

Martin, Alison. "Maren Hassinger explores relationship between industrial and natural worlds," *Fine Art Globe*, 11 June 2021.

## Fine Art GLOBE



A common theme that runs through most of Maren Hassinger's work is the relationship between the world of nature and the world built by humans.

A collection of new works featured in a show at the Susan Inglett Gallery in New York, titled "We Are All Vessels," explores the theme of a shared environment.

The exhibition comprises five new installations constructed with fabric and steel wire rope. Three of the pieces are suspended from the gallery's walls, their height gradually decreasing. Their shared steel frames, fabricated by sculptor Michael Benevenia, who studied at the Rinehart School of Sculpture in Baltimore while Hassinger was director there, are covered with different colors of transparent polyester fabric.



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The pieces, contorted into vessels of different shapes, are titled based on the color of their corresponding fabrics—"Red," "Beige," and "Brown." "Beige" takes the form of a vase with handles on either side of the opening; its bottom evokes the notion of a mermaid swaying its tail in the water. On the other hand, the "Red" sculpture is much more spread out like an upside-down umbrella, while "Brown" resembles a pore-like opening.

Hassinger's two other installations are situated on the gallery floor. They are also made with armature frames by Benevenia combined with Hassinger's steel wire rope. One of these works, "Large Body," takes the shape of a giant, convex pot with the widest part encompassing the majority of the piece and then is curved inward and then out again to emphasize the opening. The other work, "Small Body," is uprooted further from the ground than "Large Body" before gradually becoming wide. Rather than providing an opening, it gets narrower on top when all the steel-wire rope moves together toward the top revealing all of its wild, untamed end. Also included in the show are two large-scale rough sketches titled "Amphora I" and "Amphora II," on which the sculptures in her show are based.



What Hassinger tries to accomplish is to help the viewer see the relationship between the natural world and the one that's man-made. She incorporates her background in dance in her sculptures by giving them a sensation of how we as humans move and adapt to our surroundings, as evidenced by the flowing fabric on her hanging pieces.

She often uses steel wire to make things such as rope, typically made from hemp and other natural fibers, to convey the impact the industrial world has on nature and the connection between the two.



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Hassinger's work has often been called "ecological," but she insists there's more to her work than that. She has said, "I don't think my work has so much to do with ecology but focuses on elements, or even problems—social and environmental—that we all share, in which we all have a stake."

The African-American Hassinger, who now lives in New York City, was born and raised in Los Angeles then attended Bennington College in Vermont, where she started as a dance student but later shifted to sculpture, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1969.

After a year in New York, Hassinger eventually moved back to Los Angeles and took classes at UCLA, earning a Master's Degree in 1973 in the university's fiber arts program.

Hassinger's work was featured in numerous exhibitions across the country in museums and galleries and various public parks and spaces. She served as director of the Rinehart School of Graduate Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore from 1997-2017.