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In this 1977 sculpture, a message for the Black Lives Matter era

By **Sharon Mizota**

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Françoise Grossen's exhibition at Blum & Poe consists of a single work, but it is a commanding one. Made from knotted and frayed orange Manila rope — more typically found in ships' lines and fishing nets — "Contact III" hangs from the rafters, more than 30 feet long and nearly 10 feet tall, like a fence in the loft-like upstairs gallery. The ropes form elongated triangles studded with fuzzy pom-poms, each one knotted to the next.



Françoise Grossen's "Contact III," 1977, at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles. (Joshua White / Françoise Grossen and Blum & Poe)

The piece dates from 1977, and one could easily talk about how the work bridges the now well-traversed gap between craft and art or between wall hangings and sculpture, and how it recontextualizes everyday, commercial material. It certainly harks back to the dialogues of its time, when feminist art broke so many barriers. Today the barriers have shifted, but the piece still resonates.

Seen through the lens of Black Lives Matter protests, the work proffers a message of strength and unity. Those elongated triangles, each with a frayed pom-pom at its apex (head) and center (heart) look like nothing so much as a line of people, holding hands. The piece is a structure of connection, whether you read it as protest or friendship; it is a barricade against alienation.