

JOAN
TANNER

FLAW

March 5–August 8, 2021

FLAW

Compelled by a “curiosity to engage contradiction” and an impulse to disrupt “assumptions about spatial relations,” Joan Tanner’s art has developed to encompass many media, including painting, photography, video, sculpture, and installation. In her assemblages and installations, Tanner plays with the makeshift and precarious in such a manner that form unfolds as a reflection on temporality — of development and decay — in ways that seem purposefully unresolved. Preoccupied with ideas of history, impermanence, and inconsistency in her exploration of materials and form, she has created, over five decades, a body of provocative and engaging work that challenges the viewer’s imagination and refuses simple categorization.

FLAW continues Tanner’s professed interest in disjunction and disruption. In this site-specific installation, net-like structures hang from the ceiling, corrugated fiberglass panels disguise corners and wrap around columns, while freestanding elements of cut and painted wood populate the floor. It is an ungainly and unruly assemblage that both embraces and challenges the structure of the gallery. While Tanner’s installation is inspired by Zaha Hadid’s building, it rebels against the formal logic that lies behind the architect’s vision, employing a discordant vocabulary of objects and forms that unfold in an eccentric rhythm around and along the gallery. Adopting an aesthetic of *unfinishedness* that serves as a foil to the geometric weight of the enclosing architecture, Tanner’s installation draws attention to ideas about order and durability, resistance to orthodoxy, and the inevitability of change.

Organized by guest curator Julien Robson.

Joan Tanner was born in 1935 in Indianapolis. She received a BA in Fine Art from the University of Wisconsin at Madison (1956). She was awarded the Distinguished Woman Artist award by Fresno Art Museum in 2009. She has held solo exhibitions at Santa Barbara Museum of Art (1967 and 1986); MCA Santa Barbara (1995), Speed Art Museum, Louisville (2001); Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College, Los Angeles (2006); Fresno Art Museum (2009); Suyama Space, Seattle (2016); and the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina (2017). Her work is held in the collections of Albertina, Vienna; Getty Center, Los Angeles; Harvard University, Cambridge; Stanford University, Stanford; PAFA, Philadelphia; and Santa Barbara Museum of Art, among others. She currently lives and works in Santa Barbara.

Ask Yourself

- 1 Consider the contrast between Zaha Hadid's architecture space and Joan Tanner's installation. How does the installation intervene in the space? Does it tie the space together or does it create tension?
- 2 How does Tanner's installation affect the space around it? Does it make you think about the space differently?
- 3 Tanner describes her studio as a laboratory. How is an artist like a scientist? As you experience the installation, what experiments can you imagine the artist doing?
- 4 Tanner often recycles, reworks, and repurposes parts of her installations, accepting impermanence and change as a part of their condition. How can we take this message into our own lives?



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