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VOGUE

There's Plenty of Great Art to See (and Instagram) Outdoors in New York This Summer

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by EVE MACSWEENEY

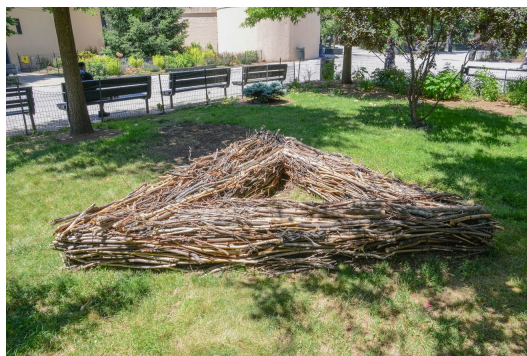


Maren Hassinger, *Monuments* in Marcus Garvey Park, Harlem
Photo: Adam Reich

If you can hit that sweet spot of gloriously breezy summer days between full-on heat-slamming New York scorchers, what could be more delightful than meandering around the city's green spaces and waterways on the trail of magical artists working outdoors?

I recently experienced two such enchantments. The first was *Monuments*, a sculptural installation by Maren Hassinger in 120th Street's Marcus Garvey Park, unveiled on the artist's 71st birthday a few days ago. It was commissioned by the Studio Museum in Harlem, which has been busy treating us to satellite projects while its new, David Adjaye-designed building is under construction, and it speaks eloquently to its local context as well as to the world at large.

The park, which covers four blocks north to south and two east to west, nestled between Harlem and East Harlem, evinces a particular sense of ownership in local residents, some of whom literally live inside it. It has high and low areas, curving pathways, large granite rock formations, a swimming pool, a baseball diamond, playgrounds, and an amphitheater. For her project, says Hassinger, an artist known for her work with both found objects and nature, "I basically installed the sculptures in a big circle around the perimeter of the park, and everything is related to where it is placed."



Maren Hassinger, *Monuments* in Marcus Garvey Park, Harlem
Photo: Adam Reich

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Made from branches pruned from trees around the city, including on the High Line and at Wave Hill, the sculptures were fashioned on armatures and shaped to echo their contexts, from a large wreath on a nearly circular lawn to a checkerboard cube sited close to the chess players' area. All were given nicknames ("River," "Mountain," "Triangle,") as Hassinger worked for three weeks with volunteers to build the pieces she'd spent many months designing, which make beautiful but subtle interventions in the landscape.



Portrait of Maren Hassinger, part of the "Supper Club" series, *The Spiritualist*, 2014
Photo: © Elia Alba

"The way they're placed in their environment in a binding relationship is the way I want to feel about people around us," she says. "We're all bound by the place we live in, and we're all meant to be here, like the birds that are picking around the place." She relates these feelings to the horror of separation being perpetrated at the Mexican border. "It's about equality," she says. "And for the people who sit on these benches or walk by with their children, it's a moment of contemplation."