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ROBERTA SMITH
CHRISTINA FORRER: *GRAPPLING HOLD*
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ART & DESIGN

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

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Christina Forrer's "Eight," from 2017, at the Swiss Institute.
Courtesy of the artist and Grice Bench, Los Angeles; Swiss Institute

CHRISTINA FORRER

Through April 23. Swiss Institute, 102 Franklin Street, Manhattan; 212-925-2035, swissinstitute.net.

[Christina Forrer](#), who was born in Switzerland and lives in Los Angeles,

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brings a barbed sensibility and a spectrum of rich colors to the often benign art of weaving. As seen in "[Grappling Hold](#)," her outstanding New York debut at the Swiss Institute, she evokes conflict and malevolence with satirical skill. Her inspirations include Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970), the Swedish-born Norwegian artist whose large anti-fascist weavings from the 1930s were among the [standouts at Documenta 13](#) in 2012.

Neither as ambitious in size nor as explicit as Ryggen's, Ms. Forrer's weavings contain ambiguities for us to sort out. She uses color to complicate things, especially in terms of skin color and therefore race. In "Two," a blond pink-skinned woman either yells at or warns the purple-skinned man standing at her side. He looks horrified or scared, but at something beyond the weaving's edge.

A range of skin tones, ages and social signifiers are displayed among the people lined up in "Eight." But most of them look extremely alarmed at whatever is beyond the edge, except for the two men at the front of the line, who grin maniacally, enjoying themselves. Several sizes of figures descend the long vertical shape of "Gebunden," or "Bound," perhaps representing, as the news release indicates, different generations damaging, or even killing, their offspring. It also reads like an allegory of the powerful and the powerless, with a red Boschian devil in a lower corner devouring, one hopes, the evil ones.

There are studies and other works to consider here; they all confirm Ms. Forrer's substantial gifts for both imagery and narratives.

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