

ARTFORUM

Maren Hassinger

SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY

Maren Hassinger's stunning exhibition "As One" covered more than forty years of the artist's elegant and unassuming productions, and left me wanting more. (Thankfully, the Studio Museum in Harlem is presenting her sculptures in Marcus Garvey Park through 2019, and a large-scale exhibition organized by Los Angeles's Art + Practice and the Baltimore Museum of Art opened at the latter this past summer). The eight works on view were spun from everyday materials, such as pink plastic bags (inflated with the breath of the artist and gallery staff) and strips of muslin dyed with tea and coffee to resemble an array of flesh tones. Girded by a palpable conceptual rigor, Hassinger's gestures nonetheless remain tender. Take *Consolation*, 1974/2015, a sculpture made from ninety-one short pieces of wire rope, each partially unraveled so that it fans out like a flower. Pinned against the wall with a single bracket and hung in a grid, the delicate forms, with their pencil-thin shadows had the mesmerizing effect of an early Sol LeWitt



Maren Hassinger.
Our Lives, 2008/
2018, newspaper,
72 x 72".

from series of actions and collections of materials that could, at any moment, come apart. *Citizens*, 2017, which was installed in the gallery's small back room, foregrounded the political dimensions of her project most overtly. The work is made of four large photographs taken from the *New York Times* and scaled up, each pinned to a separate wall. The restrained presentation serves as a counterpoint to a pair of traumatic events occurring in July 2016, when a policeman in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, killed Philando Castile, and a sniper murdered five officers in Dallas at a protest against police brutality. The images also feature three masked men carrying a sign that reads STOP KILLING US; a guy in a cowboy hat and an American-flag-and-bald-eagle T-shirt staring defiantly at an unseen crowd; two burly officers holding their hats in tribute to their fallen colleagues; and a group of dancers clasping hands with their heads bowed. Cropped to fit a vertical format, printed in black-and-white, and severed from their captions, the images—culled from the endless stream of news cycles documenting a broken country—are nonetheless painfully familiar.

The common ground of rage, sadness, and determination that Hassinger identifies in these pictures makes the case that no matter how divided the country is, at some point we will need to come together "as one," just as all those seemingly throwaway items do in her sculptures. The artist is well aware that such a prompt to unify might come off as trite, like "a hippie carryover from the 1960s," as she put it in a 2015 *Bomb* magazine interview, but she doesn't care: "I want it to be an emotional statement." With *Citizens*, Hassinger has risked sincerity, and succeeded in maintaining it.

—Rachel Churner

drawing. But the scuffs on the wall where the wire rubbed against the paint brought it somewhere more imperfect and vulnerable, repudiating any sense of formal rigidity. *Our Lives*, 2008/2018, a six-foot-wide chrysanthemum made of torn and twisted pages of the *New York Times*, was equally meditative. It had a beguiling aesthetic quality tempered by the legibility of certain pages: a paragraph about Cambridge Analytica, for example, could be made out amid the jumble of words. This combination of beauty grounded in current events is characteristic of the artist's work.

Hassinger's pieces result