

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS **MAREN HASSINGER: THE SPIRIT OF THINGS**

"I am concerned now, more than ever... with issues of equality. These become apparent in my attempt to find balances 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."

—Maren Hassinger¹

BALTIMORE, MD (June 28, 2018)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) and Art + Practice (A+P) present a solo exhibition by artist Maren Hassinger in Baltimore from July 18 to November 25, 2018. *Maren Hassinger: The Spirit of Things* features a career-spanning selection of sculptures, drawings, photographs of performances, and videos that explore the emotional dynamics of relationships amongst different communities of people and the environments in which they live. The exhibition will be presented in the BMA's contemporary wing.



"This is the third exhibition the BMA has co-organized with Art + Practice," said BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director Christopher Bedford. "With her Los Angeles roots, her ties to Baltimore through the Maryland Institute College of Art, and a distinguished and varied career, Maren Hassinger is the perfect subject for this bi-coastal presentation."

Hassinger (b. 1947, Los Angeles) is the Emeritus Director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, which she led for 20 years. During a career that has spanned more than four decades, Hassinger has explored relationships between the industrial and natural worlds in a practice that is both meditative and critical. Since the 1970s, her sculpture has incorporated common materials associated with manufacturing, mass media, and commerce. In abstract compositions such as *Interlock* (1972-73), *The Veil Between Us* (2007/2018), and *Embrace* (2018), she transforms wire rope, newspapers, and plastic bags into evocations of the beauty found in conditions often dismissed as blighted or marginal.

Hassinger is also a formative practitioner of performance art and site-specific interventions, collaborating with Senga Nengudi and other Los Angeles-based artists during the 1970s. Her performances involve dance, as well as movements observed from everyday life, and investigate communal activity and commonalities amongst groups of people. This important body of work will be documented in photographs within the show. Additionally, Hassinger has produced moving videos that address race, gender, and other aspects of identity. Two of the videos show the artist exploring these themes through interactions with her family members. In *Birthright* (2005), she learns for the first time about aspects of her family's history by interviewing her uncle. In *Wind* (2013), she engages in improvisational choreography with her daughter, artist Ava Hassinger, in a beautiful seaside setting.

"Maren's profound work connects Los Angeles and Baltimore in vibrant and creative ways. We are delighted to provide communities in both cities with the opportunity to learn more about her art in this celebration of her multi-faceted career," said BMA Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Kristen Hileman. "It was extraordinary to work closely with Maren on a project that has such deep personal resonance for her."

¹ Maren Hassinger, "Passing Through," in *Maren Hassinger... Dreaming*, ed. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee and Anne Collins Smith (Atlanta: Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 2015), pg. 20.

Maren Hassinger: The Spirit of Things is curated by Kristen Hileman, BMA Senior Curator of Contemporary Art. This exhibition is presented by The Baltimore Museum of Art and Art + Practice.

MAREN HASSINGER



Maren Hassinger's life and career bridge Los Angeles and Baltimore. An LA native and 1973 UCLA graduate, Hassinger was active with an experimental group of artists in the city, including Senga Nengudi and David Hammons, during the 1970s. Hassinger's work of this time, as well as that of her colleagues, has recently been chronicled in Kellie Jones's book *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s*. Hassinger then moved to the East Coast, spending time in New York City and East Hampton before becoming the Director of the Rinehart School of Graduate Sculpture at Baltimore's Maryland Institute College of Art, a position she held from 1997 to 2018. Alongside her solo work, Hassinger has continued collaborations with Nengudi and performed with her daughter, artist Ava Hassinger, under the name "Matriarch." She is now based in New York City. Hassinger has received numerous honors including awards and grants from Anonymous Was a Woman, the International Association of Art Critics, the Gottlieb Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She was the subject of a 2015 retrospective at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta. Her work was also included in the group exhibitions *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980* (originating at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and traveling to MOMA PS1, Long Island City; and Williams College, Williamstown, MA) and *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* (originating at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; and traveling to the Grey Art Gallery and Studio Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco), as well as the 2017 exhibition *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85* at the Brooklyn Museum.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000-square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The museum is located three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor in a park-like setting in the heart of Charles Village, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

ART + PRACTICE

Conceived and founded by artist Mark Bradford, philanthropist and collector Eileen Harris Norton, and community activist Allan DiCastro, Art + Practice (A+P) is an arts and education private operating foundation based in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. A+P's mandate is to create a developmental platform that, on one hand, supports the acquisition of practical skills for foster youth, and, on the other, stresses the importance of creative activity within a larger social context.

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