

## Lynda Benglis

b. 1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana

### Two

1973

Gauze, paint, plaster, mica, metal, and plastic sequins  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,  
Gift, Mrs. Andrew P. Fuller 76.2259

In 1969, Benglis began using vividly pigmented liquid latex as her medium, pouring it on the floor to create meandering fluid sculptures. This method translates the drip and pour techniques of Jackson Pollock and Color Field painters, such as Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis, into three-dimensional space. Part homage, part parody, the resulting work challenges the division between painting and sculpture, an idea Benglis extended to more substantial volumes in a series of knotted works, including this wall sculpture and the nearby *Juliet* (1974).

Still engaged with the body but transforming artistic action to form, *Two* is composed of tightly wound tubes of cotton bunting. The work appears at once compressed and in the process of inflating, a crumbled torso reanimating its wall-bound form. The surface features splattered metalized paint, an attribute that Benglis has called “Pollock-izing.” Yet in Benglis’s treatment, the splattered canvas is jubilantly decorated with “ultra vulgar flakes of sparkle . . . drawing attention to surface but also refracting it . . . denying the form through surface.”



## Lynda Benglis

b. 1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana

### Juliet

1974

Aluminum, plaster, and aluminum screen

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Gift, Andrew Powie Fuller and

Geraldine Spreckels Fuller Collection 2009.4

Benglis's *Knot* sculptures, a series she began in the 1970s, consist of a wire mesh armature covered with fabric and plaster sprayed with metallized paint.

Their shapes, each a unique and entangled iteration, are inspired by human limbs, gestures, and languages.

*Juliet* is from the series that Benglis titled after the NATO phonetic alphabet, a system widely used by the military during radio correspondence in which each letter is represented by a word: for example, Alpha for A, Bravo for B, Juliett for J. The work is also inspired by an Andean communication and recording device called a quipu, which consists of knotted strings or cords grouped together and encoded with numeric, linguistic, or other significant meaning to the culture using it. Serially produced and scaled for an intimate connection with the viewer, *Juliet* hovers between two mediums, reinforcing the artist's preoccupation with materiality and the evocative potential of sculpture.



**Maren Hassinger**

b. 1947, Los Angeles

**Untitled**

1972/2020

Rope

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchased through prior gift of Judge and

Mrs. Samuel I. Rosenman, 2020

In her five-decade career that spans sculpture, installation, video, and performance, Hassinger has created work about personal and social transformations. Her early work is informed by her undergraduate major in sculpture at Bennington College in Vermont, her training as a dancer, and her study in fiber structure at the University of California, Los Angeles. Bringing the three disciplines together in the 1970s, Hassinger explored motion by using fiber and wire rope in her sculptures that were sometimes activated by performances. She has described her practice as a hybrid of movement and static work: “I cannot make sculpture without movement myself . . . and my body’s relation to space around it.”

For *Untitled*, the dense, weighty lengths of nautical rope have been hand spliced to form loops at each end. The vitality of the sculpture, which hangs languorously from the ceiling, is made visceral. Some ropes kiss the surface of the floor while others lie prone, as if freed from the ceiling and exhausted by their material weight. *Untitled* may recall the twists of natural elements, such as climbing vines, hair, or an umbilical cord, as well as more complex associations, including the looped ropes of a noose. Labor and process are also central to Hassinger’s sculpture. *Untitled* evokes the dockyard task of hauling rope, and foregrounds the artist’s own physical efforts of creation.



## Senga Nengudi

b. 1943, Chicago

### Performance Piece

1978/2013

Gelatin silver prints and triptych

A.P. 1/1, edition of 5

Photographs by Harmon Outlaw

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Purchased with funds contributed by the

Photography Council, with additional funds

contributed by Manuel de Santaren 2019.20

Nengudi's practice blurs the line between performance and sculpture by extending the idioms of Post-Minimalism and exploring new models of embodiment through abstraction. A key figure in the 1970s African-American art community, Nengudi produced her first pieces amid the confrontational culture of the civil rights movement and the second-wave feminist activism. *Performance Piece* portrays Maren Hassinger, a fellow artist whose sculpture appears in this gallery, activating a work from Nengudi's landmark series of sculptural installations (*RSVP*, 1975–).

The installations include used nylon mesh pantyhose pinned to the wall in splayed biomorphic configurations. Over the course of three photographs, Hassinger entangles herself in a nylon pantyhose construction and stretches it into new shapes as she is restrained by its tendrils. Hassinger uses the gallery floor and wall as sites of gravity and resistance, imparting a sense of struggle to the call-and-response action between herself and Nengudi's sculpture. Her actions emphasize Nengudi's original intent for the sculptural work: to embody the physical tension and inelasticity of women's bodies by reflecting on, in Nengudi's words, "the restrictive settings we as women find ourselves in—inwardly and outwardly imposed."



## Robert Morris

b. 1931, Kansas City, Missouri

d. 2018, Kingston, New York

### Untitled (Black Felt)

ca. 1969

Felt

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Panza Collection 91.3803

Morris's sculpture *Untitled (Black Felt)* is composed of six felt strips arranged in concentric arcs. Morris draped each length of fabric over an armature placed in the wall in a vertical series so that the apex of each arc is at a different height relative to the floor.

The ends of the strips gracefully rest on the ground, one on top of the other. This piece, similar to Morris's other felt works, embodies his notion of Anti-Form.

Instead of executing a predetermined design, Morris allowed the final outcome of a sculpture to be determined as much by his simple actions (cutting and draping the material) as by gravity and chance. A departure from the earlier unitary geometric forms of the Minimalist sculptures that he created in the 1960s, Morris's felt works, including *Untitled (Pink Felt)* (1970) on view nearby, foreground the physical qualities of his materials and the artist's physical process.

"Disengagement with preconceived enduring forms and orders for things is a positive assertion," he writes in his 1968 essay "Anti Form." "It is part of the work's refusal to continue estheticizing form by dealing with it as a prescribed end."



## **Robert Morris**

b. 1931, Kansas City, Missouri

d. 2018, Kingston, New York

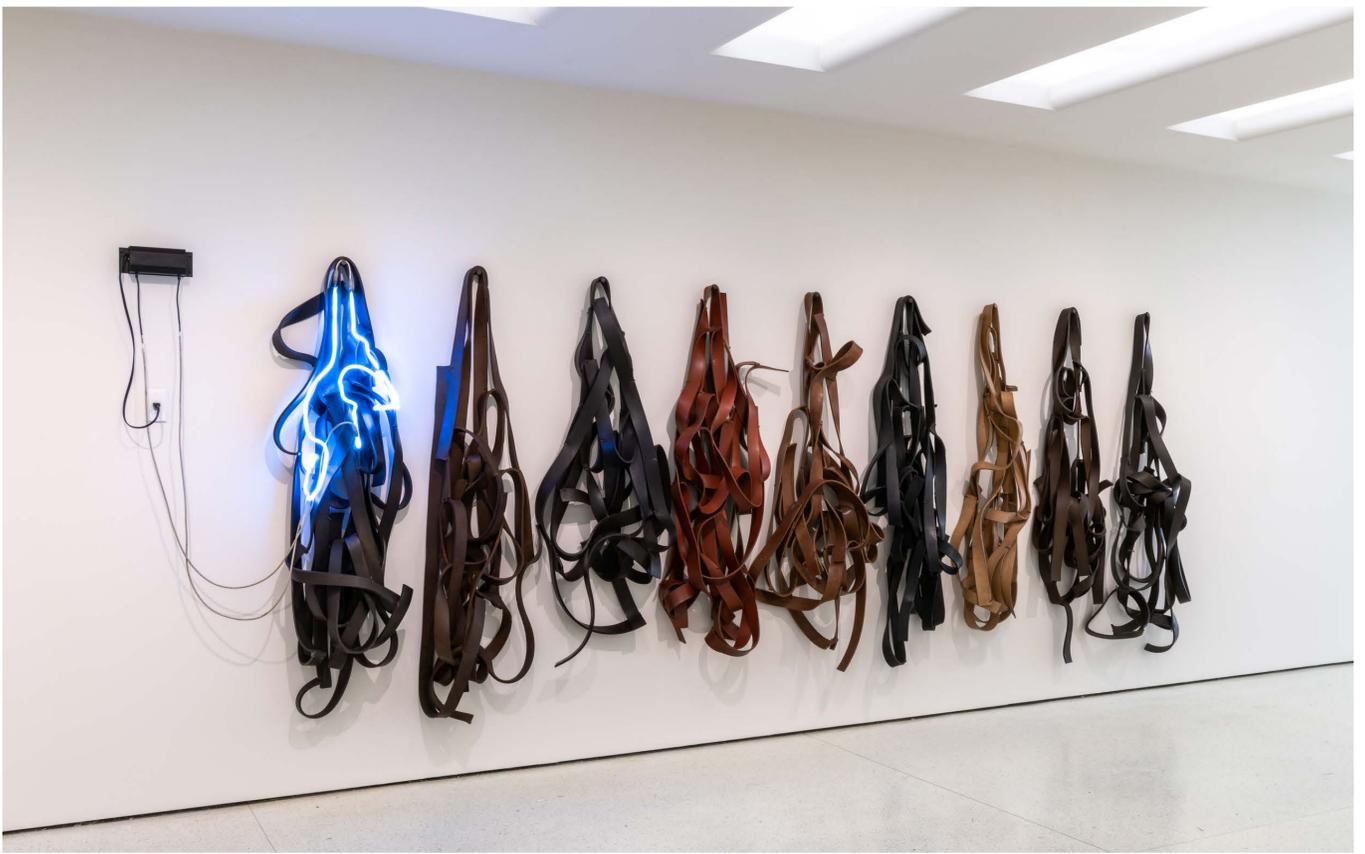
### **Untitled (Pink Felt)**

1970

Felt

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

Panza Collection 91.3804



## Richard Serra

b. 1938, San Francisco

### Belts

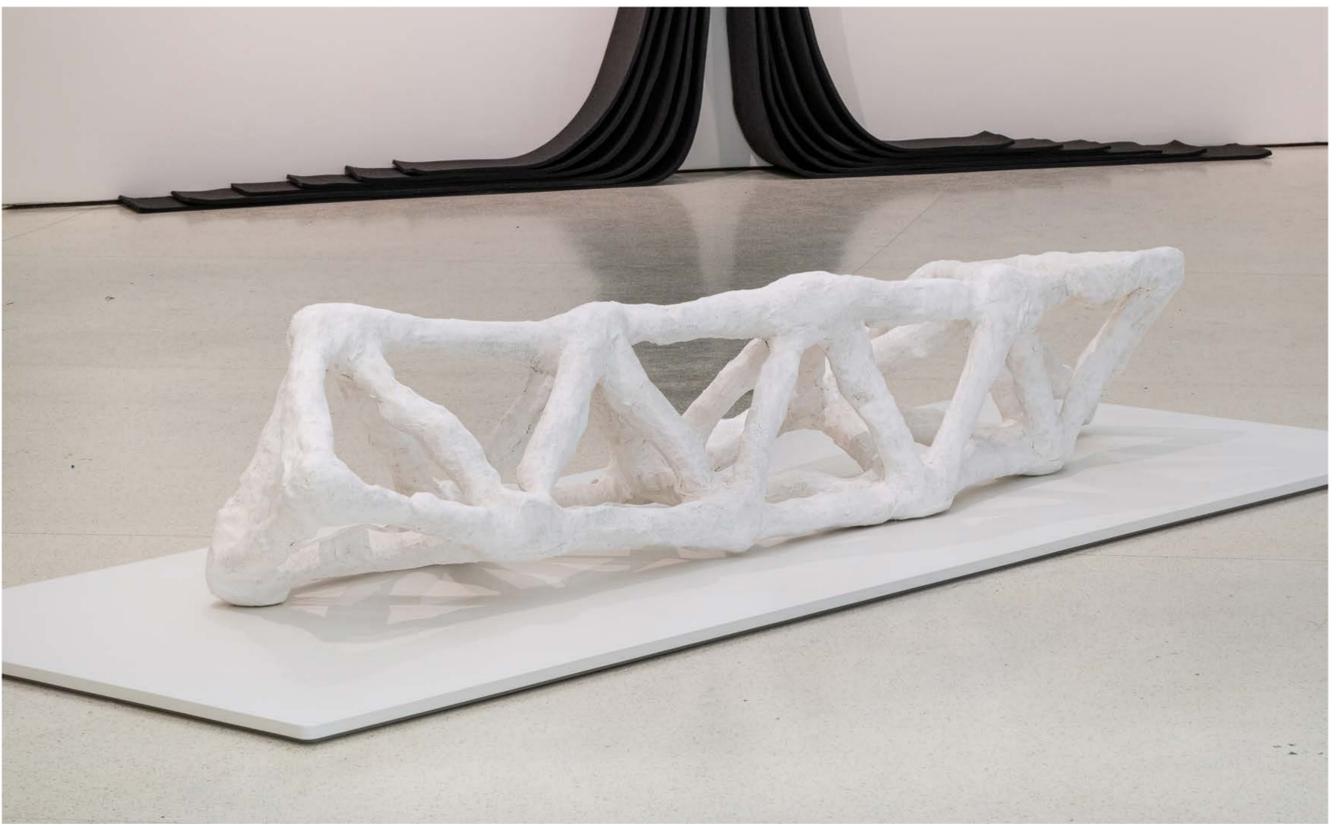
1966–67

Vulcanized rubber and neon

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,  
Panza Collection 91.3863

In the late 1960s, Robert Morris and Serra began to create sculptures with industrial materials subjected to simple actions, such as cutting, dropping, and hanging. Engaging process and form, these artists explored how felt and rubber responded to the physical environment. For Serra, this experimentation was informed by Jackson Pollock's work. After finding a cache of rubber in 1966, Serra created *Belts* by arranging the material on nails in the wall, a process he compared to drawing in space. Serra's tangles resemble, in particular, the dominant curvilinear forms of Pollock's *Mural* (1943, on view in the adjoining gallery).

The artist recently described how *Belts* reflects a direct engagement with Pollock: "Having been a painter, I thought, what if I just took one of Pollock's paintings, a painting that I really liked a lot, and I said, what if I tried to draw this Pollock three-dimensionally off the wall in strips of rubber?" While *Belts* moves these forms off the canvas and into real space, Serra acknowledges that viewers can nonetheless perceive the hangings all together in pictorial terms, as a composition against the wall. In later sculptures, comprising rubber, lead, wood, and other materials roughly strewn on the floor, Serra seeks to create "open fields" free from direct painterly associations.



## Tony Smith

b. 1912, South Orange, New Jersey

d. 1980, New York

### Wingbone

1962

Plaster, cloth, and wood

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,  
Purchased through prior gifts of Andrew Powie Fuller  
and Geraldine Spreckels Fuller Bequest and  
Richard S. Zeisler Bequest 2013.7

Together with Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists, Smith studied painting and drawing at the Art Students League in New York before he moved to Chicago to train as an architect under Frank Lloyd Wright. It was not until the early 1960s, when he was fifty years old, that he made his first sculptures. His signature large-scale steel works, featuring geometric forms, modular parts, and impersonal black surfaces, elicit comparisons to Minimalist sculptures made by his younger contemporaries. However, Smith's spiritual ambition for art—his desire to create a “universal message”—positions him more closely to his Abstract Expressionist peers, who were motivated by the same desire.

This is especially true with Smith's rare early plaster sculptures, such as *Wingbone*, which suggest not only essential geometry but also the visible trace of the artist's hand. *Wingbone* is a ten-foot chain of tetrahedrons realized in plaster-soaked newspaper and bandage fabric covering a wire armature. The work's irregular surface and undulating, reclining form give it the appearance of a once-living thing, as reflected in the sculpture's title. Smith playfully acknowledges the object's open, bone-like form, alluding to a condition of being both structurally sound and tensile or light: “All my sculpture is on the edge of dreams.”