

HYPERALLERGIC

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ART

Lynda Benglis Is Back — Knots, Pours, Dildos, and All

The patron saint of provocation is back with *Early Work 1967-79*, her first major New York show since 2011.



Adina Glickstein October 7, 2020



Installation view of *Lynda Benglis: Early Work 1967-1979* at Ortuzar Projects, New York (© 2020 Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA at ARS, NY; all images courtesy Ortuzar Projects, New York)

Though [Lynda Benglis](#) might be best-known for a certain controversial centerfold plugging her 1974 solo show at Paula Cooper Gallery, the sculptor's early-career works — including “Smile,” 1974, a bronze-cast of the double-headed dildo that led the ad to set off sparks — are equally show-stopping, embodying the same audacity along both formal and feminist lines. Now, [Lynda Benglis: Early Work 1967-79](#) collects this patron saint of provocation's diverse output, mapping an intervention into post-Minimalism as thoughtful as it is rigorous.



Lynda Benglis, "Bravo" (1973–1974), stainless steel, copper, babbitt (© 2020 Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA at ARS, NY)

Opening October 8th, in a joint presentation by Ortuzar Projects and Cheim & Read, the exhibition will be Benglis's first major New York show since her 2011 New Museum retrospective. *Early Work* showcases the products of her first decade in the city, mapping an output that ranges from polyurethane "pours" to a series of gilded wall sculptures inspired by the caryatids of the Athenian Acropolis.

Ortuzar's White Street location will house an array of Benglis's beloved "knots," which feel a bit like a metonym for her practice at large. Developed in the 1970s, these sculptures recurred as rejoinders to strait-laced macho Minimalism: adopting the same industrial materials, they take on a bodily

quality, a rebuff against coldly cerebral abstraction. One such knot, "Bravo," 1972, takes its name from the military alphabet, right between Alpha I and Charlie. Made from stainless steel, copper, and babbitt bearing, the brown tube is puckered and rucked as it loops around itself, intestinal and elemental, its ironic gesture toward soldierly rigor highlighting Benglis' break from the prevailing trends that preceded her.

Spanning ten years and installed across three locations, the works are united by Benglis' signature emphasis on process: troubling distinctions between painting and sculpture, these corporeal conjurings — knots, pours, dildos, et all — flaunt genre classifications just as handily as they rejected the limiting gender roles of their time.



Installation view of *Lynda Benglis: Early Work 1967-1979* at Ortuzar Projects, New York (© 2020 Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA at ARS, NY)

Lynda Benglis: Early Works, 1967-1979 opens October 8 at Ortuzar Projects (9 White Street, Tribeca), Cheim & Read (23 East 67th Street, 2nd Floor, Upper East Side) and Ortuzar Viewing Room (23 East 67th Street, 3rd Floor, Upper East Side) — all in Manhattan.