

Tillet, Salamishah. "How the Studio Museum in Harlem Transformed the Art World Forever," *Harper's Bazaar*, 26 February 2021.

BAZAAR

– THE ARTISTS –

Maren Hassinger



Proenza Schouler dress. JOHN EDMONDS

L.A. native Maren Hassinger, a Studio Museum artist-in-residence in the mid-1980s, saw the program as a chance to live and work in New York, which at the time was in the throes of a creative art boom fueled by superstar artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Jeff Koons, Cindy Sherman, and Julian Schnabel.



Maren Hassinger, *Monument 6 (Square)*, Installation View, 2018. Branches on armature, 84 x 84 x 84 in. The Studio Museum in Harlem in Partnership with NYC Parks, Marcus Garvey Park, NYC. Courtesy Susan Inglett Gallery, New York. Photo: Steve Brown

"I was living in my studio on San Vicente Boulevard with my husband, Peter, who was a writer, and I wanted the opportunity to come to New York," Hassinger recalls. "That was the motivation for applying, because it gave me a stipend so I could live in New York—plus the job of actually having a studio that I could go to every day. So I left Peter and I left Los Angeles and moved to New York."

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For Hassinger, the go-go, larger-than-life energy of the '80s art world occasionally proved inescapable—even in her own studio. "One day, without any to-do or anything, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat showed up along with Andy's bodyguard, who was very slight and appeared to have no weapons—I mean, he was much slighter than I was, and I'm five foot three," Hassinger recalls. "Basquiat seemed to like some drawings on the wall of my studio mate, Candida Alvarez, but they were actually the drawings of a child she knew. They weren't actually her work. ... And Basquiat was kind of turning around and dancing and exclaiming about these drawings. And then Andy was sitting next to me, and I was making these collages out of preserved leaves that I had found. He said they were quite beautiful. I do not remember what they said to Charles Burwell, who was a painter and the other person in the studio," she says. "I don't know whether he was there or not. I think he was there. But it was so shocking that maybe he just couldn't say anything."

After completing her residency, Hassinger set out to find a gallery. Instead, she took a teaching job in Baltimore. It would be more than 25 years before she got one, the Susan Inglett Gallery in Chelsea. "After my kids were born, I moved out of the city for 20 years," she says. "As much as I liked teaching, which I liked very much, I really always held it in my head that one day, I would have a gallery in New York and a studio in New York, and I would see some prosperity in that. And that is exactly what happened. But it did not happen until I retired from teaching and moved back to New York."

To Hassinger, an artistic legacy isn't built around just the work you make or show, but everything you do. "For those 20 years that I had all the students, there were certain ideas that I wanted to instill. And I think that many of the students who have gone on to be practicing artists have kept those things in mind. And they have to do with never stopping—to just keep working. And trying as much as you can to talk about how you feel in relationship to the world, and figuring out a way to represent that," she says. "I'd like to say that we are all related," she muses. "I truly believe that. And I believe that if we all lived lives in which all of us believed that, the world would be a better place."