I'd like the audience to dream with me, I have looked up...and made canopies. All spaces have meanings and associations, and I use space as a palpable material.

I know now that much of what I do has been channeled intuitively from the past and rooted in a deeply felt place. I am concerned now, more than ever—and as I was as a small child in that midcentury modern house—with issues of equality. These become apparent in my attempt to find balance between the material and the environment and to rectify any sense of separation. My goal is to find a way to unify people in this our worldly space—in this our home.



## Dreaming in Metaphors

ANNE COLLINS SMITH

Disrupting and Cocreating Cultural Ecologies  
and the Art Practice of Maren Hassinger

Maren Hassinger is a teaching artist who, for over three decades, has created a rich and compelling body of work that includes assemblage, collaboration, environmental interventions, installation, performance, sculpture, and video. Born in 1947, her powerful and, at times, meditative, aural, experiential, and visual work responds to a matrix of personal and societal concerns, including consumerism, cultural institutions (the art world writ large), family dynamics, gender, industrialism, lineage, love, nature, and race. This essay is an examination of how Hassinger's art practice disrupts and cocreates cultural ecologies in *Birthright* (2005), *Wrenching News* (2010), *Sit Upens* (2010/2015), and *Wind* (2014).

*Why must we dream in metaphors?  
Try to hold on to something  
We couldn't understand  
Couldn't understand  
And why must we argue loudly?  
When peace is our one salvation  
I couldn't understand...'*

A work song, one that is typically sung on an antebellum plantation or a worksite, with children's voices augmenting the background, begins *Birthright* (2005). Maren Hassinger's hands appear as she twists strips of *The New York Times* and expresses, "My legacy was to feel unloved and it's interesting to think about how that legacy came down to me."

*Sit Upens*, 2010/2015.  
*The New York Times* newspapers.  
Installation view, Spelman College  
Museum of Fine Art.

*Birthright* uncovers how this legacy or inheritance of feeling unloved informs and contributes to a particular cultural ecology. The video then focuses on a visit with her paternal uncle, James Wolfe, who explains their family's history. The story of the family begins with Thomas Wells, a white, British, Alexandria, Louisiana, plantation owner who fathers a daughter, Susan Wells, with his legal white wife and a son, John Wells, with his Native American lover, Clementine Bonnabette. Susan has an affair with her nephew, John and Clementine's son Willie, which produces a daughter, Eliza Gertrude Wells.

The artist shares this information with her children Ava and Jesse, who try to understand why such a relationship would be problematic and cause scandal. John is hanged for his involvement and the offspring of the liaison is given to an overseer, a former slave, named Sandy Love, to be raised. The daughter, Eliza Gertrude Wells, "Puddin'," marries, has children, and, unable to care for them because of mental illness, sends her children away to be cared for by others. Puddin' is the mother of the artist's father, Carey Jenkins, who leaves her out of his will, and by this act thereby passes on the legacy or "birthright" of being unloved. Being unloved comprises a particular cultural ecology for the artist, along with other familial influences:

*My father was an architect. My mother was a policewoman who worked with juveniles then became a teacher of primary grades and finally a welfare and attendance supervisor. My father's mother had a teaching degree, but never taught. She was a domestic who helped raise others' children. Her mother was the matriarch—mother of thirteen, born into slavery. Both of my parents moved to Los Angeles in 1930. My mother's father was a chauffeur and her mother was a homemaker who raised four and suffered from a streetcar accident, which left her with chronic kidney disease. She died young when my mother was in middle school. There was a level of dysfunction that my parents denied, fought against. They were to some extent successful with this tactic. Now I look at their problems as illness caused by the history of slavery. What I got was—women are*



*independent, can work, can achieve success in any field AND can be mothers. The last because my grandmother took care of me while my mother worked.<sup>2</sup>*

#### ADDRESSING A CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Cultural ecology is "the study of human adaptations to social and physical environments. Human adaptation refers to both biological and cultural processes that enable a population to survive and reproduce within a given or changing environment."<sup>3</sup> Daryl White, Ph.D., professor emeritus in the Spelman College department of anthropology and sociology, explains that cultural ecology is an appropriate concept to frame and discuss Hassinger's work. He states, the methodology is a:

*way of affirming, asserting, and employing analyses that included culture—any and all relevant aspects of culture—in the study of human ecology, our human relationship to our environments. In its simplest terms, the concept promotes exploring how cultural activities—from art and ritual to ideas and beliefs—play into and are indeed integral to understanding our human relationships to nature. In abstract terms, ecology is systems analysis: how parts interact to form a functioning whole.<sup>4</sup>*

*Birthright*, 2005  
Video stills. 12:10 minutes.



*Sit Upens* (detail), 2010/2015.

In an interview with arts and cultural writer Una-Kariim A. Cross, Hassinger explains how artists and their works are influenced and shaped by cultural factors, external, innate, and intrinsic. She says, “I think what artists do is that they take everything that is around them and that they digest all of that some kind of way and then it reappears in work. And I do believe that the kinds of things that I have been channeling for a long time are really beyond my particular consciousness... I think that artists are channelers of information from culture, period. Not necessarily the culture you’re living, it can be something from the past. I have no other way of explaining some of the pieces I’ve made and the titles I’ve given them and even the concerns, the subjects of the pieces if I wasn’t somehow connected with past knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> The cultural ecology that takes shape in *Birthright* also includes forbidden romantic relationships that involve incest and cross racial lines—other forms of dysfunction coupled with independence, strength, and success.

An affirming and nurturing childhood experience that has shaped and positively impacted Hassinger’s life and work is her participation as a Camp Fire Girl. Camp Fire was America’s first nonsectarian and multicultural organization for girls. Camp Fire (formerly Camp Fire Girls) is an organization that believes every youth should be given the opportunities and tools to discover who they are, become a strong leader, and contribute to their community. Camp Fire was created to “guide young people on their journey to self-discovery.”<sup>6</sup> The artist has explained: “My grandmother became the leader of a Camp Fire Girls group. This experience is forever with me. The underlying philosophy of the Camp Fire Girls and the basis of projects and multigroup meetings was the culture of Native America.”<sup>7</sup>

Hassinger learned such essential life skills while a Camp Fire Girl as adaptability, craft-making, survival, interdependence, and how to interact and “be” with nature. Camp Fire is also where Hassinger presumably encountered sit upons, handmade and waterproof seat cushions generally used in camping. The artist has taken this concept to create *Sit Upens* (2010/2015), using *The New York Times* newspapers, and has brought them to the interior space. She has also used the *Sit Upens* to

interact with those who experience her work, in essence activating the *Sit Upons* as a performance work. The *Sit Upons* offer a repose of sorts that gives respite and stillness regardless of what the news reports.

It is fitting that Maren Hassinger twists and manipulates an ephemeral object that carries so much weight and reflects a certain cultural ecology. She has repurposed the newspaper, a man-made material, to fashion canopies, the environment, and mandalas. To repurpose *The New York Times* as a mandala is an ingenious approach, and the following two definitions of *mandala* are apropos for Hassinger's use of the medium:

- A. A symbolic circular figure, usually with symmetrical divisions and figures of deities, etc., in the centre, used in Buddhism and other religions as a representation of the universe, and serving esp. as an object of meditation.
- B. In Jungian psychology: an image or archetype of a similar circle visualized in dreams, held to symbolize a striving for unity of self and completeness.<sup>8</sup>

Hassinger has disrupted the cultural ecology that *The New York Times* newspapers reflects. She has stated that she uses the newspaper because it is the newspaper of record and considered to be authoritative. *The New York Times*'s motto, "All the News That's Fit to Print," establishes the publication's authority as well as its importance in relating current events. Hassinger has used this medium to cocreate a different cultural ecology and has, in essence, transformed the newspaper into something peaceful, spiritual, and meditative.

#### NATURE AND NURTURE

Maren Hassinger, a consummate collaborator, teaching artist, and cocreator, has enriched and supported the art practice of her students and a cohort of noted artists, including David Hammons, Ulysses Jenkins, Senga Nengudi, and such younger artists as Clifford Owens

and William Pope.L. Her daughter, Ava Hassinger, a photographer, is currently a M.F.A. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. Maren and Ava, also known as Matriarch, first partnered in 2011 for *See Life* at the Museum of Modern Art. They've also created *Skyscraper* (2011), *Boxes* (2012), and *Walking Tall* (2012).

*Wind* (2014) is the latest project that Ava and Maren have created, along with Nicholas Buchanan. The fourth partner in this work is nature, specifically wind, and Ava has explained that their work is "about our relation to nature."<sup>9</sup> In an interview with celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson, she states that a recurrent theme in her work is movement:

*The theme is movement. I went to college as a dance major, the art of motion. Movement is often in my art. I discovered that in the Bible there is a reference to wind and the garden. Wind in nature is biblically considered the breath of life—it indicates God's presence. In that sense—in regard to the pieces entitled Love, 2008, and Love Monument, 2010—I felt that I was connecting with some spiritual presence of the earth. With the bags, it's not so much that I am paying attention to natural forms but I am inflating the bags with my breath. The wind is not a godlike wind, but it is our wind.<sup>10</sup>*

In *Wind*, two women, Ava and Maren Hassinger, dressed in layers of white fabric, appear along a shoreline and interact with the environment. The wind becomes a force that the women fight against, dance with, and embrace. Their destination is unknown. It is perhaps symbiosis and an understanding. It is a beautifully crafted and articulated choreographed work. Near the end of the video, the women hold each other's hands and bow toward the currents. Instead of passing on the legacy of feeling unloved, Hassinger has loved, nurtured, and inspired her offspring and her audience. Hassinger has suggested that *Birthright* marks a significant departure in her art practice, approach, and tone. A highly charged energy and tension are elicited from such works as *On Dangerous Ground* (1981) and *Daily Mask* (2004). The energies inherent

in works created post-*Birthright*, although still highly charged, differ vastly in tone. The works are just as arresting but are also more alluring and welcoming. *Wind* is a counterpoint and restorative response to *Birthright*.

Maren Hassinger has transformed and repurposed industrial and seemingly mundane materials such as pink grocery bags, consumer and shipping boxes of all kinds, and *New York Times* newspapers (in their traditional, paper form) with natural materials, including wind currents, leaves, and branches. Buoyed, compelled, and inspired by personal experiences and the world around her, she has disrupted the discontents of inherited cultural ecology by cocreating a nurturing cultural ecology in her art practice. The artist's works challenge power structures and personal histories, as they restore, imagine, and actualize possibility. Her art practice epitomizes the concept of "bloom where you're planted **[[insert footnote?]]**," much like the lotus blossom, as her work has produced and flourished amid ecology with murky conditions. *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming* is a celebration of an art career that has quietly, yet impactfully, flourished.

*Love serenade*

*Soothe me with the morning sun*

*Help me find someone*

*Peaceful and non-judgmental*

*Holdin' me back*

*And make me feel whole with life*

*And stay the same*

*Life without the pain*

*Why must we dream in metaphors?*

*Try to hold on to something*

*We couldn't understand*

*Couldn't understand*

*And why must we argue loudly?*

*When peace is our one salvation...<sup>11</sup>*



**Wind**, 2014.  
Video projection and mosquito netting,  
16:22 minutes. Installation view, Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.



## NOTES

1. *Dreaming in Metaphors* (1994). Songwriters: Olusefun Olumide Adeole Samuel (Seal) and Isadore G. Samuel. © Downtown Music Publishing LLC.
2. Workneh, Sarah, ed. "Rock Steady Baby: Maren Hassinger" [B.A.R.] *written*: Published on the occasion of The Black Artists Retreat [B.A.R.], Chicago, IL (2013). [http://blackartistsretreat.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BAR\\_publication\\_final.pdf](http://blackartistsretreat.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BAR_publication_final.pdf)
3. Wikipedia contributors. "Cultural ecology." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 October 2014. Web. 28 December 2014.
4. White, Darryl, Ph.D. "Question about Cultural Ecology." Message to the author. 7 March 2015. Email.
5. Cross, Una-Kariim A. "Her Time Is Now: Maren Hassinger on Practice, Process and Being an Artist." Interview with artist. [http://unakariim.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Maren-Hassinger\\_Her-Time-Is-Now\\_Fin1.pdf](http://unakariim.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Maren-Hassinger_Her-Time-Is-Now_Fin1.pdf)
6. <http://campfire.org/about/history>. Web. 2 January 2015.
7. Workneh, Sarah, ed. "Rock Steady Baby: Maren Hassinger" [B.A.R.] *written*: Published on the occasion of The Black Artists Retreat [B.A.R.], Chicago, IL (2013). [http://blackartistsretreat.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BAR\\_publication\\_final.pdf](http://blackartistsretreat.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BAR_publication_final.pdf)
8. "mandala, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2014. Web. 30 December 2014.
9. <http://thebeardenproject.studiomuseum.org/matriarch/Web>. 8 January 2015.
10. <http://www.marcussamuelsson.com/news/art-of-harlem-maren-hassinger>
11. *Dreaming in Metaphors* (1994). Songwriters: Olusefun Olumide Adeole Samuel (Seal) and Isadore G. Samuel. © Downtown Music Publishing LLC.



*Wrenching News* (floor detail), 2010/2015.

**Blanket of Branches** (foreground),  
1986/2015.  
Miscellaneous tree branches hung as a  
canopy from the ceiling.

**Wrenching News** (background), 2010/2015  
Shredded, twisted, and wrapped newspa-  
per (*The New York Times*). Installation view,  
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art





**Sit Upons**, 2010/2015  
*The New York Times* newspapers.  
Installation view, Spelman College  
Museum of Fine Art.



## Refrain

ANDREA BARNWELL BROWNLEE, PH.D.

Maren Hassinger often uses materials found in nature, such as leaves and branches, that evolve, change, and even degrade over time. When Anne Collins Smith suggested that the museum organize a solo exhibition of Hassinger's work, it marked the beginning of our extensive adventures with nature. Many of the artist's most compelling works had disintegrated beyond a recognizable state. Therefore, realizing such an exhibition would require reconciling the temporal and delicate qualities of the materials she uses and, in a few instances, re-creating works. The process of presenting *Maren Hassinger...Dreaming* demanded that we confront time's impact on her work and reconsider the intensive process of her practice.

In many ways, *Blanket of Branches* illuminates key characteristics of Hassinger's diverse body of work, and reflects her ceaseless experimentation with materials or genres. Hassinger first created *Blanket of Branches* in 1986 for the exhibition of the same name that was organized by the Contemporary Arts Forum, in Santa Barbara. The canopy of branches, which covered the ceiling surface of the forty-by-fifty-foot room, encouraged viewers to reconsider how and when they interface with nature, what sculpture could look like, and where it could reside in a room. This indoor installation of found organic material altered viewers' spatial relationships with nature and the sculptural object. In 1986, this move was bold and innovative, but does not mark the work's only defiance of convention.

Senga Nengudi, a sculptor and performance artist with whom Hassinger has collaborated since the 1970s, choreographed an interac-

Installation view of  
*Maren Hassinger...Dreaming*  
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

tive music and art performance called *Dance Card*. On the opening day of the exhibition, Hassinger, Frank Parker, and Ulysses Jenkins activated *Blanket of Branches* by performing Nengudi's piece underneath it.<sup>1</sup> In the performance, Jenkins and Parker compete for the attention of one woman (Hassinger), who, ultimately, has her way with both of them. Set underneath Hassinger's *Blanket of Branches*, this archetypal seduction ritual brought performance artists in direct contact with the branches-turned-medium, engaging in an interplay of movement and mood.

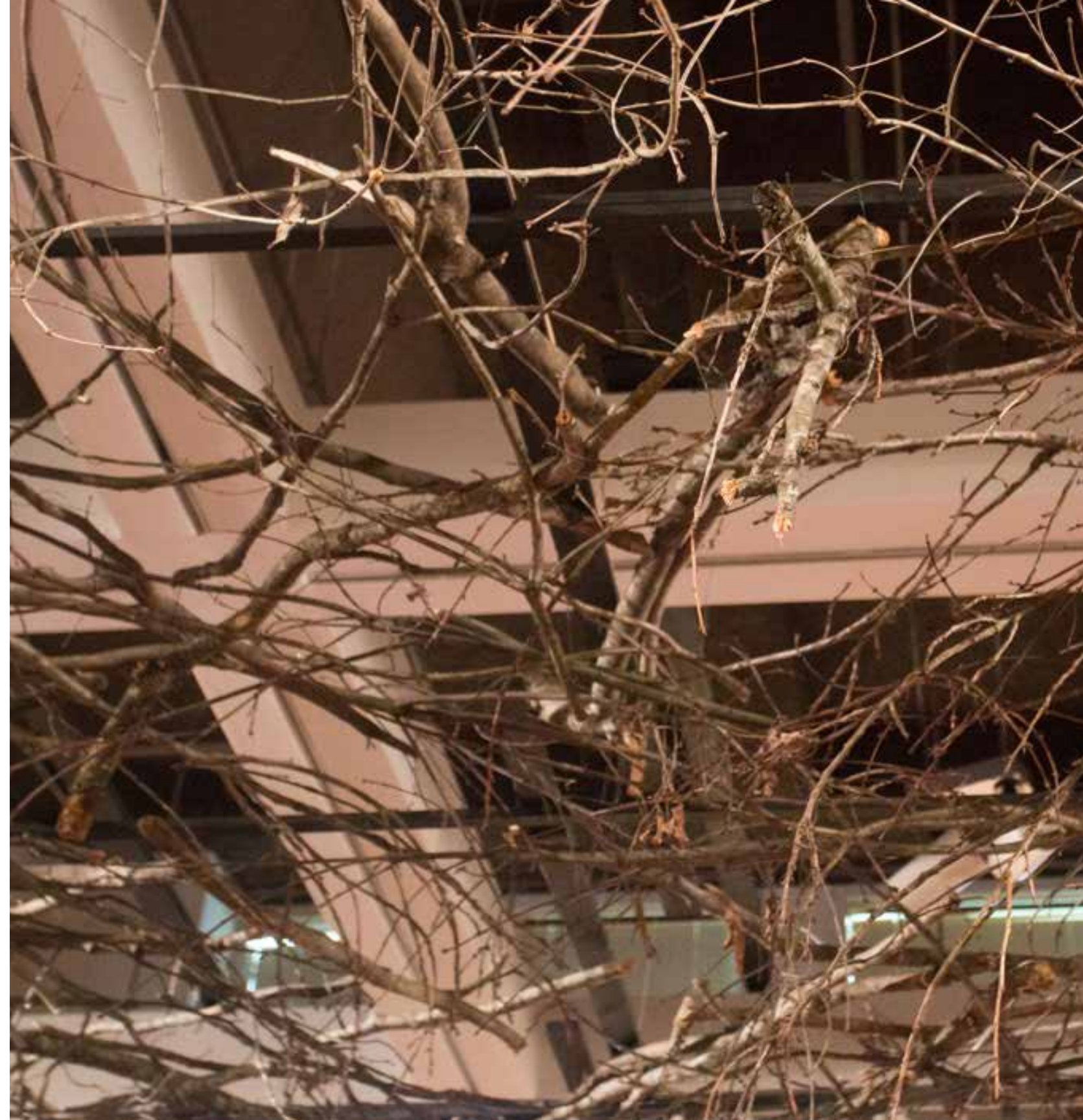
As expected, the branches used in *Blanket of Branches* were altered by the effects of time, and inclusion in *Maren Hassinger...Dreaming* meant that the sculpture had to be re-created. To create this work, a structural grid was suspended to create a drop ceiling. Hundreds of branches were found nearby and slowly adhered to it. As the sculpture realized its form, the balancing and assembling of the fragile branches took on a repetitive and ceremonious tone.

*The Dream*, like *Blanket of Branches*, had to be re-created for this exhibition. Also engaging with the ceiling, in this installation Hassinger transforms leaves into a canopy of serenity and restoration. The artist explained that she made her first canopy of leaves in August 2001 while in residence at the MacDowell Colony, in Peterborough, New Hampshire. The leaves were preserved in a glycerin solution. The artist then sewed four or five individual leaves onto hundreds of single strands of thread. The strands of leaves were installed to dangle, collectively creating a gently moving canopy that Hassinger intended viewers to experience from below. Hassinger explained:

*After preserving the leaves in glycerin and water, the leaves also felt like skin. I suppose I was making a statement about our bond with nature. When I lay beneath the leaves on my bed at MacDowell, it was so tranquil. It was calming, peaceful. It encouraged daydreaming.*<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after Hassinger completed *The Dream*, it was featured in a solo exhibition entitled *My Hand, This Leaf*, which opened at David Allen Gal-

*Blanket of Branches* (detail), 1986/2015.





*The Dream*, 2001/2015  
Bed canopy made from preserved  
red bud leaves. Installation view, Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.

lery, in Brooklyn, just days after 9/11. The strong resemblance between the size and shape of leaves and human hands was not lost on viewers. According to Hassinger, a visitor noted how the individual leaves in *The Dream* reminded him of all the lives lost in this national tragedy. *The Dream* has gone on to have further personal significance for the artist and her loved ones. Hassinger explained further:

*When my dear friend and colleague, feminist art critic and art historian Arlene Raven (1944–2006) was ill, I gave her *The Dream* and hung it above her desk. The original *Dream* is still there, years since her passing. It's drier and browner, but still has the capacity to calm.<sup>3</sup>*

The original version of *The Dream* is not suitable for public presentation; however, the visual splendor, emotive responses, and intrigue that this restorative work prompts made it an ideal work for Hassinger to re-create on the occasion of this exhibition. Re-creating *The Dream* served as a reminder of the preciousness and significance of Hassinger's work. It also underscored that her intensive process has a rhythm that can only unfold in real time. Her practice requires coordination, precision, repetition, and patience. It cannot be sped up, time-lapsed, or edited.

Several partners were involved in the process of re-creating *The Dream*. Dave Genarro, the former horticulturalist in the Spelman College Facilities Management Services, collected hundreds of red bud leaves from campus during the fall of 2014. Art handlers Mike Fitzgerald and Mike Jensen preserved them in a glycerin solution to keep them from browning. Once they were patted dry, Hassinger ironed each of the individual leaves and stored them flat between wax paper. Michele Pierson, a Spelman senior art and art history major, Pamela Council, Hassinger's former studio assistant, and Delores Fields, who is the mother of Traci Fields a former recruitment assistant in the office of the provost, all helped stitch the leaves onto single strands of thread. Through the act of being responsible for such small and fragile objects, the stitching sessions to re-create *The Dream* became sewing circles of sorts. The gatherings mirrored the process that Hassinger explores in



*Women's Work*, her well-known meditative performance piece that she created in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

As with *Women's Work*, through careful concentration the ritualized process gave way to new observations. [[Insert photos of the students and Maren creating *The Dream* by Scott King nearby.]] All of the leaves were relatively the same size. Some resembled the shape of a heart and others spades. Yet, no two were identical. Although they had been preserved, the leaves were still fragile and had to be handled with the utmost care. Human hands and suspension left them vulnerable. [[Insert a photograph of *The Dream* nearby.]] Like the original canopy, the second iteration of *The Dream* is a temporary yet restorative shelter. Viewers were encouraged to recline in the lounge chair below, block out distractions, suspend activity, and embrace serenity.

The gestures that were repeated to re-create *Blanket of Branches* and *The Dream* became poetic—a physical embodiment of a musical refrain. That Hassinger's work can suggest the force of dance, the physicality of sculpture, and the rhythm of music marks the unique interdisciplinary qualities of her art practice. Since the 1970s, Hassinger has demon-

Hassinger and students prepare *The Dream*.



strated her sustained examination of new visual relationships between movement and nature. Her refrain remains an unyielding engagement with sculpture, performance, and video.

Re-creating works featured in *Maren Hassinger...Dreaming* provided a bird's-eye view of how Hassinger radically challenges the boundaries of artistic mediums and the art object's permanence. Through its manifestation, the exhibition made space to explore the formidable relationship between nature, process, and practice.

*Women's Work*, 2015  
Performance. Presented at Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.

**NOTES**

1. Senga Nengudi originally named the piece *Nature's Way*. Shortly after it was performed, however, she changed it to *Dance Card*.

2. Correspondence to the author, December 22, 2014.

3. Ibid.

4. As part of the public programs that were organized in conjunction with this exhibition, Hassinger, along with women from the Spelman community, re-created *Women's Work*. As they repetitively manipulated strips of the *New York Times*, linked their fragments together, and had an improvisational conversation, they alluded to sewing, knitting, and other forms that are traditionally labeled women's work.

*The Dream* (detail), 2001/2015.







***On Dangerous Ground***, 1981.  
Wire rope. 21 units, each approximately  
4' x 3' x 3'. Installation view, Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.

**Love**, 2008/2015.

Pink plastic shopping bags each filled with a love note and inflated with human breath. Installation view, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art.





***Blanket of Branches*** (foreground),  
1986/2015.  
Miscellaneous tree branches hung as a  
canopy from the ceiling.

***Wrenching News*** (background), 2010/2015.  
Shredded, twisted, and wrapped newspa-  
per (*The New York Times*). Installation view,  
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art.



## Inside the Artist's Studio

CONSTANCE MALLINSON

*“There are opportunities for sculpture everywhere. In a field, in a room, on a stage, in the street, on the ceiling, in front of a camera, etc. Every place inspires a different response. Some responses locate us in space and time and link us to particular people in particular places. These last offerings might be political. There are reactions to given events... There are sculptures acting like sculptures and people acting like people and sculptures acting like people and people acting like sculptures. There’s stillness and motion. There’s the ‘littering of space’ to mark it. There are pieces that last and pieces that erode. Materials are many—steel to video, plastic bags to newspaper.”*

—MAREN HASSINGER

Much is contained in Hassinger’s statement about how sculptural attitudes have been expanded, redefined, and transformed during the forty-plus years of her artistic practice. The unique, fabricated object we have traditionally associated with sculpture now finds itself part of a holistic approach that considers the important interconnections among the social, cultural, technical, consumerist, and natural realms. Stephen Johnstone described this as expressing “a desire to confront things in the world at large rather than in the art world.” Through film, video, performance, installation, and site-specific works, Hassinger has explored subjects as diverse as identity politics, the natural versus the human environment, and how the widening spatial and material possibilities of sculpture can be engaged in perceptual change. As issues surrounding such subjects have recently intensified, her past work

*On Dangerous Ground* (detail), 1981.

and that of the present resonate powerfully within our contemporary experiences.

Hassinger's roots are clearly in postminimalism, with its affinities to such influential sculptors as Eva Hesse, whose installations in the early 1970s, at the now-defunct Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, Hassinger viewed while an MFA student in fiber structure at UCLA. Hesse's dangling strings of elongated latex sausages, suspended netted rubber spheres, supple biomorphic doughnuts, soft droopy sacks of egg/scrota forms, and trailing hairy skeins were a sexy surrealist challenge to the male-dominated minimalist art of the 1960s. Artists like Hesse emphasized an expressive, spontaneous process and reintroduced a sense of pleasurable crafting their materials. Novel materials were employed. Many of these under-recognized women artists embraced the multiple contradictions and polarities elicited by the reinsertion of eroticism, natural references, and disorder into the manufactured primary forms and rigid systems approach that had characterized minimalism. Writing at the time, Robert Pincus-Witten remarked, "The limp, the pliable, and the cheap were sought; the hard, the polished, the expensive became suspect."<sup>2</sup> Rawness, playfulness, humor, and naturalistic coloration had replaced shiny stainless steel and prismatic, colored plexicubes.

That seismic shift in artistic values allowed for a rediscovery of autobiography and social issues in art-making and hastened the interrogation of sexual, individual, and racial identities so prevalent in the art of the 1980s and '90s. For Hassinger, whose dance and performance pieces focused on a consideration of the temporalities and theatricalities of entire sites and the dissolution of framing devices that impede direct communication with the spectator, a renewed humanism resulted. The departure from traditional aesthetic concerns and the immersion of the natural into the social and cultural were apparent in such choreographed performances as *Ten Minutes*, 1977, in which carried tree branches were symbolic of the natural world. It allowed for industrial materials—steel, concrete, and plaster—to be infused with such opposing qualities as fragility, growth, and dancelike movement, recalling shamanistic rituals. She described the formal and conceptual requisites

that have driven her work throughout her practice as using industrial materials to "approximate natural forms and plant life... bridging the divide between natural and manufactured, interior and exterior, personal and public."<sup>3</sup> Conventional binaries and hierarchies that neatly separated industry from nature were challenged, suggesting that as nature is artificially reproduced through genetic engineering, theme parks, suburbia, etc., and as our infringement upon it intensifies, those changes bear examination. By the 1980s, she was producing site-specific works composed of rows of "trees" constructed from unraveled steel rope set in the shrubby growth next to L.A.'s freeways. With its curly strands like flying hair in a whirling dance, these hi-tech trees came to typify the kind of nature/culture tensions and material transformation that defined much of her work from the 1980s into the present. Installations varied from wiggly, galvanized wire rope placed outdoors, which appeared to bend and move with the wind or wave in imaginary oceans, to indoor and outdoor fields of wiry, wheatlike sheaves such as *On Dangerous Ground*, 1981. Much of this earlier work explored the problematic relationship of the industrial to the organic, suggesting that the natural—a traditional inspiration for art—was being overrun or replaced.

Subsequent installations like *Heaven*, 1985, a room of preserved and scented rose leaves covering the gallery walls, *Blanket of Branches*, 1986, a ceiling-mounted, suspended web of bare intertwining branches, and *The Dream*, 2001, a buoyant bed canopy of overlapping red bud leaves, challenged accepted sculptural aesthetics and locations as well as requirements for permanency in traditional art valuation through their ephemerality. No longer concerned with constructing an illusion of the natural found in conventional landscape representation, these pieces initiated a contact with the landscape based not on separation and alienation but on a tactile and immersive appreciation of nature. As in all her work, the pieces embrace contradictions and paradoxes; while these arrangements of bare branches and dried leaves imply the death of nature, perhaps by human means, there also exists a spiritual, animistic sense of the natural cycles of decay and regeneration. Such



*On Dangerous Ground*, 1981.  
Wire rope. 21 units, each approximately  
4' x 3' x 3'. Installation view, the Los Angeles  
County Museum of Art.

performances as *Pink Trash*, 1980, in which Hassinger, clad in a suit fashioned from bright pink plastic garbage bags, involved carefully replacing trash that she had collected on-site in several New York parks and then painted rose-petal pink. Such artistic gestures underscored and attempted to dramatize the rift between civilization's consumer waste and the natural environment. A decade later, the gallery installation *Perimeter*, 1990, a room-sized open frame constructed of cut twigs and branches that delineated a corner of the white gallery, reversed the usual perceptual model of traditional landscape painting: Instead of designating a portion of nature for our pleasurable gaze, "nature" enclosed the viewer and space within the frame, directing attention to the artifice of viewing the environment in order to interrogate the boundaries that separate humans from the natural world. The work of this twenty-year period continuously subverted expectations for representation, materials, and proper art contexts to disarm and disrupt many of their associations with power, privilege, or repression. *Cloud Room*, 1993, a video projection installed in an airport lounge, unexpectedly offered a meditation space within a frenetic airport, transporting viewers—and reconnecting them—to the serene beauty of drifting clouds.

As the Media Age has dominated the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hassinger became more explicit in her examination of the myriad ways culture frames and influences our attitudes, especially as pertaining to public and private identities. *The Weight of Dreams*, 1995, a flurry of layered faxes applied to a wall-mounted chicken-wire armature mysteriously lit from within, seemed to presciently assert a mysterious life force beyond endless messaging and objectified "facts." She has made expressive masks of herself, cast from strips of the *London Financial Times*, to explore how our collective and personal consciousness and self-images are impacted and created by economic journalism. Similarly, the film *Daily Mask*, 2004, documents a daily facial the artist gave herself. As the dark substance is peeled from her face, viewers meditate on how appearances define gender and race, but can be "unmasked" to reveal alternative identities.

Throughout this period, a theme of returning to an authentic, less mediated experience is evident. *The Veil Between Us*, 2007, fabricated of shredded, twisted, and knotted newspapers, engulfs the viewer like thickets of vines or grass. Reiterating some of the content of earlier works, the natural is represented by manufactured materials (here, paper made from trees) to dramatize the increasingly crucial tensions, relationships, and connections—or disconnections—between nature and an information-obsessed civilization. In *Wrenching News*, 2008, thousands of strips of newspapers form a shaggy, mandalalike icon. Forcefully obliterating headlines and verbiage describing world events and recasting or recycling them into an object of meditation is a powerful reminder that we can transcend sensational news and seek renewal. A sense of healing pervades this work as we contemplate the possibilities of transformation through awareness, recycling, and change. The *Sit Upon*s, 2010, seats woven from hundreds of strips cut from newspapers for the *Global Africa Project*, encouraged participants to engage in "the simple act of sitting in repose"<sup>4</sup> to gain a new understanding of the space around them in a way that also promoted person-to-person communication, sitting together, telling personal stories. As in all the newspaper pieces, it is a palliative counterforce to the detached and



alienating stance of mass media and a reference to the act of weaving in the *kente* cloth factories of Ghana and Ivory Coast, the “origin of my practice.”<sup>5</sup>

Hassinger has implied the importance of heritage through a number of separate works referring to flowing rivers. Numerous metaphors are evoked in these works, from the blood that carries our DNA and historical memories to moving waters, as representative of change. The first *River*, a serpentine thirty-foot-long galvanized chain intertwined with rope, was exhibited in her native Los Angeles, in 1972. Given the strong emphasis on unorthodox sculptural materials coupled with emergent environmental issues at the time, it challenged the sculptural status quo and, in its transmogrification of water into steel and rope, alluded to the industrialization of our waterways. The piece was re-created for the expansive *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980*, at Los Angeles’s Hammer Museum, in 2011. In the context of that exhibition, the *River* seemed to primarily address issues of black identity, specifically in its over-sized use of the symbols of slavery. The title also refers to such rivers as the Mississippi that facilitated the slave trade. Or it conjures a slithering venomous snake as symbol for the chains of racial oppression winding its way through the landscape to leave a legacy of

*The River*, 1972.  
Galvanized chain and rope.



pain and rage. Conversely, it also suggests diaspora—the river as a body of water that transported slaves from Africa or as a means to travel north to freedom. *That* river led to the ensuing transformative power of expression that has characterized much historical and contemporary African American music, dance, and visual art. Moreover, since an artwork is always subject to new discoveries, contexts, and observations, this version of *The River* has grown from the particularities of its original conception by a twenty-five-year-old artist. Hassinger had yet to see the effects of environmental degradation, globalism, the full extent of the struggle for equality, even the election of the first African American president. The artwork is now even more multileveled in its associations. As much as it is about the lingering oppression of slavery and racial bias, it now also represents the ropes and chains that tie our trading ships laden with foreign-produced goods to the docks, leaving American jobs and the biosphere endangered.

The 2005 video *Birthright*, made for the African American Performance Archive, consisted of an interview with Hassinger’s uncle in St. Louis. When shown in the installation *The River*, 2008, in a darkened room, the walls of which were covered in branches intertwined with found trash, the film poetically evoked the troubled past by recalling

*The River*, date TK  
Caption info TK.

floodplains where debris is periodically deposited. In an adjacent light-filled room, however, the piece *Love*, 2008, a floor-to-ceiling triangle created from hundreds of small hot-pink plastic bags inflated with human breath, offered what Hassinger described as “an antidote to darkness and brutality.”<sup>6</sup> Like a massive female orifice, *Love* becomes a welcoming goddess presence, inviting new life and potential regardless of past events.

Such competing narratives have consistently characterized Hassinger’s art, whether in her objects and installations that simultaneously embrace delicacy and steeled strength, her dances and performances that encourage connectivity with nature and humanity, or her films and videos that bring a heightened awareness to the past or the moment. Most recently, in *Radical Presence*, exhibited in museums across the country, Hassinger performed *Women’s Work*, 2014, with five female participants. Over several minutes, each participant, in sync, ritualistically tears a single sheet of newspaper into strips, twisting the paper into strands, then ties them together to add to a growing ball that is, simply, presented to the audience. Such performances emphasize the power of cooperation and community, undoing negative stereotypes surrounding the insignificance of daily handwork and imparting a Zenlike attention to the joy of creating. These acts become gifts of generosity. Constantly transforming the most ordinary or mundane activities and materials—from newspapers, packaging, to natural and manufactured detritus—into deeply contemplative experiences has been Hassinger’s lifework. Ugliness and beauty, harshness and tenderness, destruction and creation, human-made and natural, fragility and resilience, pain and healing, are allowed to coexist so we may respond to their differences.

#### NOTES

1. Johnstone, Stephen. “Recent Art and the Everyday.” Introduction. *The Everyday*. London: Whitechapel, 2008.
2. Pincus-Witten, Robert. *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1977), 46.
3. Maren Hassinger, conversation with the author, September 2011.

4. Maren Hassinger, conversation with the author, September 2011.
5. Maren Hassinger, conversation with the author, September 2011.
6. Egan, Shannon. *Maren Hassinger: Lives*. Gettysburg, PA: Schmucker Art Gallery, Gettysburg College, 2010.





**Wind**, 2014.  
Video projection and mosquito netting,  
16:22 minutes. Installation view, Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.

***On Dangerous Ground***, 1981.  
Wire rope. 21 units, each approximately  
4' x 3' x 3'. Installation view, Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.





## Nature's a Good Place to Begin a Story about Maren Hassinger

LERONN PHILLIPS BROOKS, PH.D.

She leaves the stage, takes her time with the steps. Closer, Maren Hassinger walks into the audience, looks, leaves me with that acknowledgment, and continues down the aisle. She reads from pages all the while—sits where, and when, she pleases. I can't pick up each individual word, but, together, her lines do hum. The trail of pages leaves bits of that humming on the floor, confirms the history of that presence planting and speaking its way into the world. Hassinger reads from the pages so lightly, you wouldn't think the performance of *My Work* would have left such an impact. But it has. Nearly a year has passed since the artist's performance at the *Carrie Mae Weems Live* symposium, at the Guggenheim Museum, and I'm here weighing the meaning behind Hassinger's sly gestures. In this opening paragraph, I've tried to retrace the artist's purposeful route, and the humming pages spoken, then dropped, to float like leaves. I intuit the artist's thinking through nature. I'm trying to gather the remnants; *work with me*.

Hassinger described the performance in her own words:

*The idea was, I was trying to show what my work was about. I tried to break down the space between the art and the audience for it. I tried to talk about sculpture as SPACE and movement and interaction with audience by doing that. I showed slides of work from 1969 to the present while sitting in the audience. I tried to point out that space can define power relationships. There is a difference when speaking at the podium and when speaking from the audience. Sculpture can reveal this fact through spatial relations.<sup>1</sup>*

*Blanket of Branches* (detail), 1986/2015.



For the work, Hassinger embodied culture, spoke through nature, activated the environment, and it all took form. The artist, through persona, inhabited a narrator who embodies, and wielded, the contrasting forces. As the narrator, Hassinger was, and is, both a native of culture and the wild. Her performance and sculpture consistently reconfigure the boundaries between these supposed opposites; they speak from both sides of a single tongue. That is, in her work, the artist is a complicated witness. A witness, in her sculpture, powerful enough to meld iron with the seasons. In such works as *Field*, 1983, the narrator commands iron to tell the vulnerability of flora in fall. Here, Hassinger sews a hem from seeming incongruities. The movement in the work is deliberately implied. The symbolic meaning of the materials is joined. The concept provides the space for the union. The narrator is embodied. Hassinger has reconciled the tension through form.

As art historian and cultural critic, Maurice Berger has pointed out that, by the early 1980s, Hassinger's work had begun to demonstrate an awareness of time, space, and theatricality: The artist's "performances had, in effect, merged with her art as the spectator was increasingly thrust into an elaborate visual, tactile, and phenomenological field."<sup>22</sup> This field can be defined as a space of conscious awareness; Hassinger

*Field*, 1983.  
Concrete and wire rope. 4' x 15' x 15'.



*Pink Trash*, 1982.  
Performance. Three New York City parks covering 50' x 50' in each park.

performs in an awareness of the bonds between nature and culture as she defines space (in ways similar to the Guggenheim performance). In her performance *Pink Trash*, 1982, Hassinger, in the persona of the narrator, drops crumpled paper into the grass; she litters. The artist has reprocessed the paper, which was once trash collected in three New York City parks. She then colored it "rose petal pink." In turn, the artist-as-narrator has brought the processed wood back to nature as loving gestures. The refuse is transformed: It has become doubly or triply loaded objects—"seeds," "leaves," "loving notes" dropped to the earth, "planted" in the grass. These "rose notes" bring into balance the initial act of littering. That act, via metaphor, is now partially wrung of aggression. The field is activated. Low in the grass, and out across each pink-sown field, Hassinger's narrator-as-awareness has transformed aggression into hope, baggage into flowers. The larger question is, *What do we bring to the conversation as cultural beings?* Here, the relevant question is, How do I reconcile the damage I've done to the earth, and in the world? I have to think about it. But I'd like to culminate with roses.

Hassinger's persona bears witness through poetic action. And while this embodiment often speaks *through* nature, it is simultaneously strapped to culture. Inevitably, this narrator's language is muddled by



the rub. Each is present and speaks through the merge. And as suggested by the narrator's performative act of littering, or even the artist's use of roughly treated steel, the union can be refined. Consequently, Hassinger's sculpture, such as *Remains*, 1980, resemble bittersweet vestiges. In "The Field Museum," poet Roger Reeves struggles with the uneasy merger of nature and culture. In verse, he conjures the narrating subject (his daughter) owning the language of hybrid object created in the fracas:

*How often can you send a child to meet a ghost/At the river before the child comes back speaking/As the river. Speaking as the pedal-less red/Bicycles half-buried in its bank, speaking bolt oil/Spilling down the legs of a thrice-trussed bridge/Just after a train lurches toward a coast covered in smog/The river must be thick with this type of body;/A daughter bearing bird names on her lips, cutting/Her ankles on cans that resemble her mother's tongue.<sup>3</sup>*

In *Daily Mask*, 2004, Hassinger embodies the narrator caught behind the minstrel's (a racist cultural stereotype) mask. The work explores human nature as it plays in the natural world. In the video performance, the

*Remains*, 1980.  
Concrete and wire rope. 5' tall.



artist applies the "minstrel black" makeup in lines as carefully as she plotted the sheets in *Pink Trash*. There is a similar process of accumulation between the works. The resulting mask, however, is the symbol of dehumanization; it smothers true identification—blocks empathetic connection. The stereotype separates *the human* from the world. The narrator is calling for the recognition of Hassinger's black body as the historically loaded field being acted upon; look into the dark mask and the reflection is deeply grim. *Daily*, in the performance's title, suggests the repetition of this dehumanization, as well as multiplicities of this act—everyday, in the world and in our thoughts. These thoughts are enacted. The black body is acted on, cut down, too often, too easily erased: Racism is active as a verb. Hassinger, behind the mask, is the midground between tensions. It is so dark there, black people are swallowed.

The black body is given its rightful complexity in *The River*, 2005, an installation. After a storm, branches and twigs pile on the floor and line your spot in the center of the gallery, from the edges of an imaginary delta, flustered, brought home. Other forms of debris (strips of newspaper, fabric) reach down from the ceiling in long tares; they are hung from a mesh of tossed brushwood threatening collapse from the threaded rafters of thistle. The gallery is coated with anxiety—reeks of disaster. In front of you is a projection—a break, as if through a window, into light. *Birthright*, Hassinger's video that is included in *The River*, is about the artist's extended family, equally frayed. The work exposes you to the vulnerabilities of other interiors. Hassinger uses documentary footage of herself and her children; they speak with extended family,

*Daily Masks*, 1997–2004.  
Video still. 16mm film transferred to video.

make bonds, fill in holes, strengthen worn connections. This sharing of intimate histories of love, violence, and questioning is an attempt to come to terms with damage; the process affirms, makes new and complex shelter, from what remained in the wash for so long. Hassinger as the narrator is stitching together pieces of a story, and, with new eyes, the film is an elaborate cloth. The installation, in all its heart, is almost the exact opposite of *Daily Mask*. A mask, for all its darkness, is also a boundary. In crossing that line, *The River* opens the space, confronts the tension; it lets events secreted in the blood *tell*, as if to say, *We are all tenuous shelter for secrets*.

All elements considered, the work activates both space and time. And in this metaphorical field, Hassinger, still the transforming embodiment of an awareness, repurposes the litter (as in *Pink Trash*)—a family's neglected histories, its doubts, its tragedies, its prospects—but this time to color the black body *human*. “Ancestry,” according to the artist, “comes down to the present like a flood leaving in its wake debris for future generations to endure and attempt to heal.”<sup>4</sup> To this, I ask myself, *What have I ever rebuilt from all the things I've torn down?*

It is not enough to say Hassinger thinks through her materials; I have to question that. The artist's understanding of context and association informs the story being told. She is rooted in a process open to the larger natural order. It seems, in her performances and sculpture, there's a form of resolution in simply dramatizing the question of location. In nature, in the world, in “time,” the intent is not to be so clearly true, *but aware*. Hassinger incorporates this awareness within concepts of post-minimalist subversion—meaning, the artist makes use of the contention between stereotypical “oppositions” (in relation to gender, concepts of hard and soft, male and female, the processed and the organic, and so on). What's more, her use of sequential arrangements reflects this influence. Therefore, her work even challenges “the nature” of the discipline itself. These challenges to mighty concepts are stated with a poetic simplicity. This is the conceptual tension Hassinger, at times, plays with, the idea of subverting heft with levity (even if reflected in her own work). One could easily imagine such installations as *Wrenching News*



*Is Love*, 2008, and *Pink Sky*, 2014, as the remnants of the field sown by Hassinger's persona from *Pink Trash*. And, unlike the disentangled metal cables of such work as *Rain*, 1977, and *Trees*, 1983, Hassinger's “balloons” are literally vulnerable and lift that notion into metaphor. And so, while the pink plastic bags bring with them the suggestion of refuse, each small heart-shaped balloon is swollen with human breath, and a love note awaits in each center. The artificiality of the plastic is brought into tension and hearted by the warmth of human breath. I can imagine an emoted yearning held in the confines of that skin. The balloons are not at all as self-serious, as is much minimalist and postminimalist sculpture; rather, they are clumsily beautiful, cheerful, witty, and light. There is an activation of an awareness here in the whimsy as it hovers—a knowing intimacy shared by the crowd.

*Love*, 2008.  
Pink plastic shopping bags each filled with a love note and inflated with human breath descending from a 32' ceiling.

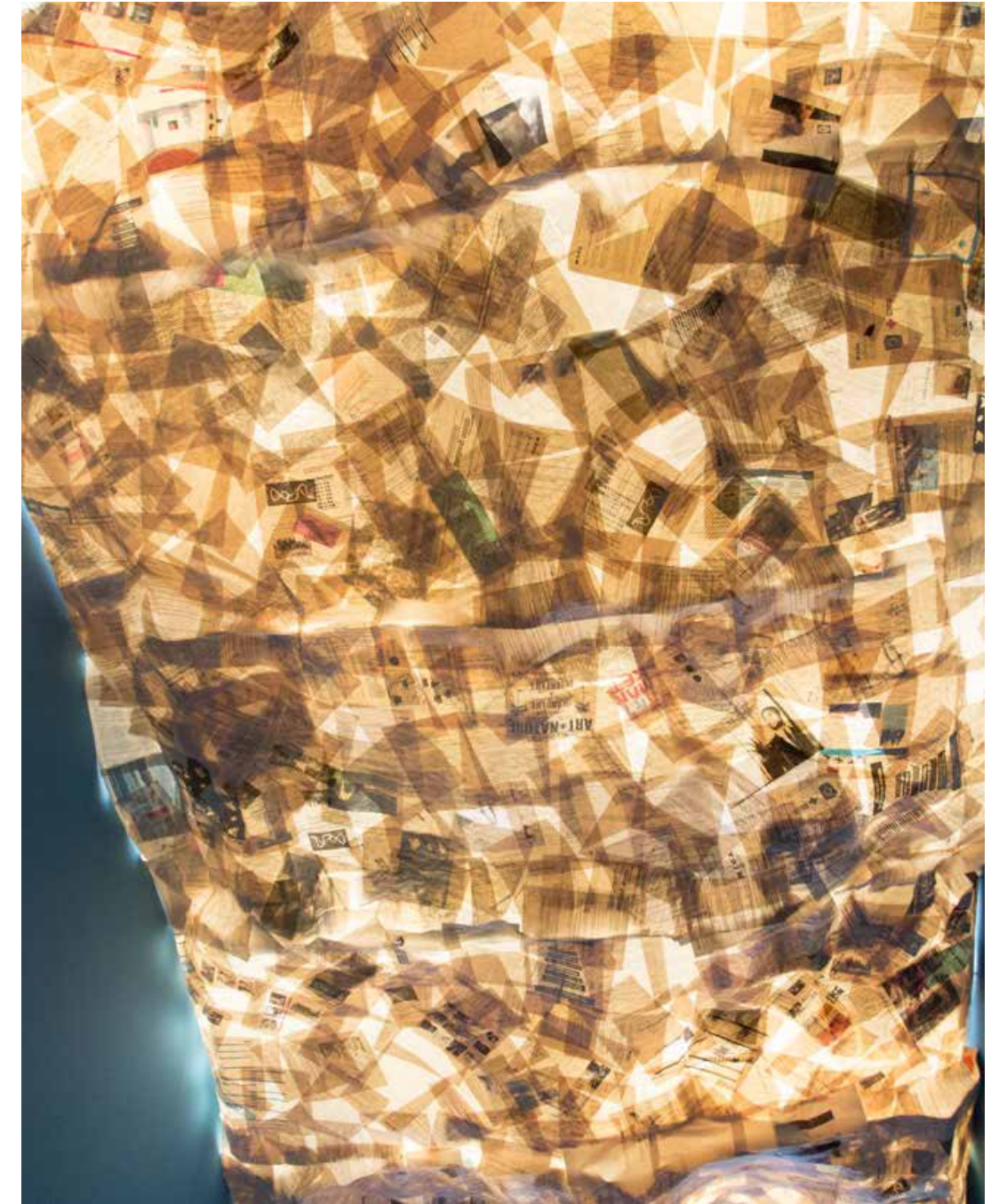
If you ever have the opportunity to speak to Hassinger, you will learn that she is not a boastful person, but she is always watching. And when she speaks, you will think differently for having heard what was said, and the silence around it. Your awareness will be pronounced within

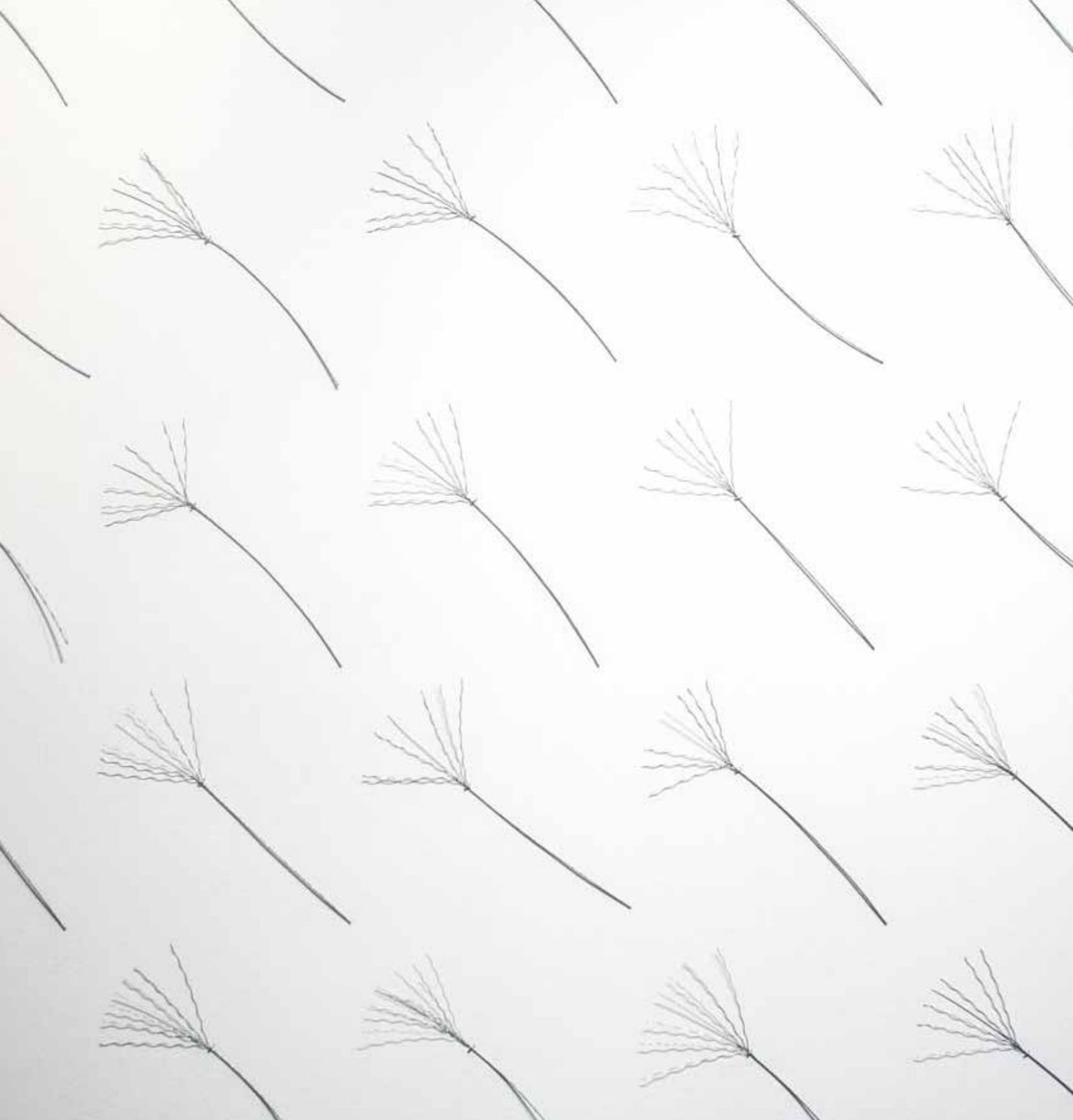
the context. Similarly, her work is also always watching, activating, always indicative of a witness's mindfulness. But you bring your own awareness to the site; the gift, for me, that afternoon at the Guggenheim, was to have it confronted, questioned. And it is not too deep to say that I was then, and am now, a witness to myself. Hassinger's work traces—offers—that kind of awareness. As an artist—as a black woman, a mother, an educator—in the world, it is a way of processing the world while thinking about nature, in conceptual spaces, as “performing” objects. Her vision? Dynamic interchanges. This sensibility, as performed, makes use of the head and gut. The head and gut make use of memory. Memory is a field in the body where the artist litters her reforms. The offering should take root. The intent of the work is the work of owning a conscious life. The message? *As viewers, this is our work, too.* That is the nature of the proposition.

#### NOTES

1. Maren Hassinger, personal communication, September 22, 2014.
2. Maurice Berger, “The Weeds Smell Like Iron: The Environments of Maren Hassinger,” *Maren Hassinger, 1972–1991* (Brookville, N.Y.: Hillwood Art Museum, C.W. Post Campus, Long Island University, 1991), 3–4.
3. Roger Reeves, “The Field Museum,” *The Best American Poetry, 2014*, Terrance Hayes, ed. (New York: Scribner Poetry, 2014), 117.
4. Shannon Egan, “Maren Hassinger: Lives,” 2010, Schmucker Art Catalogs, Book 6, accessed September 24 <<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/artcatalogs/6>>

*Weight of Dreams* (detail), 1995/2015.





**Consolation**, 1996.  
Wire and wire rope. Installation view,  
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art.



***On Dangerous Ground***, 1981.  
Wire rope. 21 units, each approximately  
4' x 3' x 3'. Installation view, Spelman  
College Museum of Fine Art.





## Nature as an Architecture for Equality

MARY JONES

The following interview between Mary Jones and Maren Hassinger was edited by Orit Gat and originally featured on BOMB Daily, in February 2015. It is reprinted here with permission by BOMB magazine. All rights reserved. © Bomb Magazine, New Art Publications, and its Contributors. The BOMB Digital Archive can be viewed at [www.bombmagazine.org](http://www.bombmagazine.org).

“Another artist awaiting serious study,” said art critic Holland Cotter of Maren Hassinger. Now, she’s getting it. *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming*, a retrospective of her work, opens this spring at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, in Atlanta, “the only museum in the nation emphasizing art by and about women of the African diaspora,” as the statement on the institution’s website reads.

For more than four decades, the sculptor and performance artist has created powerful images that refer to nature as a complex, psychological space for political and personal transformation. Early pieces resembled stark groves of bare trees; wire-rope forms twisted and bent from the heat of her welding torch. Lately, her materials have included the underfoot and overlooked: trash, leaves, boxes, and piles of newspaper. Dance and movement are seminal to her work, and from her earliest pieces on, the viewer must circumnavigate and interpret the space, whether it’s a freeway overpass, a pink path, or a crowded, small room.

A native of Los Angeles, Hassinger’s work was included in the traveling 2011 exhibition *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980*, and in *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*, in 2012.

*The Veil Between Us* (detail), 2007.



A residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem brought her to New York City in 1983, and she's been in the Northeast since, where she raised her two children. Her daughter, Ava Hassinger is also an artist, and the two work collaboratively under the name "Matriarch." Hassinger and I met in her apartment on Malcolm X Boulevard, in Manhattan.

**MARY JONES** What is the personal significance of your upcoming retrospective?

**MAREN HASSINGER** Seeing all these pieces together and the evolution of my ideas, especially about nature. The earliest piece is from the mid-1980s, and then the show moves to the larger, more recent performative work that expresses my philosophy now: getting beyond the strict nature thing into something else, something about social positions. At first, when I referred to nature, it was about how I thought nature was on its way out. I was very influenced by Walker Percy at the time—I liked how in Percy's work there actually *was* no nature. Nature only survived on the golf course or other artificial spaces created solely for the rich. Now, I'm using it to talk about equality. Nature is used as form, like a piece of architecture, not ecology.

*12 Trees*, 1979.  
Wire rope. 10' x 140' x 5'. At the intersection of Mulholland Drive and the San Diego Freeway northbound.

**MJ** Your work *Pink Trash* has had multiple reincarnations, including the decor of your apartment, which is brimming with inflated pink plastic bags! There have been many political interpretations of this piece, most alluding to the sidelong reference to "white trash."

**MH** All this pink work began when Meghan Williams asked me to do a show with her fellow CalArts students in Lynwood, California, in 1982. It was a very blighted neighborhood, where houses had been torn down to make room for a stalled freeway project, and it felt like a weird ghost town. I decided to make some pink paths through this desolate landscape. I remember the dead grass and how the pink popped against the brownish green as I was putting down the paint. So, no, not really, it wasn't political—it was more about color theory. Nobody gets that.

**MJ** Even if the formal aspects give the work its character, do you welcome the political readings as well?

**MH** Yes, politics are always there; it's inescapable. If you're going to be a really good artist, it's *got* to be there, because it *is* there. I always giggle when I tell people that in order to do the piece, I had to first remove all the white trash.

**MJ** What about ecology? You've used trash in your work for decades, and now you've got boxes, sometimes stacked to the ceiling, at other times explosively uncontained. Do they represent urban detritus?

**MH** All the pieces with boxes are about our gross need to consume, and where it leads us. Where is the bleeding heart in all of this? I don't think my work has so much to do with ecology, but focuses on elements, or even problems we all share, and in which we all have a stake. Maybe that's an ecological statement, but I want it to be an emotional statement. I want it to be a humane and humanistic statement. Maybe that sounds like a hippie carryover statement from the 1960s, but, frankly, I think it's what we need right now. Martin Luther King spoke about

it. Even Rodney King said it!—"Can't we all get along?"—as they were beating the shit out of him. Then, there's Nelson Mandela, saying how he could not forget, but he could forgive.

**MJ** I really want to get back to some of the issues of the original Civil Rights movement, where there was a vision of the future, one of equality. I want to be part of that equality and to make that a now situation, as opposed to something way off in the distant future. I want to concentrate on issues and environments in which we all have a common interest. This is why I'm very tired of the conversation that goes on among many artists of color about being oppressed and victimized. Although that may very well be the case, at this point talking persistently about victimization is not a conversation that I want to hear anymore. I was recently talking with a friend about cultural ecology; I think that's an appropriate description—we can redirect our voices from oppression to the retelling of humans functioning together.

**MJ** What about Malcolm X, and your work *Message from Malcolm* at the 110th Street subway station for the 2 and 3 lines?

**MH** I like Malcolm X's writing, because his feelings represent the culmination of a difficult life. He came to his ideas through struggle and taking a hard look at his circumstances and the circumstances of black people in this country and elsewhere. In my piece, there are several texts that describe why I like him. They deal with universal brotherhood and taking responsibility for one's own future.

**MJ** Let's get back to equality as part of your conceptualization of nature, and the piece you're currently developing about the sky. How did you begin?

**MH** It was late afternoon, storm clouds were gathering, and I was looking out this window here on the sixteenth floor. Some planes were coming into LaGuardia and others were leaving; it was like a rush hour



thing—many more planes than usual. When bad weather is coming quickly, they have to get out really fast. I watched as they flew over the middle of Manhattan, right over the Empire State Building, then over Harlem, and disappeared into a cloud bank. It was like a ballet. In this apartment, it was really loud, one after another—this booming, repeating sound. The other thing about the sky is that it's our canopy. To me, it seems so potent. I want to capture the images in time, include the sounds, and add a voiceover that I hope is poetic and of interest. If we can share the sky, we can share other things. I want it to be a very positive message.

**MJ** Like many artists in the *Now Dig This* show, you have a complex relationship with Los Angeles. You grew up there, and studied dance and movement there, as a child. At Bennington College, you were a dance major before switching to sculpture. Also, you've performed with Senga Nengudi, your collaborator for almost forty years.

**MH** These lessons happened to be with the former members of the Lester Horton Dance Group. Lester Horton was really a visionary, and his dancers had tremendous gifts. One of his students became the famous Alvin Ailey. Lester was one of the few who would integrate his company in the 1950s, and was very influenced by other cultures—Asian, Indian, and

*Message for Malcolm*, 1996–2009.  
Glass mosaic. Installation at the Interborough Rapid Transit Company 7th Ave station at 110th and Lennox, New York City.



especially Native American. My teachers all subscribed to this ideology. I was so fortunate; it was very expansive and inclusive philosophically and physically. Senga had also taken lessons as a child with other members of this company, and reached out to me in 1974–75, and we’ve been working together ever since.

**MJ** You said one of the things you’ve learned from your collaboration with Senga is about “the possibilities of doing anything, anywhere.” Can you elaborate?

**MH** Initially, Senga got a group of us together to explore site-specific performance. We did performances under the freeway. We had both gotten grants from Brockman Gallery Productions in 1978–79. I made a series of wire-rope trees installed along the freeway. But Senga’s pieces were performative—people playing instruments, dancing wildly to no end while wearing strange costumes and masks she designed—all this happening under the freeway overpass. I was one of them. She called it *Ceremony for Freeway Fets*.

**MJ** You’ve described collaboration and improvisation as part of your approach to performance, most recently in *Women’s Work*, at the Walker

*Women’s Work*, 2006.  
Performance.

Arts Center, in Minneapolis, as part of the *Radical Presence* show. How so?

**MH** The performers and I were working with newspapers, shredding them and twisting them into a globe. At the end, we gave this globe to someone in the audience. At the Walker, the audience included many men, and the performers and I gave the newspapers to everyone in the audience to continue the project. My thinking about that was, “So now everybody’s a woman!” When you’re thinking about equality, we don’t really have to have gender assignments anymore; everybody can share in every gender.

**MJ** You’ve taught for most of your career, and since 1997 you’ve been the director of the Rinehart School of Graduate Sculpture, at the Maryland Institute and College of Art. What has teaching given you?

**MH** Some really great things have happened from teaching. *Women’s Work* is about teaching. I decided from the very beginning that I wanted a reading list. I wanted the students to be intellectuals. I think artists *are* intellectuals, and have to be knowledgeable about the world they’re entering as artists. The late Arlene Raven was the first artist-in-residence that I chose, and from her experience at the Women’s Building she brought exceptional skills. But, most of all, she was so smart, and became a wonderful friend. She recommended I read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire. I’ll never forget that moment. It was so important. I’m loving that my students now are from all over the world, and represent an international community through their work and ideas—from a Chinese student referencing the Golden Age of Cinema in China to a student from Wisconsin inspired by Lawrence Welk.

Installation view of  
*Maren Hassinger...Dreaming*  
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

**FOLLOWING SPREAD**

*The Veil Between Us*, 2007.  
Twisted and knotted newspapers (*The New York Times*), 5' x 26' x 6'. Installation view,  
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art.







## In Retrospect

VALERIE CASSEL OLIVER

Maren Hassinger and Valerie Cassel Oliver  
in Conversation

**VALERIE CASSEL OLIVER** Your work encompasses so many areas—sculpture, installation art, environmental work, and performance. Given all of these facets, let's focus today on performance, knowing that performance touches upon other areas of your work.

**MAREN HASSINGER** I have a lot to say. I've been doing it for a long time and thinking about it for a long time.

**VCO** Well, let's start at the beginning. As with the *Radical Presence* exhibition, I think great import was owed to some of the conversations I had early on with both you and Senga Nengudi about your performances and their histories. You've certainly been on the forefront of that since earlier times and the 1970s. Let's talk about your undergraduate degree from Bennington and your graduate work at UCLA, but also Los Angeles in general as it was where you were born and raised. Can you talk about your youth and your formal studies in terms of what laid the foundation for the particular practice of performance in your work?

**MH** Dance started for me when I was five years old. I took creative dance with Ann and Paul Barling. As time went on, Ann became recognized as a teacher of dance for children, and I'm pretty sure she published books on this. (I have to look it up, but you know how you remember little snatches from your childhood.) At the end of the dance classes, they—either she or her husband, Paul—piled phonebooks up in the center of the floor and all of the little kids would run, run, run, run, run,

*Weight of Dreams* (detail), 1995/2015.



and jump over the phone books. Actually, this is an order that all of the classes I took in dance had, from modern to ballet. At the end of class, you do floor work all across the floor. That was the first time, and I had a kind of red-and-white, pink-and-white sundress. I didn't have leotards and tights, and I remember running running, running, and jumping and how much fun it was, and how free it felt. I took classes with them for many years; then, the schoolwork took over for a while. When I was in middle school, at John Burroughs, I was taking gym, and we had to take square dancing, and I really loved that. Then, I started taking—I don't even remember how I found out about these women—but I was taking Lester Horton technique from former members of his company, Lelia Goldoni and Yvonne de Lavallade. You've probably heard of Yvonne's sister Carmen. I went once a week to class, and we worked on all of the important techniques all through high school. In high school, I was part of Orchesis, and later there were innumerable performances under the instruction of Kay Turney at Los Angeles High School.

VCO Orchesis was a...

MH Dance club. We did performances, a lot of them—maybe four per year. When I ran into some people at a high school reunion, one said, "We knew you would do something, because you were always running around in those leotards and tights." I don't quite remember it that way, but I do remember there was some kind of reception where my neighbor across the street, who had studied piano for a long time, and later became my roommate at Bennington—her name is Michelle Maddox—and I did this performance. It was improvisational, for a small group. It was in high school, in one of these rooms. I don't even know what the occasion was, but she was doing weird things with the piano, like picking in the back and stuff. Now, I realize, after having studied John Cage, reading his stuff, that that was the kind of thing he was doing. I don't know how we knew about that in high school—or if we were just doing it because it was in the air.

VCO It may have been part of that zeitgeist of the time. It seemed to be a moment in the country where people considered pushing the boundaries for what were traditional forms of music-making, movement-making, art-making...

MH That would have been 1965—

She was plucking around on the piano, and I was doing some crazy improvisation to it. Then, I went to Bennington College, because I had hoped to be a dance major. It had long been considered a leader in contemporary dance. Michelle also decided to go to Bennington. She was my neighbor across the street in L.A. Two girls from L.A. were accepted **and** we became roommates.

VCO Did she study music?

MH No. I think she took general liberal-arts courses, but she decided to leave after the first year, so, as far as I know, I was the only L.A. representative for a while.

VCO And you studied dance?

MH I tried to, but whatever I did in high school, and with Yvonne and Lelia, wasn't enough to prepare me for everything I saw going on there. Technically, I was way far behind. Many people from New York had been studying daily, so they suggested I major in art, because I was better in art. They didn't have grades that they posted. All these comments came out. My sculpture teacher was ranting and raving about how wonderful this head was that I had made. My dance people kept saying there is difficulty here, so I wasn't allowed to continue, although I did try performing in other peoples' works. But their works weren't accepted, so I didn't perform for a long time. I went on and got a degree in sculpture. The visual arts degree was my major thing, but I also had to take a lot of drawing. I worked with Pat Adams, who was tremendously helpful; she

was also my counselor. I also worked in photography with a guy named Laurie Hyman. My major teacher for sculpture was Isaac Witkin. He had been an assistant of Henry Moore's. He was also a white Jewish South African, who had emigrated from South Africa to London.

VCO Central Saint Martin's—University of the Arts, in London?

MH Exactly. And then emigrated to the United States. Bennington was in the throes of summer. Before I got there, David Smith, who had long been connected with the college, had passed away in an auto accident. He apprenticed with Anthony Caro. So, that was the kind of training that I had.

VCO But dance and your passion for movement never left.

MH No, it was always lurking around the sculpture.

VCO Let's fast forward to L.A. and graduate school at UCLA. You continued in sculpture?

MH No, I tried, but as Bennington did not allow me in dance, they did allow me in sculpture, and at UCLA they didn't accept sculpture. I don't even know how this happened, but I ended up in fiber structure, working with a man named Bernard Koester. Bernard is a renowned designer, who got involved because there were so many innovative things going on with fiber at that time. It was 1970. He introduced us to all kinds of people who did really wild things, including Sheila Hicks, who is in the current Whitney Biennial, and Magdalena Abakanowicz, who at that time was doing this huge kind of labial-looking thing. I did that, but after about a year I was supposed to be getting an MA and I realized that the terminal degree at that point for practitioners was a MFA. Bernard said, "Let's make the application and see." I was his first MFA. He was very, very supportive of me. The class was in this bungalow off-campus on Sunset Boulevard; you could hardly find it if you were looking for it. There were

only—oh, my God, in the two-year program—maybe five people in the first year that were getting ready to graduate, and then, in the second year coming along, maybe only another five. Then it was a tiny, tiny little program, and nobody was paying a whole lot of attention to it. But Bernard made the program wonderful, and I think it grew right after us. He went on to teach for quite a while and then retired. The last time we spoke he was designing exhibitions for LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Modern Art]. I don't know if he's still doing it.

VCO What an incredible time to be in L.A., too. There seemed to have been a harmonic convergence with all of the experimentation. The things begin to merge and emerge in the mid-to-late 1960s—there seemed to be such a rich fluidity in terms of communities working together: visual artists, movement artists, people really pushing the boundaries, and the relationships that began to reconnect to people you knew before you left to go to Bennington—people who were in L.A. at the time, people like Senga, of course, and Ulysses Jenkins, David Hammons, not to mention other artists of Asian or Latino descent that were also there, in film. And, Kerry James Marshall was in town studying at Otis.

MH I knew him very well, but also Carrie Mae [Weems].

VCO Carrie Mae, that's right, she came from Portland via San Francisco. It seemed like such a rich environment. That notion of being sort of off-campus, in this tiny little area where no one was really paying attention to me, would give rise to a permissive environment to move in and out of and not be so tied to the ivory tower, the academic element of it, but to put you out in the world into this wellspring of activity that was happening.

Let's talk about the community that was in L.A. at that time, what people were doing, and what institutions, if any, existed to support these types of experimental practices. I'm not sure whether it was in graduate school or soon thereafter that you began seminal work incorporating



movement and sculpture like in *Diaries*, and *Ten Minutes*. These works brought together not only the visual arts and movement but also an interesting ensemble of people who were engaged in these projects with you.

MH Right. It started for me in graduate school, in 1973, when I did my thesis. I got hold of this wire rope in a salvage yard. I started doing things with it and realized it had a lot of motion potential. Half of that show became the wire rope just supporting itself on a point, and it looked like it was capable; it actually was. I also came under the influence of minimalism. When I had been in Bennington, minimalism—Clement Greenberg was doing our critiques—was the whole thing. Coming to L.A. was a release from the establishment mentality. There were also great people coming through. I remember a lecture, a wonderful lecture that Agnes Martin gave that was like a performance, where she sat midstage at LACMA. One light was on her, and she was in the little chair and had a hankie in her hand, and she was twisting the hankie the whole time. The dialogue was like poetry; I don't know if it was prepared or just flowing out. But it was wonderful. John Cage was also there. He was quite wonderful reading. He had passages from—I can't remember if it was *Ulysses* or *Fin-*

*Diaries*, 1978.  
Performance. Presented at Vanguard Gallery, Los Angeles.



*Ten Minutes*, 1977.  
Performance. Presented at Studio Z, Los Angeles.



*negans Wake*—but it was fabulous, just so fabulous. He had a movement person with him, too. So, there were these sorts of interactions.

There was the Pasadena Museum, which was run by someone who ended up coming to the Whitney Museum, whose name I don't have on the tip of my tongue. She did a wonderful Agnes Martin show, and an even more wonderful Eva Hesse show. At least, for me, it was more wonderful, because it was more influential. I remember at the Agnes Martin one going, "Oh, that looks like whispers," and looking at the caption: It was called *Whisper*. But at the Eva Hesse show, there was a room that had this lighting. It was coming up from the walls, kind of recessed; at least, that was my memory of it. The room itself was oval, and she put in there these pieces that look like bandaging. I've forgotten the title now, but it was in the shape of *Ls*, and it was bandaged with all this...

VCO Fiberglass and resin...

MH Resin and fiberglass, right; they were so moving. I've seen them in other installations, and they were as moving as in this one. It was like heaven in there. I've never forgotten how totally influenced I was. It became my desire to make work that, while abstract, or mostly abstract, would point to states of being that could change the way you felt, at least for a moment, while you were looking at them. That was graduate school.

Bernard took us to see the Hesse show, because there were links between the kind of fibrous materials that she and people like Sheila Hicks used. When that was over with, I got out of school, had photographs taken of my work, and went around showing them to galleries; no interest at all. Senga called me on the phone. I don't know exactly how she got my phone number or...

VCO You hadn't met before, or maybe you met through...

MH Now, I'm confused. Did I meet her when Alonzo Davis's Brockman Gallery gave us a grant to make public sculpture or did I meet her before? Maybe it was afterward that she called, once we were involved in this program. It turned out she lived close by, and we started a conversation—by this time, I had a studio space on San Vicente Boulevard—and that conversation never ended. We were talking last week, when I got home from Baltimore, where I teach now. There was a package waiting for me from her. We're lifelong friends.

VCO You're both now well into four decades of collaborative work.

MH Half of the stuff we've collaborated on nobody has ever seen.

VCO I believe that that is what makes it so interesting. The work, however, is being documented and archived. John Bowles at the University of North Carolina has done an admirable job in archiving black performance work, and many of the projects that you and Senga have done together like *The Spooks Who Sat by the Door*.

MH That was big because that was a real indictment. We thought of that show, because there were no black people in it.

VCO Talk about that project and what it was in response to.



MH It was at the Long Beach Museum, which at that time was run by David Ross who later became the director of the Whitney and then the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. It was sometime in the mid-1970s. It might've been a feminist show—all women. There were no African American women so we decided to be the spooks who sat by the door—you know, how lions sit by the door—except we had these ghost outfits on with little eye slits.

VCO Interesting that you would have sheets over your head.

MH That's the thing: If you're going to be spooks, you have to look like ghosts; right? The other thing is the KKK; all of those things were merging at that point. After that, we just started doing a lot of different things here and there.

VCO *The Freeway Fets*...?

MH We knew each other well then. We had been through this whole thing about what we were going to do for our pieces. We were paid a certain

*The Spooks Who Sat by the Door*, 1983. Performance with Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi. Presented at Long Beach Museum of Art.



amount of money to make these pieces for Caltrans [California Department of Transportation]; that was the grant that he got.

VCO This was the Brockman Galleries?

MH We each got ten thousand dollars. Brockman was also able to hire some assistants who supposedly helped us; my assistant really did—he got sweaty. Then, I decided to do these twelve trees next to the highway, next to the freeways. The first twelve trees I did was the Vermont on-ramp at the Hollywood Freeway. That got taken down immediately; they wanted to put a hotel there. The second one was at the intersection of Mulholland Drive on the 405 Freeway; that lasted for about thirty years. You may remember when they were advertising that the 405 was going to have this massive shutdown. The exact intersection where my pieces were was where they were making this bridge, so they took my pieces down. Cal State Fullerton, a university, was building a new library. They wanted to put it in front of the library, so they sent me photographs of them carefully unearthing the piece after thirty years, putting it on a truck bed, and taking it over to Cal State Fullerton—and I've never heard another word about it since. Not one word.

*Ceremony for Freeway Fets, 1978.*  
Performance with David Hammons and Maren Hassinger. Presented at Los Angeles freeway underpass.

VCO Have you traveled back to see the piece installed or...

MH No. Emails started, but were never finished. I was moving so fast, trying to get my life in order with the current, that I can't go back and keep bugging this person. I remember we exchanged site maps and all that stuff and I located everything, and I just never heard again.

I had a former student, from when I was teaching out in L.A., trying to help me, and even he gave up. I heard from him recently, and he said, "Did that ever get installed?" No—I don't know what happened to it. But Senga's *Freeway Fets*, which lasted a minute, has lasted forever, and that's the thing. So, what does that say?

VCO The temporality of art that has everlasting life.

MH Everything is temporal. Everything. You can never imagine what's going to take hold and what isn't. I know definitely in this country there is never a reason to do an equestrian statue in a square, because it will last three years. Why would you ever attempt to do anything like that again? It's over. It is so over. Our lives are entirely different. We live moment to moment.

VCO Let's talk about intentionality, because you're right; you created the sculpture that had the intentionality of being around. Things like performance were and are still fleeting. There was someone there documenting the event, but, at that time, the intentionality of performance was about the immediate experience, the moment and was very temporal. How has that shifted from those early performance works to, say, performing before a camera lens today? Do you think there are performances that are specifically created and made with the intentionality of living on? Before, the idea was just to do the performance and then have it documented, but the intentionality was never for this ongoing life. That's a huge arc that spans a lot of your career. It develops appreciation and an eventual acceptance of performance art as its own

practice. Now, its place is in institutions. But, back at that time, performance was... finish this sentence...

**MH** It wasn't quite dance, and it wasn't quite art; it was somewhere in between. And it was just temporary. It lasted those moments. There were hardly any audiences, so that, basically, when Senga and I were collaborating, most of the time we used each other to see how it looked. Senga got together this small group of people, like Houston Conwill, Ulysses Jenkins, myself, Frank Parker, Yolanda (whose last name I don't remember right now). Occasionally, Yolanda would work with us, but that was about it. Sometimes, if the performance was bigger, like that flying one, when Ulysses brought in a woman who played the trumpet; sorry, I don't remember her name. I had an assistant at that time named Tony, and Tony really helped me. He did research to find the films, which we were going to project onto our body, of flying birds and that kind of thing.

**VCO** You did that in conjunction with a museum?

**MH** It was a museum—the Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery, in Barnsdall Park. It was the opening of *Afro-American Abstraction*, which had started, in 1981, at P.S.1. We've been doing that for a long time, and Senga and I are fully committed to it. Ulysses is totally committed; that's all he does. He just does video and performance; that's it. His video work has gotten so beautiful and so wonderful.

**VCO** The politics of the day also informed a lot of the work: for instance, *The Spooks Who Sat by the Door*, the role or place of women and their acceptance within the art world. These were things that, unfortunately, we are still struggling with, but, at that time, the sense of urgency and the imperative to kick down those doors, to respond immediately and in time, was so palpable.

Of course, there are arcs to this, but women's issues were a big part of the work you're doing—the role of women, the place of women, and diaries also—and it resurfaces in a more recent piece. I'm curious about the intersection where the politics of the day and your creative response to it becomes social critique. I'd like to tease that out in the earlier works you created, either singularly or with Senga.

**MH** I remember this show, called *Festival in Black*, at the Otis Art Institute. David [Hammons] wasn't in the show, so he appeared totally covered, his face totally masked in clay that was cracking. Maybe he had a head-dress on or something, but I remember the clay face cracking and how he came right up to you, this far away, to show you. It was extremely powerful and his protest for not being in the show. It literally worked just the same as the spooks worked. Then, when Senga did her piece with *Freeway Fets*, that was also a protest against the idea that we had to do something that will last forever. She wanted to use the stockings. There was a movie theater in a black neighborhood in L.A., the Bard Theater, that was known for being very rowdy. Up at the park was one of those old-fashioned signs that had the metal kind of scaffolding in the back, and then it had the signboard itself. She wanted to go up there and stream the stockings somehow between the metal parts and the roof, or whatever, and it'd come down. She was told she couldn't, so, in protest, she did *Freeway Fets*. It was fabulous, and crazy, and confusing, because when you're performing something, you have to have somebody tell you to do this, do that. But it was, kind of, like, come over here—I have these headpieces, I have these costumes, I have these people who are playing music, I have thus and thus and thus. So, friends and the Caltrans people are going to give me a cherry picker. I'm going to go to the top of the column that's holding up the freeway at this particular site and put my work up there, and we're going to move to the music. I remember the feeling of being there, twirling around and around and around. I remember what I was wearing, but I didn't really know how I looked. Years after, I saw her still-documentation of that and realized that person was me. There were no mirrors, but I remember the

experience of spinning and spinning, that kind of wild... underneath the freeway where the homeless might be living. They do live under there now. I don't know if they were at that time. It's a kind of sanctuary.

VCO I'd like to learn a little bit more about Los Angeles, but at some juncture it seemed like everyone migrated to New York. Was that in the 1980s?

MH I wonder why... (*giggling*)

VCO I read, at some point, that, with your and Senga's collaboration, there was a feeling that there was no support, no traction for the presentation of that work in L.A.

MH No.

VCO So, you just decided to leave Los Angeles for New York?

MH There were different reasons. Senga was tired of the crime in her neighborhood, and I got tired of just running around showing my work to everybody and nothing happening. I made an application to the Studio Museum in Harlem, and when I got accepted to go there, I went—and I didn't come back.

VCO That was for A.I.R. (the artist-in-residency program)?

MH Yes.

VCO That was the mid-1980s?

MH Yes, 1984 to '85.

VCO What was New York like?

MH Really exciting. So much was going on. It was wonderful being able to be like a real-life artist and wake up every day and go to a studio. We had people come in, like Basquiat, and Andy Warhol's Factory visited us.

It was an interesting time, but not like now. Now, when artists-in-residence get out, they get play, they get a lot of play. We didn't have that. We got out and had to hit the road and keep on struggling.

VCO You mentioned Warhol and Basquiat, New York in the early and mid-1980s, as sort of fertile ground for creative experimentation. It's always been a fertile ground. But, at that time, for a very particular type of practice (performance), the city was open to that? What spaces were in place? Was it as open to performance as, say, San Francisco was open to the experimentation of film and movies back in the early 1970s?

MH They were open to it, but only on a certain level. You're not going to see Senga's practice at LACMA, at that time. We were black women, you know, we were rarely being asked; the black men were being asked. David got impatient with all of them and that's why he came East. Linda Goode Bryant was wonderful, because she said, "There should be a gallery where black artists can show on 57th Street, and I'm opening it."

VCO Right, and that became Just Above Midtown Gallery (JAM)?

MH Yes. That was wonderful. But Senga and David came earlier than I did; they were working with Linda before I actually knew Linda. By the time I came to New York and met Linda, she was working on Franklin Street, which was Just Above Midtown downtown.

VCO You were creating sculptural works at the Studio Museum?

MH Out of wire rope, concrete, dirt, and also with these preserved actual leaves, and collages.

VCO Did we feature this piece at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston?

MH No, that was *Whirling*.

VCO I loved that work—the illusion and implication of movement. I always likened it to the *Whirling Dervish of Sufism*.

MH It was about that. Then, I did several pieces about movement. They used the wire rope that looked like movement—walking, whirling, leaning, but also looked very African. They were a weird height, like the height of your foot or calf...

VCO Like African anklets which—

MH Yes, *Whirling* one was like anklets, but it was also like stools. It wasn't high; it was below your knee.

VCO You did this as a series of sculptures that the audience activated?

MH Those were much later—like the *Global Africa Project*, curated by Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie-King-Hammond. They were at the Museum of Arts and Design, and that was 2010.

VCO So, then, let's go a little further back..

MH But that is related to that. Actually, if you were able to go through the trajectory of my work often inspired by movement, then made into sculpture or installation, they may use different kinds of materials or whatever, but they're all related. And they all ask you—well, at least the *Global Africa Project* asks you—to sit down.

VCO To activate it..

MH Yes. Right.

VCO But, let's discuss your earlier time in New York. It was the 1980s, and you were just completing the artist-in-residency program at the Studio Museum. From there, it seemed like a lot of the focus of the work went into installation and sculpture, but always with the mindset, as you were saying earlier—so beautifully—informed by movement, and also informed by nature and maybe the body's movement through that landscape. It seemed like a lot of the attention shifted into doing more sculptural work, or where you were also doing performances. It seemed to me a period of time in which performances became the focal point.

MH I think they were. One thing that happened at the Studio Museum is, I got pregnant and had my daughter, and I did some public art then. I remember being asked to come to her elementary school when she started to get older and we moved out of New York City. I asked the students to do these almost military kinds of drills out on the grass, but it really was, in essence, the performance thing coming out. It never, never left me—not since I was five years old; it was always there. There was always a way that I analyzed space, because it was not just an object, it was the ability to move through space. All the pieces that have gotten done have always been related to what it would be like, what it would be like to be in that space and moving through it, and how stuff like the ceiling is so important in a space and the floor, and what's on the floor. What kind of floor is so important to a space, and how the light is in a space. I'm calling it sculpture, because it deals with space, the literal space, but I guess it could be called something else. I don't know.

VCO We should say that anyone who is going to review the show [at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art], by the time this interview gets online, will know that the exhibition comprised several installation pieces, which the audience is meant to activate by simply moving through them.

Then, you left New York and went to the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) to teach?



MH Yes, but there was a six-year interim where I was in East Hampton, Long Island. That's when I really started heavily doing video. It was hard with the kids. By that time, there were two kids, but when they were in nursery school, I could go over to the studio. That was a local television station subsidized by the town, so I could take classes and learn how to do editing, and that's what I did.

VCO Talk about the video work.

MH The culminating thing out of that was the 16mm film called *Daily Mask*.

VCO Which Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee and I included in the exhibition *Cinema Remixed @ Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image Since 1970*, in 2009. *Daily Mask* was finished in 2003?

MH It took me a long time, but, finally, in 2003 it was done.

VCO You'd been working on it...

MH Since 1996, '97. I had to hit different editors, and different decisions were going on all the time. It's three minutes long, and it took that long to complete.

VCO Exactly. Back to the issue of intentionality—performing before the lens is a very different kind of animal.

MH Not that different. It was a protest, again. It was like all the other protests—it was under the sheets or on with the clay face. But this one had the war paint.

VCO A protest against...?

MH Coming out every day with this mask on.

VCO As a black woman?

MH As a black woman. And that's a lot of masks—too many. Then, I discovered later on, which makes this a kind of impressionistic piece, that my dad was a whole lot Native American. So, here I am putting on my war paint (Senga always called it my war paint), and I'm filling in the spaces between the war paint so that I'm totally in blackface. I've shown that at other places. One time, at one of the places, a woman came up to me—it was actually the Academy Museum here, in New York—and said, "You know there was a guest in here the other day, and she wanted to know if you were a woman." Right; because all the blackfaces were usually men. They were always men.

VCO Yes, I think that's true.

MH Wow, I thought, I hit that without even knowing I was hitting that. I never even thought of it until that one person. It's really important to have "sheroes" because you get feedback. In one way or another, somebody's going to tell you something that will make you go, *What?* That piece, it's only three-minutes, yet it included all my history: being black, being a woman, and having to deal with this vanity-mirror thing, but also the whole sex thing. Not just the problem of putting the makeup on everyone and having to look presentable to people, but that once you've covered your whole self with the black thing, your gender was questionable. It's such a little gem of protest, beyond what I even knew. And that's the thing: If time goes on and I really sit with the piece and the idea of the piece and then decide to make the piece, it usually has more in it than I know, and somebody else comes along and talks about it.

VCO Exactly. The subconscious surfaces when you're creating. You have the vision and then the movement for that vision, but there's something else at work. There's never just the conscious intent, there's the subconscious that always interweaves and comes to the surface. The beauty of the creative spirit is that work then lives beyond you; it's open to the

world to be read in interesting, different ways. But it's something about performing before the camera lens.. I definitely want to talk about this destruction of the "fourth wall" and performance. You dismantle this idea that there is a proscenium and you are on a stage doing something. You bring the inner turmoil and tension directly to the viewer in this video work.

MH Recently, especially.

VCO Even as a video work, there is a need for the audience to complete the work.

Working in performance... I guess there has always been a sense of the audience's role... but when did you become conscientious about audience engaged in the performance? When did you consciously break down that "fourth wall"?

MH When that show opened at the Hammer. *Now, Dig This!*; it could've happened before this, but I distinctly remember we were doing this reprise of Senga's *Kiss*. We were figuring out the blocking for all of that and how we would collaborate on the movement and the props and the lighting, and what kind of situation Hammer was providing. We decided to include the audience at the end by singing and asking them to sing with us, and giving presents—little votive candles with notes on the bottom. "This Little Heart of Mine" is what we were singing. We gave all of those out, so we gifted everybody. We had to do it again and again—three or four times that day. We were gifting and gifting. Then, we were asked to do another performance in L.A., related to that, at another time. There were parts where we moved throughout the audience. Finally, we did it in the round at P.S.1, with Ulysses Jenkins providing the core of the piece. We were in the round and the audience was also in the round. The combination of those three things made me start thinking: I don't want the audience to be different from me; I want them to be part of the experience of being here today. The next time I was asked to do some-



thing was at the Museum of Modern Art, a series of talks about *Now, Dig This!*. I did this piece; I was supposed to do it at the end, at five o'clock, after the day was over. It was called *Together*. I had these clotheslines. I put bits underneath everyone's seat during the lunch hour. At the end, I said, "Everyone dig under your seat, give the rope tie to somebody else who has an end of it, and stretch it throughout, so that the people in the back are linked to the people in front." Everybody did it, and I said, "Now we're all together. Let's just not forget about this experience." After that, there was a nice photograph taken of the rope. It was very graphic—these lines throughout the space.

I also did a video piece in collaboration with my daughter, which ended with us going up through the audience taking *their* pictures; those images were then simultaneously projected onto a big screen right in the front that everyone could see themselves in. Carrie Mae Weems had this thing at the Guggenheim, and I decided that I wanted to stay in front and just lecture; I wanted to suggest how you make sculpture, in the process of the talk. Instead of talking about the sculpture, I wanted to make sculpture, and the sculpture became one that had a social component to it. First, I was on the stage, saying things about spatial attitudes—what happens with the space. A line was printed on an 8 ½ × 11 sheet of paper. I read the line and threw the paper around, thus marking

*Kiss*, 1980.  
Performance with Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, and Franklin Parker.

the space as I was talking about marking space. Then, I went throughout the audience, and, when it was time to show slides, I showed them from a seat in the audience, sitting next to what—I later learned from a photo—was my daughter’s art history professor. Which was really weird because I didn’t know she was. For me, in my mind, I made this stage—and the place where the audience was sitting—one thing. I was able, by breaking that barrier down, to show them *what* it’s like to be a sculptor as opposed to telling them *here’s* a sculpture.

I felt really good about it. I don’t know how anyone else felt necessarily, but that is definitely the direction I would like to go. What I really believed is that there are still lots and lots of segregated situations. Now that it’s been pointed out, it’s not just a matter of race but also gender, also sexuality. There are just so many things dividing all of us, and we seem to applaud these divisions. What I’m saying, at least symbolically, is that we can function as equals. The Civil Rights movement was so many years ago; people gave their lives in that movement, and we have *never* lived up to what they hoped.

VCO The sacrifice.

MH The sacrifice. We have never honored their sacrifice; we really, really haven’t. I would like to do that, and I don’t want to do it in a monument. After all the things I tried to do in a monumental kind of way, it just doesn’t really work, it doesn’t stand. Maybe this is an opportunity where it could work, as performative, as social interaction, as these kind of *minute* interventions—stuff that would take twenty minutes, at the most maybe five minutes. Just something like that original thing I talked about when I saw the Eva Hesse show—that would spark your imagination in this space at this time, so that you don’t forget.

VCO One thing I haven’t covered is your work at MICA [Maryland Institute College of Art]. It’s important that other people know that the artists that have come out of MICA have been influenced by you; they serve as

an extension of your artistry. I think your work at MICA has been very important—so as to not be overlooked—as well as your deep investment in the institution.

MH So deep (*sighing*).

VCO Yes (*laughing*).

MH Seventeen years of depth.

VCO And it is still going on. You served as director or chair of the department.

MH I’ve been the director for seventeen years. It’s been a rocky road and it continues to be a rocky road, and it has nothing to do with the students creating that rocky road.

But I do have to thank Leslie King-Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims, because they were on my panel and they were the ones who fought for me to be hired. Also a man named Richard Martin, who worked as the fashion curator at the Met; he was also on that panel. Between the three of them, they hired me.

VCO Your work there has been exceptional. When I look at some of the younger artists who have come up, they all have MICA behind them; somehow they are attached. Then that amazing project that was done there, *Art as a Verb: The Evolving Continuum*.

MH That was really good.

VCO It was so important in pairing generations of people together, because it was students working with other artists—Senga, I think, and David was a part of it. I can’t remember all of the other artists; Annette Lawrence was a student there. The exhibition *Double Consciousness* owed a lot to

this project because, in speaking with those younger artists, they were citing their ability to work with another generation of artists and how influential *Art as a Verb* was. The project laid a platform, to spring, to pull threads from. You are part of the legacy, and your legacy lives on through all of the students who come in contact with you. That must be tremendously rewarding, but also a significant contribution to the field. Without going through each and every performance work you've done, which Andrea [Barnwell Brownlee] may be disappointed we didn't do...

MH She can always call me and interview me again about it.

VCO I think it crosses what you were just talking about.

MH I forgot about crosses.

VCO I mean, what you were saying about—.

MH That was a protest.

VCO The work, *Crucifixion*? Yes... I remember it being about pulling people together and having people understand that we are inextricably linked, that despite these artificial barriers or fiefdoms, or constructed...

MH Stuff...

VCO Stuff, whether it's race, or gender, or sexual orientation, or class, which is becoming increasingly more prevalent, we are so interconnected. When I think about crosses that you did—was that at Union Station or Penn Station...?

MH Penn Station.

VCO Where you went around and just—.

MH Marked everybody.

VCO Exactly.

MH And people were lining up to be marked. Then, like little sculptures, they were running all over the place.

VCO But all a part of these individuals functioned as parts of a whole—the body.

MH That was great; you just recognized that. I had totally forgotten about it. My résumé is now getting to be too big to think about.

VCO Now, you can start to quote yourself. This is the great thing about working for long periods of time: You can appropriate from your own material.

MH That's true, because very much of what I just said is exactly that piece, which I had forgotten. You start out in this stuff and you have one mind, and that mindset is developing when you're a very little child and is still there. It hasn't gone anywhere; it's there.

VCO And it will continue.

MH I hope so. As long as I have the energy!

VCO It will. I am confident of that. Maren, congratulations on your retrospective. It is well deserved and an overdue celebration of your career.

MH Thank you. Thank you for your support. Couldn't do it without you.

*(They end with a hug).*



*Love* (detail), 2008/2015.



*Wrenching News* (wall detail), 2010/2015.



## Critical Chronology

KRISTIN D. JUAREZ

- 1947 Born in Los Angeles to Carey Jenkins, an architect, and Helen Louise Mills Jenkins a policewoman. She is an only child and dances from the age of five. Her parents will divorce when she is thirteen.
- 1969 B.A., Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont. She graduates with a major in sculpture, where she is informed by minimalism.
- 1972 Hassinger begins to work in wire rope, with such pieces as *Interlock* and seriality in her *Number* series, in 1973.
- 1973 M.F.A., University of California, Los Angeles, in fiber. She is part of the first cohort of M.F.A. students in fiber at UCLA under Bernard Koester. While in school, she's influenced by Agnes Martin, Eva Hesse, and John Cage.
- 1975 Hassinger's exhibition at Arco Center for Visual Art includes the thirty-minute performance of *High Noon*, performed at noon with friends and accompanying music by Manitas de Platas.

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Group Show, Newspace Gallery, Los Angeles.

Artists Choose Artists, Art Rental Gallery, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Fiberworks, Lang Art Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, Calif.

Hassinger/Mahan, Arco Center for Visual Art, Los Angeles.

**PERFORMANCE**

High Noon, Arco Center for Visual Art, Los Angeles.

1977 MH receives a Special Projects Grant from the California Arts Council and a commission to build public sculpture for the City of Los Angeles, C.E.T.A, Title VI. With Senga Nengudi, MH performs Nengudi's work *Performance Piece—Nylon Mesh* and *Maren Hassinger* at Pearl C. Woods Gallery, in Los Angeles. It becomes the prelude to Nengudi's exhibition *Repondez s'il vous plait* at Just Above Midtown Gallery, in New York.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Festival in Black, Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles.  
Tension/Line, Libra Gallery of the Claremont Colleges, Claremont, Calif.  
Studio Z, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, Calif.

**PERFORMANCE**

Diaries, Vanguard Gallery, Los Angeles.  
Ten Minutes, Studio Z, Los Angeles.

**PUBLIC ART**

Branches, storefront facade, 1115 North La Brea Avenue, Inglewood, Calif.

1978 MH participates in ritual-like event, *Ceremonies for Freeway Fets*, organized by Senga Nengudi, under an expressway in downtown Los Angeles. Other artists include David Hammons and Franklin Parker. Brockman Gallery, the federal C.E.T.A. program, and Cal Trans (California Department of Transportation) sponsor the event.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

New Talent Show, Zabriskie Gallery, New York.  
Pocket Art, Just Above Midtown Gallery, New York.  
Double X Plus, LACE Gallery, Los Angeles.

Art, California Museum of Science & Industry, Los Angeles.  
Abstract Concerns, Art Space Gallery, Los Angeles.

**PUBLIC ART**

Twelve Trees, Vermont Avenue on-ramp, Hollywood Freeway, southbound, Los Angeles (destroyed).

1979 **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Transformation: UCLA Alumni in Fiber, Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles.  
Secrets & Revelations II, William Grant Still Community Arts Center, Los Angeles.

**PERFORMANCE**

Lives and Vanities, Vanguard Gallery, Los Angeles.

**PUBLIC ART**

Twelve Trees #2, Mulholland Drive off-ramp, San Diego Freeway, northbound, Los Angeles.

1980 MH receives an Artist's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1980, she begins collaboration with Ulysses Jenkins, who, together with Senga Nengudi, presents *Adams Be Doggereal* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE). *Leaning* is exhibited for the first time at the *Afro-American Abstraction* exhibition at MoMA PS1.

MH conceives and performs *Crucifixion/Red Cross* as a "kinetic sculpture," in which she incorporates commuters and their movements into a performance/installation piece by placing small crosses on them. The performance is presented as part of *Remy Presents: Project Grand Central*, in the Waiting Room, Grand Central Station, New York.

**SOLO EXHIBITION**

Beach, Just Above Midtown/Downtown Gallery, New York.



**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Outlaw Aesthetics, Just Above Midtown/Downtown Gallery, New York.

In-Sites, The Woman's Building, Los Angeles.

Afro-American Abstraction, Museum of Modern Art PS1, Long Island City, New York. Travels to Everson Gallery, Syracuse, N.Y. (1981); Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles (1982); Oakland Museum of Art (1982–83); Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tenn. (1983); Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue, Wash. (1984); Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin Tex. (1984); Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Miss. (1984).

**PERFORMANCE**

"Games," I.D.E.A., Santa Monica, Calif.

"Kiss" created by Senga Nengundi and performed by Hassinger, Nengundi, and Franklin Parker at California State University, Los Angeles.

**PUBLIC ART**

Crucifixion/Red Cross, presented for Remy Presents: Project Grand Central, Grand Central Station, New York.

1981 MH is the first African American artist to have a solo exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. *On Dangerous Ground* is presented for the first time.

**SOLO EXHIBITION**

Gallery Six: Maren Hassinger, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Forever Free—Art by African-American Women, 1862-1980; national tour opening at Illinois State University.  
Ten California Artists, California Museum of Science and Industry, Los Angeles.

1982 MH performs *Flying*, made in collaboration with Senga Nengudi, Ulysses Jenkins, and Franklin Parker. The performance in Barnsdall Park was presented as part of the presentation of the exhibition *Afro-American Abstractions* at the Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery. She begins to integrate the color pink into her practice with *Pink Trash* and *Pink Paths*.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Magnus/Hassinger, Art Space Gallery, Los Angeles.  
Four, Art Gallery, Los Angeles City College.

**PERFORMANCE**

Flying, Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles.  
Stilwende, Just Above Midtown/Downtown Gallery, at Stilwende, New York.

**PUBLIC ART**

Pink Paths, Foundation for Art Resources—Transitional Use, Lynwood, Calif.  
Pink Trash, Art Across the Park, New York.  
Chorus, Commission for Arco, elevator foyer of Anaconda Industries offices, Rolling Meadows, Ill., relocated to California African American Museum, Los Angeles.

1983 MH becomes an Artist-in-Residence with the California Arts Council. She receives the Betty Brazil Memorial Fund prize in sculpture. Together with Nengudi, they perform *The Spooks Who Sat by the Door* at the Long Beach Museum of Art as protest of the lack of black female artists in the exhibition *At Home: Roles, Relationships, and Reality*.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Visual Conversations—East Coast/West Coast, Social and Public Arts Resource Center, Venice, Calif.  
At Home: Roles, Relationships, and Reality, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, Calif.

Beasley, Hassinger, Honeyword, Saar, Los Angeles Southwest College Art Gallery, Los Angeles.  
Exchange of Sources: Expanding Powers, California State University, Stanislaus, Calif.

#### PERFORMANCE

The Spooks Who Sat by the Door, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, Calif.  
At Home, videotape, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, Calif.

1984 MH becomes an Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. She receives an Artist's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

4th Holiday Invitational Exhibit, A.I.R. Gallery, New York.  
Sticks and Stones: Modern/Post-Modern Sculpture, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York.  
East/West: Contemporary American Art, Inaugural exhibition of the California African American Museum, Los Angeles.  
The Cotton Exchange Show, Cotton Exchange Building, sponsored by the LACE Gallery, Los Angeles.  
Transformation of the Minimal Style: Craft and Meaning, The Sculpture Center, New York.

#### PERFORMANCE

Voices, L.A. City College, and The Women's Building, Los Angeles.

1985 MH gives a slide presentation at the Museum of Modern Art entitled, "Artists Who Work in Public Places," sponsored by City Arts Workshop, Inc.

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Focus: Environment, Maren Hassinger, Art Gallery, Da Vinci Hall, California State University, Northridge.  
Maren Hassinger, Art Gallery, Los Angeles City College.

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

From the Studio: Artists-in-Residence, 1984–1985, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.  
Beyond 1984: Contemporary Perspectives on American Art, Ohio University, Athens. Travels to the University of Palermo, Sicily (1990).  
The Mattress Factory Show, The Scripto Pen Factory, Atlanta, Ga.  
Artists and the Landscape, Guggenheim Gallery, Chapman College, Orange, Calif.  
To the Astonishing Horizon, Design Center of Los Angeles, The Theater Art Gallery, New York—a collaborative project with Candida Alvarez.  
Carnival-Ritual of Reversal, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York.

#### PERFORMANCE

Solitude, SPARC Gallery, Venice, Calif.

#### PUBLIC ART

Necklace (of Trees), Atlanta Festival for the Arts, Atlanta, Ga.

1986 MH gives birth to her daughter Ava Hassinger. They will collaborate making film, video, and performance.  
MH is awarded studio space at PS1, Long Island City, New York. *Blanket of Branches* was first installed at Contemporary Arts Forum, under which the performance *Nature's Way*, by Senga Nengudi is performed. The video recording of the performance is renamed *Dance Card*.

#### SOLO EXHIBITION

Blanket of Branches and Dancing Branches, Contemporary Arts Forum and Alice Keck Park, Santa Barbara, Calif.

**PERFORMANCE**

Nature's Way, by Senga Nengudi is performed for the Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, Calif.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Progressions: A Cultural Legacy, The Clocktower, The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Long Island City, New York.

Choosing: An Exhibition of Changing Perspectives in Modern Art and Art Criticism by Black Americans, 1925–1985, The Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago, Ill.

Visions of the World, Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, New York.

Artists Select: Contemporary Perspectives by Afro-American Artists, Arizona State University Art Collections, Tempe.

**1987 GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Blue Angel: The Decline of Sexual Stereotypes in Post-Feminist Sculpture, Longwood Arts Gallery, Bronx, N.Y. Travels to A.I.R. Gallery, New York (1987); Space One Eleven, Birmingham, Ala. (1988).

Los Angeles Collects, The Museum of African-American Art, Los Angeles.

Art in Public Places, The Museum of African-American Art, Los Angeles. P.S.1, The Clocktower National & International Studio Artists' Exhibition, The Clocktower Gallery, New York.

**PUBLIC ART**

Oasis, Artpark, Lewiston, N.Y.

**1988** MH receives an Artist's Grant from Artist's Space in New York. She also receives an Artist's Fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Coast to Coast: A Woman of Color National Artist's Book Project, Women's Caucus for Art, Houston, Tex. (1988), in collaboration with Senga Nengudi. Travels to the College of Wooster Art Museum, Wooster, Ohio, January (1989); DePauw University Art Museum, Greencastle, Ind. (1989); Center for Book Arts, New York (1989); The University of Michigan School of Art Museum, Ann Arbor (1989); Flossie Martin Art Gallery, Radford, Va. (1990); Eubie Blake Center, Baltimore, Md. (1990); Artemisia Gallery, Chicago, Ill. (1990); The Jamaica Arts Center, Queens, N.Y. (1990).

Art As a Verb: The Evolving Continuum, Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore, Md. Travels to the Studio Museum in Harlem (1989); Metropolitan Life Insurance Gallery, New York (1989).

Workspace '88, Jamaica Arts Center, Jamaica, N.Y.

Unity: A Collaborative Process, Goddard Riverside Community Center, New York.

Lava, Onetwentyeight, New York.

Who's Uptown: Harlem '87, Schomburg Gallery, New York.

**1989** MH gives birth to her son, Jesse.

**SOLO EXHIBITION**

Field, Soho 20 Gallery, New York.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Artists at Hunter, Voorhees Gallery, Hunter College, New York.

Tropical Rain Forest, Sundered Ground Gallery, New York.

Hassinger, McKeown, Mancini, Cyrus Gallery, New York.

American Resources: Selected Works of African-American Artists, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York. Travels to Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, Fisk University/Downtown Arts Gallery at Church Street Centre/Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery, Nashville, Tenn. (1989).

Outside the Clock: Beyond Good & Elvis, Scott Hansen Gallery, New York.

Lines of Vision: Drawings by Contemporary Women, Blum Helman Warehouse, New York. Travels to Hillwood Art Gallery, Long Island University, Brookville, N.Y.; Murray State University, Murray, Ky.; Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, Mich.; University Art Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton; Richard F. Brush Gallery, Saint Lawrence University, Canton, N.Y.; The University of Oklahoma Museum of Art, Norman.

A Debate on Abstraction, Hunter College, New York.

Transformations and Traditions: Contemporary Afro-American Sculpture, The Bronx Museum, Bronx, N.Y.

Airlines, Hillwood Art Gallery, Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus, Brookville, N.Y.

The Appropriate Object, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.

#### **PUBLIC ART**

Hunt's Point Sculptors, Tall Grasses, Bronx, N.Y.—moved to Roosevelt Island, New York.

Rend, Set Design, Donald Byrd Dance Foundation, New York.

Sculpture City, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, N.Y.

1990 MH gives a lecture for a panel entitled, "Shifting the Mainstream: Multi-Cultural Identity in the Arts," at San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, Calif. She becomes an Artist-in-Residence at The Printmaking Workshop in New York City.

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Out/In Queens: A Sculpted View, Queensborough Community College Art Gallery, Bayside, N.Y.

In the Public Eye: Beyond the Statue in the Park, Euphrat Gallery, De Anza College, Cupertino, Calif.

The Decade Show, New Museum of Contemporary Art/The Studio Museum/ Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York.

New History: Beverly Buchanan, Mel Edwards, Maren Hassinger, The Atlanta College of Art, Ga. Artists for Amnesty, Blum Helman Gallery, New York.

Nature & Humanity, Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York.

Hunt's Point Sculptors: Gallery Works, Krasdale Foods Art Gallery, Bronx, N.Y.

Benefit Sale, Sculpture Center, New York.

Hassinger, McCarthy, Rodgers, Ziegler, The Sculpture Center, New York.

1991 MH is the Visiting Artist at University of Iowa, Iowa City, as well as at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

#### **SOLO EXHIBITION**

Maren Hassinger, Gracie Mansion Gallery, New York.

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

5 From Bennington, Krasdale Foods Art Gallery, Bronx, N.Y.

Three Installations: Renee Green, Maren Hassinger, Greg Henry, Jamaica Art Center, Jamaica, N.Y.

#### **PUBLIC SCULPTURE**

Installation of "Circle of Bushes" for C. W. Post, Long Island University, Brookville, N.Y.

1992 **SOLO EXHIBITION**

Bushes, Fine Arts Gallery, LIU/Southampton Campus, Southampton, N.Y.

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

The Printmaking Workshop: Bob Blackburn's Collection, The Cleveland Institute of Art, Ohio.

5 Artists at the Airport, Insights into Public Art, Wood Street Galleries, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Volume: 6 Contemporary Sculptors, Guild Hall, East Hampton, N.Y.:

Aycock, Benglis, Hassinger, Holt, Kendrick, Newman.

Environmental Terror, Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Touring Maryland and Virginia.

Summer/Selections from the Printmaking Workshop Collection, New York.

#### **PUBLIC ART**

Commission for the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport, Pittsburgh, Pa.

- 1993 Coinciding with her commission for the Whitney Museum's Sculpture Court at the Philip Morris Building, MH performs *Notes* at the Whitney Museum. The performance includes MH describing the artist and audience interaction, when the audience entered the room, and continues with script that intertwines ideas on black artists, nature, and the metaphysical.

#### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

Memory, Benton Gallery, Southampton, N.Y.

#### **PERFORMANCE**

Notes, for the Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, New York.

#### **PUBLIC ART SCULPTURE**

Window Boxes, Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, New York.

Evening Shadows, University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach.

- 1994 MH is awarded Visiting Artist Fellowship at the Brandywine Workshop, in Philadelphia, Pa. She participates in the panel discussion, "Opportunities for the Future—Careers for Women Artists," at State University of New York at Stony Brook.

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Robert Blackburn: Inspiration and Innovation in American Printmaking, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York.

Inspired by Nature, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, N.Y.

African-American Women Prints, The Printed Image Galleries, Firehouse Art Center, Philadelphia, Pa.

The Faculty Show '94, University Art Gallery, Staller Center for the Arts, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

27th Annual Artists of the Springs Invitational Exhibition, Ashawagh Hall, East Hampton, N.Y.

Light and Lightness, Trans-Hudson Gallery, Jersey City, N.J.

Sightings, The Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, N.Y.

Maren Hassinger and Cynthia Hawkins, Peg Alston Fine Arts, New York.

Black Prints, Elsa Mott Ives Gallery, New York.

- 1995 MH participates in the panel discussions, "Nature, Landscape, and Contemporary Sculpture" (moderator Michael Brenson), at The New School, New York, as well as "Feminism and Art Production," at the Parrish Art Museum, in Southampton, N.Y. She participates in a discussion, "*Rubber Bob*, video short film by filmmakers Peter and Maren Hassinger" at the Southampton Cultural Center, Southampton, N.Y. *Weight of Dreams* is first exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Required Nuance: Three Contemporary Sculptors, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

Black Pearls: Treasures of African-American Women Artists, Cinque Gallery, New York.

Listening to the Earth: Artists and the Environment, Emerson Art Gallery, Hamilton College, Clinton, N.Y.

Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop. Travels to nine galleries in Sub-Saharan African cities.

**PERFORMANCE**

More Notes, for The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

A Day at the Beach, for the Victor D’Amico Institute of Art, Amagansett, N.Y.

Where’s Mommy? for opening of Sightings at the Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, N.Y.

Reir is to Laugh, for the series “Conversation with Contemporary Artists,” the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**PUBLIC ART**

Fence of Leaves, P.S.8, Percent for Art Program, Department of Cultural Affairs, New York.

The Forest People, Set Design, Wendy Perron Dance Company, St. Mark’s Church, New York.

1996 The International Association of Art Critics award second place to MH for Best Show by an Emerging Artist for her solo exhibition at Trans-Hudson Gallery. *Consolation* is first exhibited. She receives a grant for artists by the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

**SOLO EXHIBITION**

Treachery and Consolation, Trans-Hudson Gallery, Jersey City, N.J.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

4 Who Teach, Omni Gallery, Uniondale, N.Y.

Whisper, Stomp, Shout! A Salute to African-American Performance Art, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colo.

1997 MH receives an Artists’ Grant by Anonymous Was A Woman and sits on a panel at the Museum of Modern Art, “Abstraction or Essence: Three African-American Perspectives,” in New York. She is a visiting artist at Randolph-Macon College, Lynchburg, Va., as well as Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

Her work is included in the National Endowment for the Arts permanent archive. MH becomes director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture at Maryland Institute College of Art.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

1997 New Faculty Exhibition, Decker Gallery, Station Building, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

Faculty Show 1997, University Art Gallery, Staller Center for the Arts, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Introductions—New Faculty Exhibition, Decker Gallery, Station Building, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

Eight by Eight, Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, N.Y.

**PUBLIC ART**

Neuberger Museum of Art 1997 Biennial Exhibition of Public Art, on the campus of Purchase College, State University of New York.

Twentieth Century American Sculpture at the White House, Exhibition IV, The First Lady’s Sculpture Garden, The White House, Washington, D.C.

1998 **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Sculpture on Site, Sculpture Inside, Harford Community College, Chesapeake Gallery, Bel Air, Md.

Faculty Show, MICA, Baltimore, Md.

Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979, Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Traveled to MAK-Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna (1998); Museu d’art Contemporani, Barcelona (1999); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (1999).

**PUBLIC ART SCULPTURE**

The Garden Path, Mediating Nature and Culture, Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, Cazenovia, N.Y.

Footfalls, The Village of Greenport, Greenport, N.Y.

1999 **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Passages: Contemporary Art in Transition, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Traveled to Chicago's Cultural Center (2000) and Miami Art Museum, Miami (2000).

Through the Fire to the Limit: African-American Artists in Maryland, Government House, Annapolis, Md.

Faculty Show, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

2000 **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Snapshot, Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, Md.

2000 Faculty Exhibition, Decker Gallery, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

Artscape, Baltimore, Md.

**PERFORMANCE**

Untitled Presentation for "Golden Door, Golden Floor," Evergreen House, Baltimore, Md.

**PUBLIC ART**

Sculpture at Evergreen, Baltimore, Md.

Nature Trail, Villa Julie College, Baltimore, Md.

2001 MH sits on a panel entitled, "The Love/Hate Relationship of Art Schools and the Art World Blur," at the National Council of Arts Administrators, Virginia Commonwealth University. She makes *The Dream* in residency at MacDowell Artist Colony, Peterborough, N.H., and exhibits it at her solo exhibition, *My Hand, This Leaf*.

**SOLO EXHIBITION**

My Hand, This Leaf, David Allen Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Homecoming, Thomas Segal Gallery, Baltimore, Md.

2001 Faculty Exhibition, Meyerhoff Gallery, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

**PUBLIC ART**

Message from Malcolm, Arts for Transit, 110th Street IRT, New York.

2002 *Faculty Show*, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

Unforgettable, Chelsea Studio Gallery, New York.

Healing Arts/Art That Heals, Maryland General Hospital, Baltimore, Md.

**PERFORMANCE**

Participatory survey of 9/11 at MICA and Chelsea Studio Gallery, New York, called "Why Did This Happen?"

**PUBLIC ART**

Weeds and Nerves for the exhibition Healing Arts/Art That Heals, Maryland General Hospital, Baltimore, Md.

2003 MH receives the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation Individual Support Grant.

**GROUP EXHIBITION**

Living With Art: Modern and Contemporary African-American Art from the Collection of Alitash Kebede. Traveled to the Gallery of Contemporary Art, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (2003); Museum of Texas Tech, Lubbock (2003); Peninsula Fine Art Center, Newport News, Va. (2006); Bermuda National Gallery (2007).

2004 MH acts as cocurator with Chezia Thompson on the exhibition *Phenomenology* at Artscape, Baltimore, Md. She becomes an Artist-in-Residence and Nature Conservancy/Andy Warhol Estate, East Hampton, N.Y. Her film *Daily Mask* is first shown among work made of newspaper and newsprint at Loyola College, Julio Art Gallery, Baltimore, Md.

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

Rainforest, David Allen Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Diaries, Loyola College, Julio Art Gallery, Baltimore, Md.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Sabbatical Exhibition, Decker Gallery, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.  
African-American Artists in Los Angeles, A Survey Exhibition: Fade (1990–2003), California State University, Los Angeles.

**PUBLIC SCULPTURE**

Art in the Garden, Grant Park, Chicago Park District and the Department of Cultural Affairs, Chicago, Ill.

**2005 GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Tex.  
Along the Way: MTA Arts for Transit, Celebrating 20 Years of Public Art, UBS Art Gallery, New York.  
City Art: New York's Percent for Art Program, Center for Architecture, New York.

**2006** MH gives a lecture and critique at Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.. She sits on the Arts Education Roundtable at the International Sculpture Center Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio, as well as the panel "The Arts and Human Development," at the 36th Annual Meeting of the Jean Piaget Society, in Baltimore, Md. She is a juror for the Fulbright National Screening Committee, Sculpture Panel.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

181st Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Art, National Academy Museum, New York.  
14th Annual Lotta Art Benefit, School 33, Art Center, Baltimore, Md.

Peace and Tranquility, Studio Magazine, a publication of the Studio Museum in Harlem. Spring 2006 Issue, 26–29.  
Riffs and Rhythms: Abstract Forms and Lived Realities, James E. Lewis Museum of Art, Morgan State University, Baltimore, Md.

**PERFORMANCE**

Side by Side, mixed-media performance with Senga Nengudi and Women's Work part of Les Soirées Nomades: Nuits Noires at Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France.

**2007** MH receives an Artist's Grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. She sits on the panel "Modern Art in Los Angeles: Feminist Art in Southern California," at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. She presents on the education panel at International Sculpture Center Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio, and leads a tour of the Hirschhorn Museum Sculpture Garden entitled, "Figure It Out: Interpreting Form in a Public Space," in Washington, D.C. *The Veil Between Us* is first exhibited at Maryland Art Place, and becomes a major part of her video *Birthright*.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Cinema Remixed and Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image Since 1970, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, Ga. (2007–8); Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Tex. (2008–9)  
Celebrating Forty Years: Showcasing Forty Artists, Maryland State Arts Council, Baltimore, Md.  
Mini-Curated-Micro-Books, a project of the Baltimore Book Festival.  
Janet and Walter Sondheim Prize at MICA—Semi-Finalists Exhibition, Meyerhof Gallery, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.  
21st Annual Critics' Residency Program, Maryland Art Place, Baltimore, Md.  
15th Annual Lotta Art Benefit, School 33, Art Center, Baltimore, Md.  
Crossing the Line: African American Artists in the Jacqueline Bradley and Clarence Otis, Jr. Collection, The Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, Winter Park, Fla.



AGENTS of Change: Women, Art and Intellect, Ceres Gallery, New York.  
At Freedom's Door: Challenging Slavery in Maryland, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Md.

2008 MH Participates on panel and oral history project, "African American Avant-Gardes 1965–1990," at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. *Love* is presented at the Sondheim finalists exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Discursive Acts: African American Art at University of Delaware and Beyond, University Museums, Newark, Del.  
Faculty Show, Decker Gallery, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.  
Slideshowpotluck, Democratic National Convention, Denver, Colo.  
Grimaldis @ Area 405, Area 405, Baltimore, Md.  
The Sondheim Finalists, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Md.

2009 MH receives the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women's Caucus for the Arts. She is named one of the Ten Best Baltimore Artists of 2008.

**GROUP EXHIBITION**

30 Seconds Off an Inch, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

**PERFORMANCE**

Africa, three 30-second performances at the opening of 30 Seconds Off an Inch, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.  
Quiet as Kept: Change, a performance ritual written and directed by Ulysses Jenkins at California African American Museum, Los Angeles.

2010 MH moves to New York from Baltimore. She describes the moving process and the residual boxes as the inspiration for her sculptural works she calls totems that will go on view in the 2013 exhibition *Hassinger*

@ Clark: *Boxes Combs, and Constellations* at the University of Delaware.  
*Wrenching News* is presented at her solo exhibition *Maren Hassinger: Lives* at the Schumucker Gallery at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Maren Hassinger: Lives, Schmucker Gallery, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa.  
Global Africa Project, Museum of Arts and Design, New York. Traveled to Reginald Lewis Museum, Baltimore, Md., January to June 2012; High Museum, Atlanta, Ga., June to September, 2012; 3 Museums in the Seattle area November to February 2013.

**PERFORMANCE**

Contributed "score" to performance artist Clifford Owens called "Repose."  
Taped and transcribed interview and map of performance experience in Los Angeles, LACE Gallery.

2011 **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Travels to MoMA PS1, Long Island City, N.Y. (2012–13); Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Mass. (2013).  
Dance/Draw, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Mass. (2011–12).  
Inti, Curated by Clifford Owens, OnStellarRays Gallery, New York.  
Excerpt from In a Quiet Place (1985) in Sculpted Etched and Cut and Collected, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.  
Beige (1990) and Green (1990) are included in VideoStudio: Playback, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.  
Material Girls, The Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore, Md. Travels to Spelman College Museum of Art (2012).

**PERFORMANCE**

Kiss, with Ulysses Jenkins and Senga Nengudi, Hammer Museum, Blackbox Theater, October 2.  
Dancing in the Street, a Matriarch project for “Be Black Baby,” Recess Gallery, New York, April 1.  
See Life, a Matriarch project for “Flux This!” for Museum of Modern Art Education Department, New York, March 25.  
Africa, four 30-second performances at the opening of Material Girls, Reginald Lewis Museum, Baltimore, Md.

**2012 GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Tex. (2012). Travels to Studio Museum in Harlem and New York University’s Grey Art Gallery (2013–14); Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis, Minn. (2014–15); Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (2015).  
Cinema Remixed and Reloaded 2.0, Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba.  
Romare Bearden Centennial, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

**PERFORMANCE**

Women’s Work, as a part of Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Tex., November 17.  
Boxes, Performed as a part of a day of performance curated by Clifford Owens. PS1, Long Island City, N.Y.

**2013** MH becomes an Artist-in-Residence at the University of Delaware, Newark. She sits on a panel with Ken Johnson, Michael Brenson and Joan Waltemath entitled, “The Position of the Critic,” Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Md.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

American Beauty, curated by William Villalongo, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.  
Hassinger & Clark: Boxes, Combs & Constellations, Mechanical Hall Gallery at University of Delaware, Newark.  
Ashe to Amen, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, Baltimore, Md.  
Selections from the Permanent Collection at the BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport, organized by the Reginald Lewis Museum, Baltimore, Md.  
Heavy Metal: Joseph Beckles, Charles Dickson, Melvin Edwards, Maren Hassinger, John Outterbridge, Garboushian Gallery, Beverly Hills, Calif.

**PERFORMANCE**

Dancing Outside the Box, collaborative dance with Kimberly Schroeder as a part of “Hassinger and Clark: Boxes, Combs and Constellations,” University of Delaware Museums, Mechanical Hall Gallery, Newark, September 18.  
Women’s Work, performed as a part of “Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art,” Grey Art Gallery, New York, September 10.  
Together, performed as a part of the “Now Dig This! From Los Angeles to New York Symposium,” Museum of Modern Art, New York, February 8.  
Kiss, with Ulysses Jenkins and Senga Nengudi, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, N.Y., February 10.

**PUBLIC ART**

Artpark, Lewiston, N.Y.

**2014** MH sits on the panel with Dawoud Bey, Torkwase Dyson, Jennie C. Jones, Richard Hunt, Tameka Norris, and William Villalongo, entitled,

“The Past Is Present: Black Artists and the Issue of Abstraction,” Black Artists Retreat, Chicago, Ill. She participates in “Carrie Mae Weems LIVE: Past Tense/Future Perfect,” at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

#### SOLO EXHIBITION

Maren Hassinger, Reginald Ingraham Gallery, Los Angeles.

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Poor Working Conditions, curated by Claire Grube, Martos Gallery, New York.

Cultural Guerillas, Hudson Guild Gallery, New York.

#### PERFORMANCE

Olympia’s Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity, performance of Lorraine O’Grady’s writing as a part of “Future Feminism,” The Hole, New York, September 21.

2015 Hassinger re-creates many of her sculptures for her solo exhibition *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming* at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art.

#### SOLO EXHIBITION

Maren Hassinger... Dreaming, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, Ga.

#### PERFORMANCE

Women’s Work, performed during the Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Activism Conference, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art.

## Maren Hassinger Publications and Catalogues

compiled by  
KRISTIN D. JUAREZ

#### INTERVIEWS & WRITINGS

Dimling Cochran, Rebecca. “Review of *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming*.” *Sculpture Magazine*. Forthcoming.

Jones, Mary. “Maren Hassinger.” *Bomb Magazine*, February 23, 2015. <http://bombmagazine.org/article/0829120/maren-hassinger>.

Hassinger, Maren. “Rock Steady Baby.” Digital publication, in conjunction with Black Artists’ Retreat, Chicago, Ill., August 22–23, 2013.

Malinson, Constance. “Inside the Artist’s Studio—Maren Hassinger.” *Times Quotidian*, October 19, 2011. [http://www.timesquotidian.com/2011/10/19/inside-the-artist-studio\\_maren-hassinger](http://www.timesquotidian.com/2011/10/19/inside-the-artist-studio_maren-hassinger).

Rodgers, Dylan. “Art of Harlem: Maren Hassinger.” MarcusMuelsson.com, September 22, 2011. <http://marcussamuelsson.com/news/art-of-harlem-maren-hassinger>.

Channing Jones, Allison. “Studio Visit—Maren & Ava Hassinger.” *Studio* (summer–fall 2011): 47–48.

Castro, Alex. “Eye to Eye: Maren Hassinger.” *Urbanite*, September 10, 2010: 98.

Hassinger, Maren, and Leslie King-Hammond. “Arlene Raven: Critic, Advocate, Arts Activist, and Friend.” *Arlene Raven’s Legacy Critical Matrix: The Princeton Journal of Women, Gender and Culture* 17 (spring 2008): 132–35.

Dorsey, John. “Cutting Up With: Maren Hassinger, Chief of Sculpture at MICA.” *The Baltimore Sun*, Sunday, December 20, 1998, 3F.

James, Curtia. "Interview with Maren Hassinger." *Art Papers* (January–February 1994): 6–8.

Hassinger, Maren. *Artist and Influence*, Lorraine O'Grady. Interviewer for Hatch-Billops Collection. March 12, 1993: 20–32.

Slivka, Rose C. S. "From the Studio." *The East Hampton Star*, September 9, 1993: 118.

#### SELECTED REVIEWS

Watts, Gabbie. "Artist Maren Hassinger On The Evolution Of 'Women's Work'" WABE 90.1FM, Aired March 27, 2015. <http://wabe.org/post/artist-maren-hassinger-evolution-womens-work>.

O'Neill, Gail. "Maren Hassinger Transforms Nature into Sensory Meditations in 'Dreaming,' at Spelman." *ArtsAtl.com*, March 12, 2015. <http://www.artsatl.com/2015/03/maren-hassinger>.

Richmond, Susan. "The Material Distillation of Dreams: Maren Hassinger at Spelman Museum." *Burnaway.org*, February 27, 2015. <http://burnaway.org/review/material-distillation-dreams-maren-hassinger-selman-mfa>.

Hutchinson, Christopher. "Postcolonial Thought: Material & Spirit—Maren Hassinger at Spelman Museum." *Creative Thresholds*, February 26, 2015. <http://creativethresholds.com/tag/spelman-college-museum-of-fine-art>.

Overby, Jason. "Review: Maren Hassinger . . . Dreaming." *Maroon Tiger*, February 20, 2015. <http://thamaroontiger.com/review-maren-hassinger-dreaming>.

Frater, Sally. "Critic's Picks: 'Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art.'" *Artforum.com*, February 11, 2013.

McClintock, Dinah. "MATERIAL GIRLS." *Art Papers Magazine* 36, no. 6 (November 2012): 51.

Parmer, Amanda. "Critic's Picks: 'Material Girls: Contemporary Black Women Artists.'" *Artforum.com*, October 25, 2012.

Cash, Stephanie. "Review: Tires, love letters, hair combs and more are stuff of art or Spelman's seven 'Material Girls.'" *ArtsAtl.com*, September 28, 2012. <http://www.artsatl.com/2012/09/review-material-girls>.

Feaster, Felicia. "Material Girls Show Strong Works of Art." *AccessAtlanta.com*, September 13, 2012. <http://www.accessatlanta.com/news/entertainment/arts-theater/material-girls-show-strong-works-of-art/nR7FP>.

Butler, Connie. "This Is Art—These People Are Artists: Pacific Standard Time, Conceptual Art, and Other Momentous Events from a Local Point of View." *Art Journal* 71, no. 1 (spring 2012): 38–57.

Gaines, Malik. "City after Fifty Years' Living: L.A.'s Differences in Relation." *Art Journal* 71, no. 1 (spring 2012): 88–105.

Trescott, Jacqueline. "'Material Girls': 8 African American Artists Update a Tradition." *Washington Post*, August 12, 2011.

Cochran, Rebecca. "Cinema Remixed and Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image Since 1970." *Artforum.com*, October 17, 2007.

Goodman, Jonathan. "Maren Hassinger." *Sculpture Magazine* 24 (April 2005): 73–74.

Dorsey, John. "Maren Hassinger, Artist." *Roland Park News* 6, summer 2002: 3–4.

Owens, Donna M. "An Artful Legacy." *Baltimore Magazine*, June 2002: 78–79.

Page, Judith. "New York Maren Hassinger." *Sculpture Magazine* (May 2002): 71.

Megerian, Maureen. "Entwined with Nature—The Sculpture of Maren Hassinger." *Woman's Art Journal* (fall 1996–winter 1997): 21–25.

Wei, Lilly. "Maren Hassinger at TransHudson." *Art in America* (June 1996): 106–7.

Raynor, Vivien. "Contradictions and Questions, Unresolved." *The New York Times*, Sunday, February 11, 1996.

Brenson, Michael. "Maren Hassinger." *The New York Times*, March 29, 1991: C19.

Canning, Susan M. "The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s." *Art Papers* 14, no. 6 (1990): 40.

Fox, Catherine. "Form, Materials Unit 'New History' Exhibition." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, August 10, 1990: E2.

Johnson, Ken. "Maren Hassinger at Soho 20." *Art in America* (May 1990): 244–45.

Cotter, Holland. "Black Artists: Three Shows." *Art in America* (March 1990): 164.

Raven, Arlene. "Mojotech." *The Village Voice*, March 28, 1989: 93.

Raynor, Vivien. "Modern Sculpture of 11 Black Artists at Bronx Museum." *The New York Times*, Sunday, March 26, 1989.

Artemis, Maria, U., and Merrill Elam. "NEA and Regional Site Work." *Art Papers* 10, no. 6 (November 1986): 54–55.

Woodward, Josef. "Aura of Audacity in Installations 'Blanket of Branches.'" *Santa Barbara, California, News-Press*, Saturday, July 12, 1986.

"Sculpture, Performance at Arts Forum." *Santa Barbara, California, News-Press*, Saturday, June 14, 1986: D4.

#### EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Cassel Oliver, Valerie. *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art; Essays by Yona Backer, Naomi Beckwith, Valerie Cassel Oliver, Tavia Nyong'o, Clifford Owens, Franklin Sirmans*. Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2013.

*The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation: 2011 Awards in Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking, Photography, Video and Craft Media*. New York: Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, 2012, 26–27.

Adams, Derrick, Terry Adkins, Sherman Fleming, Maren Hassinger, Stefani Jemison, Lorraine O'Grady, and Clifford Owens in conversation with Kellie Jones. In *Clifford Owens: Anthology*. By Copeland, Huey, John Bowles, Christopher Lew, and Clifford Owens. Long Island City, N.Y.: MoMA, PS1, 2012.

Fletcher, Harrell. *2012 Hammer Yearbook*. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2012: 134–35.

Jones, Kellie. *Now Dig This! Art @ Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980*. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum; University of California; Munich; New York: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2011.

Molesworth, Helen. *Dance/Draw*. Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 2011: 88–89.

Rogers Tilton, Connie, and Lindsay Charlwood. Los Angeles: *Object @ David Hammons Body Prints*. New York: Tilton Gallery, September 2011: 44, 48–53, 49, 58, 75.

Schriber, Abbe. *VideoStudio: Playback*. New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2011.

Sims, Lowery Stokes, Leslie King-Hammond, and Martina D'Alton. *The Global Africa Project*. New York: Museum of Arts and Design; Munich: Prestel, 2010: 6.

Egan, Shannon. *Maren Hassinger: Lives*. Gettysburg, Pa.: Schmucker Art Gallery, Gettysburg College, 2010.

Garay, Olga. *African American Artists in Los Angeles, A Survey*. City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, 2009.

Patel, Samir S. *30 Seconds Off an Inch*. New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2009.

Swartz, Anne, ed. *Women's Caucus for Art: Honor Awards for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts*. WCA, 2009: 4–7.

Barnwell Brownlee, Andrea, and Valerie Cassel Oliver. *Cinema Remixed @ Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image Since 1970*. Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum; Atlanta: Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 2008.

Burton, Johanna, and Anne Swartz. *Arlene Raven's Legacy, Critical Matrix, Princeton Journal of Women, Gender, and Culture* 17 (spring 2008): 132–35.

Heartney, Eleanor, and Irving Sandler, Al Miner, and Ding Ren. *Art Today in Words and Images, 21st Annual Critics' Residency Program*. Baltimore: Maryland Art Place, 2007.

Sirmans, Franklin. *Crossing the Line: African American Artists in the Jacqueline and Clarence Otis, Jr. Collection*. Winter Park, Fla.: Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, 2007.

Heartney Eleanor, and Irving Sandler. *Maryland Art Place: Art Today in Words and Images*. Baltimore: Maryland Art Place, April 2007: 10–12, 21, 37.

Bloodworth, Sandra, and William Ayres, *Along the Way: MTA Arts for Transit*, New York: Monacelli Press, 2006.

Cassel Oliver, Valerie, and Franklin Sirmans. *Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970*. Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum; New York: Distributed by Distributed Art Publishers, 2005.

Heiferman, Marvin, ed. *City Art: New York's Percent for Art Program*. Merrell, N.Y., 2005.

*Art in the Garden*. Chicago: Chicago Park District, 2004.

National Endowment for the Arts. *A Creative Legacy: A History of the National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists' Fellowship Program*. New York: Abrams, 2001: 176.

Kelly, Cindy. *Sculpture at Evergreen*. Baltimore: Evergreen House, The Johns Hopkins University, 2000.

Scott, Deirdre A., and Frank Stewart. *Passages: Contemporary Art in Transition/The Studio Museum in Harlem*. New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2000.

Murray, Mary E. *The Garden Path: Mediating Nature and Culture*. Cazenovia, N.Y.: Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, 1998.

Schimmel, Paul, and Kristine Stiles. *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object: 1949–1979*. Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art; New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998.

Torre, Susana. "Footfalls 98: Mapping the Walk." Greenport, N.Y., 1998.

Cohen De Pietro, Ann. *Eight by Eight*. Huntington, N.Y.: Heckscher Museum of Art, 1997.

Collischan, Judy. *1997 Biennial Exhibition of Public Art*. Purchase, N.Y.: Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York, 1997.

Tucker, Marcia. *Twentieth Century American Sculpture at the White House, Exhibition IV*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 1996.

Hazlewood, Carl E. *Required Nuance: Three Contemporary Sculptors*. New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1995.

Collischan, Judy, and Noah Jemisin. *Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop, A Cultural Presentation of the United States of America*. New York: Printmaking Workshop, 1994: 48.

Glenn, Constance W., ed. "Insite/Centric," in *Reconfiguring Boundaries/Defining Spaces: Maren Hassinger, Frederick Fisher, Eugenia Butler*. Long Beach, Calif.: University Art Museum, California State University Long Beach, 1994: 6–9.

Berger, Maurice. *Environmental Terror*. Baltimore: University of Maryland, 1992.

King, Elaine A. *Five Artists at the Airport, Insights into Public Art*. Pittsburgh: The Wood Street Galleries of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, 1992.

Strassfield, Christina M. *Volume: 6 Contemporary Sculptors*, East Hampton, N.Y.: Guild Hall Museum, 1992.

Collischan Van Wagner, Judy. *Maren Hassinger*. Long Island, N.Y.: Hillwood Art Gallery, Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus, 1991.

Douglas, Robert L. *African-American Contemporary Art*. Palermo, Sicily: Università di Palermo, Cibellina, Museo Civico d'Arte Contemporanea, 1990: 78–79.

Peraza, Tucker & Conwill. *The Decade Show*. Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, The New Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1990: xxxiii.

Steinbaum, Bernice. *American Resources: Selected Works of African-American Artists*, New York: Bernice Steinbaum Gallery; Nashville, Tenn.: Fisk University, Downtown Arts Gallery, and Vanderbilt University, 1989.

Verre, Philip. *Traditions and Transformations: Contemporary Afro-American Sculpture*. New York: The Bronx Museum of The Arts, 1989: 7, 9, 12, 30–33, 59, 62, 70.

Wright, Beryl. *The Appropriate Object*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Albright-Knox Gallery; Detroit, Mich.: Detroit Institute of the Arts; San Jose, Calif.: San Jose Museum of Art; Louisville, Ky.: The J. B. Speed Museum, 1989: 1, 12–19.

Yau, John. *Air Lines*. Brookville, N.Y.: Hillwood Art Gallery, Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus, 1989: 7, 9–10, 25.

Bibby, Dierdre L. *Who's Uptown: Harlem '87*. New York: The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1988: 17, 52, 54.

Edwards, Susan, Vincent Longo, Maurice Berger, and Rosalind E. Krauss. "Anti-Simulation: Materialism and Abstraction," in *A Debate on Abstractions*. New York: The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, 1988: 47–61.

King-Hammond, Leslie, and Lowery Stokes Sims. *Art As a Verb*. Baltimore: Maryland Institute College of Art, 1989.

Martignoni, Enrico. *Sculptors Working Socrates Sculpture Park, May 22, 1988–March 15, 1989*, Long Island City, N.Y.: Socrates Sculpture Park, 1989.

Carson, Julie, and Howard McCaleb. *Blue Angel: The Decline of Sexual Stereotypes in Post-Feminist Sculpture*. Bronx, N.Y.: Longwood Arts Gallery; Birmingham Ala.: Space One Eleven, 1988: 11, 16–17.

*Art in Public Places*. Los Angeles: Museum of African American Art, 1987.

Heiss, Alanna. *National and International Studio Programs 1986–1987*. New York: The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc., P.S. 1, and The Clocktower, 1987: 36–37.

Tully, Judd. '87 *Artpark Visual Arts Program*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Artpark, 1987.

Gedeon, Lucinda H. *Artists Select: Contemporary Perspectives by Afro-American Artists*. Tempe: Arizona State University Art Collections, 1986: 16.

Onorato, Ronald J. "NEA Site Works," in *33rd Arts Festival of Atlanta 1986*. Atlanta, Ga.: Arts Festival of Atlanta, 1986: 5, 8, 9, 13.

Moore, Ethel, and William D. Paul, Jr. *32nd Arts Festival of Atlanta 1985*. Atlanta, Ga.: Arts Festival of Atlanta, 1985: 9, 16, 17, 27.

Douglas, Robert L., and Jeff Donaldson. *Beyond 1984: Contemporary Perspectives on American Art*. Athens, Ohio: Trisolini Gallery, Ohio University, Athens, 1985.

Fonvielle-Bontemps, Jacqueline. *Choosing: An Exhibit of Changing Perspectives in Modern Art and Art Criticism by Black Americans, 1925–1985*. Hampton, Va.: Hampton University, 1985: 42, 89.

McCaleb, Howard. *Sticks @ Stones, Modern/Post-Modern Sculpture*. New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1984.

Patton, Sharon F. *East/West: Contemporary American Art*. Los Angeles, Calif.: California Afro-American Museum, 1984.

Hart, Katherine. *Gallery Six—Maren Hassinger: On Dangerous Ground*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1981.

#### ANTHOLOGIES & RESOURCES

Maren Hassinger Artist Website. <http://marenhassinger.com>.

African American Performance Art Archive. <http://aapaa.org>.

Phelan, Peggy. *Live Art in LA: Performance in Southern California, 1970–1983*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Lyn, Elizabetha Belinski, and Corinne Nelson Kienholz. *L.A. Rising, SoCal Artists Before 1980*. Los Angeles: California International Arts Foundation, 2010.

Patton, Sharon F. *African-American Art*. Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1998.

King-Hammond, Lesley, ed. *Gumbo Ya Ya: Anthology of Contemporary African-American Women Artists*. New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1995.

#### PUBLIC & CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

##### AT&T

Brown Capital Management, Baltimore, Md.

Caltrans, Los Angeles, Calif.

California African American Museum, Los Angeles, Calif.

California State University, University Gallery, Long Beach Campus

Greater Pittsburgh International Airport, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Calif.

James E. Lewis Museum of Morgan State University, Baltimore, Md.

Mobil Oil

Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Oreg.

Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, Baltimore, Md.

Seattle Transit Authority, Seattle, Wash.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, Calif.

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, N.Y.

Williams College Art Museum, Williamstown, Mass.

## Maren Hassinger... Dreaming Exhibition Checklist

<p><i>Birthright</i>, 2005 Video, 12:10 minutes Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>Daily Mask</i>, 2004 16mm film transferred to video 3:22 minutes Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>On Dangerous Ground</i>, 1981 (reconfigured with <i>Hedge</i>, 1982) Wire rope Dimensions variable Courtesy the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History &amp; Culture. Gift of Maren Hassinger. <i>Hedge</i>, courtesy the artist.</p>	<p><i>Wind</i>, 2014 Video projection and mosquito netting 16:22 minutes Courtesy the artist</p>
<p><i>Blanket of Branches</i>, 1986/2015 Miscellaneous tree branches hung as a canopy from the ceiling Dimensions variable Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>The Dream</i>, 2001/2015 Bed canopy made from preserved red bud leaves Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>Sit Upons</i>, 2010/2015 <i>The New York Times</i> newspapers Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>Wrenching News</i>, 2010/2015 Shredded, twisted, and wrapped newspaper (<i>The New York Times</i>) 7 feet × 7 feet × 1 foot (wall) 6 feet × 6 feet × 1 foot (floor) Courtesy the artist</p>
<p>Senga Nengudi <i>Dance Card</i>, 1986 Video documentation of choreographed piece by Senga Nengudi performed by Maren Hassinger, Ulysses Jenkins, and Franklin Parker, with music by Butch Morris under <i>Blanket of Branches</i> by Maren Hassinger, at Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, Calif., 1986. Digital transfer from VHS, color, sound, 5:24 minutes Courtesy Senga Nengudi</p>	<p><i>Leaning</i>, 1980 Wire and wire rope Dimensions variable Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>The Veil Between Us</i>, 2007 Twisted and knotted newspapers (<i>The New York Times</i>) 5 feet × 26 feet × 6 inches Courtesy the artist</p>	
<p><i>Consolation</i>, 1996 Wire and wire rope Dimensions variable Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>Love</i>, 2008/2015 Pink plastic shipping bags each filled with a love note and inflated with human breath Dimensions variable Courtesy the artist</p>	<p><i>The Weight of Dreams</i>, 1995/2015 Paper and chicken wire Dimensions variable Courtesy the artist</p>	



COPYRIGHT PAGE TK