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LYNDA BENGLIS: 7 COME 11: CUATRO, 1976, metallized copper with aluminum screening, cotton bunting, plaster, liquid aluminum, sprayed aluminum and copper, 44" x 24" x 7½", at the Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles.

Lynda Benglis, Sculptural Knots

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As a title for sculpture, *7 Come 11* gives cause for wonder. Lynda Benglis' series of large metal knots, currently at the Margo Leavin Gallery, is so named, for reasons best understood by the artist. Apparently, Benglis' choice of a gambling term reflects her interest in the concept of chance. Since literal associations are not easily found in the objects, it seems that the reference to chance relates to the process of object-making, or even to the life of an artist. Certainly, those who seriously pursue the arts are subject to more risk to the psyche (and bank account) than people who mind stores, feed computers or deliver mail. All that, of course, is a speculative aside, not a central issue in viewing the work.

The knots, eleven of them, hang from various heights on the gallery walls. Although viewing is necessarily frontal, the pieces are three-dimensional and look as if they would be equally interesting if seen from the reverse side. They appear to fly or hang weightlessly, in defiance of their considerable mass. In their longest dimension, the works range from five to fifteen feet. They are essentially knotted, tubular structures, with two exposed ends that are flared and flattened.

Benglis constructs the tubes, about six inches in diameter, from aluminum screening, wrapped in cotton bunting. She loops the tubes in loose, single or multiple knots and reinforces their position with plaster and liquid aluminum. The



LYNDA BENGLIS: Installation of the *7 Come 11* series, l-r, Dos, Siete and Ocho, metallized copper knots, at the Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles.

knots are then metallized and made permanently rigid with sprayed aluminum and copper. Surfaces retain wrinkles of the cloth and craggy deposits of metal. All eight of the works on display are finished in copper.

The forms of the knots are completely clear, but content (like the titles) is open to question. Metaphoric possibilities abound. The works can be seen as anthropomorphic gestures, paths of movement or organic calligraphy. Like scarves in the wind or dancing figurations, the knots fill the walls with lyrical motion and cast dramatic

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LYNDA BENGLIS, SCULPTURAL KNOTS

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shadows as they extend their space.

Utilitarian associations raise still other considerations. Learning to tie knots is a basic skill. Children are expected to tie their shoelaces to prove their readiness for school. Adults tie knots daily to secure items of clothing and strings on packages. Decorative knots are used in sewing, and nautical knots proliferate in macrame. The knots of Boy Scouts, sailors and ordinary households are normally tied in soft fiber. Benglis' nonfunctional, metallized knots are angular and rigid. Though she ties them while her material is malleable, its resistance is obvious. The work speaks of the power and energy of metal.

In the realm of psychology, knots imply anxiety. To be "tied in knots" is to be incapacitated by worry. Some photographic reproductions of Benglis' knots convey a sense of convoluted tension, but the actual work seems largely free of that sort of disquietude. It functions effectively, beyond content, as innovative resolution of sculptural form.

Benglis maintains a studio in California, as well as in New York. This major solo exhibition continues through June 30. □