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## The Pioneering Early Work of Lynda Benglis



An installation view of Lynda Benglis's "North, South, East, West" (1976) at Ortuzar Projects, New York. Photograph by Timothy Doyon, courtesy of Ortuzar Projects, New York. © 2020 Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA at ARS, NY.

By M.H. Miller

It is perhaps odd to use the word “underrated” to describe an artist as celebrated as [Lynda Benglis](#), whose work is in the collections of most major American museums, but it’s also not a bad epithet for her. Still best known for a series of ads she created in the pages of *Artforum* magazine in the 1970s — one of which famously included an image of the artist wearing nothing but white-rimmed sunglasses and brandishing an enormous dildo — Benglis is one of the more interesting and groundbreaking sculptors of the last 50 years. A new exhibition, with both Ortuzar Projects and Cheim & Read, looks at her early output, from 1967 to 1979, a time when her work in sculpture was no less radical and influential than what Jackson Pollock had done to painting some 20 years earlier. She expanded the basic definitions of her medium through impossible-seeming

feats, as in “Bravo” (1973-74), which looks like the crunched metal of John Chamberlain but is in fact an aluminum wire structure, wrapped in gessoed canvas and sprayed with aerosolized metals, in this case a combination of zinc, bronze and copper, and hung on the wall like a painting. Her work took the almost philosophical interest that Minimalists like Robert Morris and Donald Judd had in traditional materials, but added bold color and texture to the mix. She was a Minimalist ready to disco, and I’d take her over Judd any day of the week. “*Lynda Benglis: Early Work 1967-1979*” is on view through Dec. 3 at Ortuzar Projects, 9 White Street, New York City; Cheim & Read, 23 East 67th Street, New York City; and Ortuzar Viewing Room, 23 East 67th Street, New York City; [ortuzarprojects.com](#) and [cheimread.com](#).