

ARTFORUM

GILLIAN JAGGER (1930–2019)

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Gillian Jagger in New York, 1964. Courtesy of David Lewis Gallery.

Sculptor Gillian Jagger, known for her incorporation of natural materials like animal carcasses and fallen trees into formidable installations, died at eighty-eight years old on October 21. Her death was confirmed by her wife, Connie Mander.

Jagger was born in London in 1930 to sculptor Charles Sargeant Jagger, with whom she shared a love of animals, and Evelyn Isabel Wade. Charles died when Gillian was only four years old; three years later, Evelyn married an American man and moved herself and her two daughters to Buffalo, New York, narrowly avoiding the beginning of World War II. Following boarding school in Toronto, Jagger studied writing and art alongside her friend Andy Warhol at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, from which she received a BFA in 1953.

After graduation, Jagger moved to New York City, where Warhol helped to get her work included in her first-ever group show at Loft Gallery in 1956. She received an MFA from New York University in 1960, where she wrote a thesis on Odilon Redon. Around the same time, while living on 102 Street and Central Park West in Manhattan, she began to take rubbings and casts from the city streets, leading to works like *Yellow Line & Time*, 1963, and *Traffic Impressions*, 1964, that landed somewhere between Abstract Impressionism and Pop art, though Jagger resisted categorization. In 1964, her career began to take off on the strength of her plaster-cast manhole covers and the ascendancy of Pop. Unhappily pigeonholed in a genre she felt no connection to, Jagger left America for a few years. Upon her return to the states, Jagger took a teaching post at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute that would endure for forty years and lead to her becoming a professor emeritus in 2009.

Jagger met Mander, her life partner, in the early '70s. In 1978, the two bought a farm and moved to Kerhonkson in upstate New York, where they lived until Jagger's death. Over the next few decades, Jagger began to convert barns into studios to hold her ever more ambitiously scaled sculptures, which she built out of found materials like tree trunks and casts taken directly from nature. Around 1998, Jagger began to use full animal carcasses and skeletons for works like *Absence of Faith* (*Faith I and Faith II*), 2001, a piece comprising hanging casts taken from the body of a deceased horse. Filmmaker Barbara Gordon, one of her former students, made her the subject of a 2011 film called *Casting Faith: A Portrait of Gillian Jagger*.

Describing her work in a 2016 interview, Ryder said: "All my installations came about from my search for evidence of my connection to the earth, to the animals and to the apparatus that held them, to the trees, roots, even to rushing water." In a 2015 review of one of Jagger's exhibitions at David Lewis, Lauren O'Neill-Butler described her practice as "a gloomy romanticism tinged with a pragmatism that resonates strongly today as questions around affect, posthumanism, and animal studies are debated amid urgent concerns about climate change."