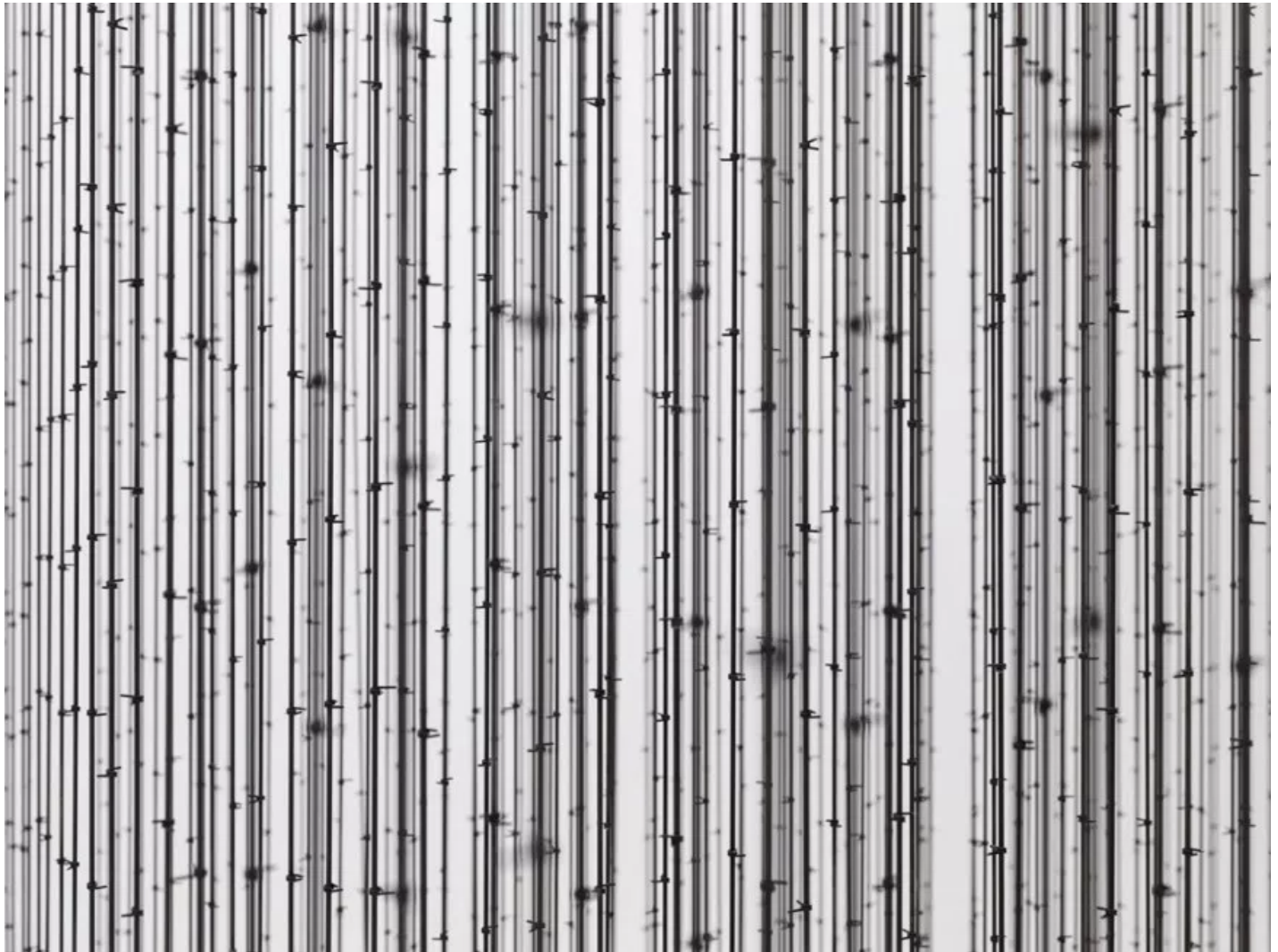


Installing Mona Hatoum's *Impenetrable*

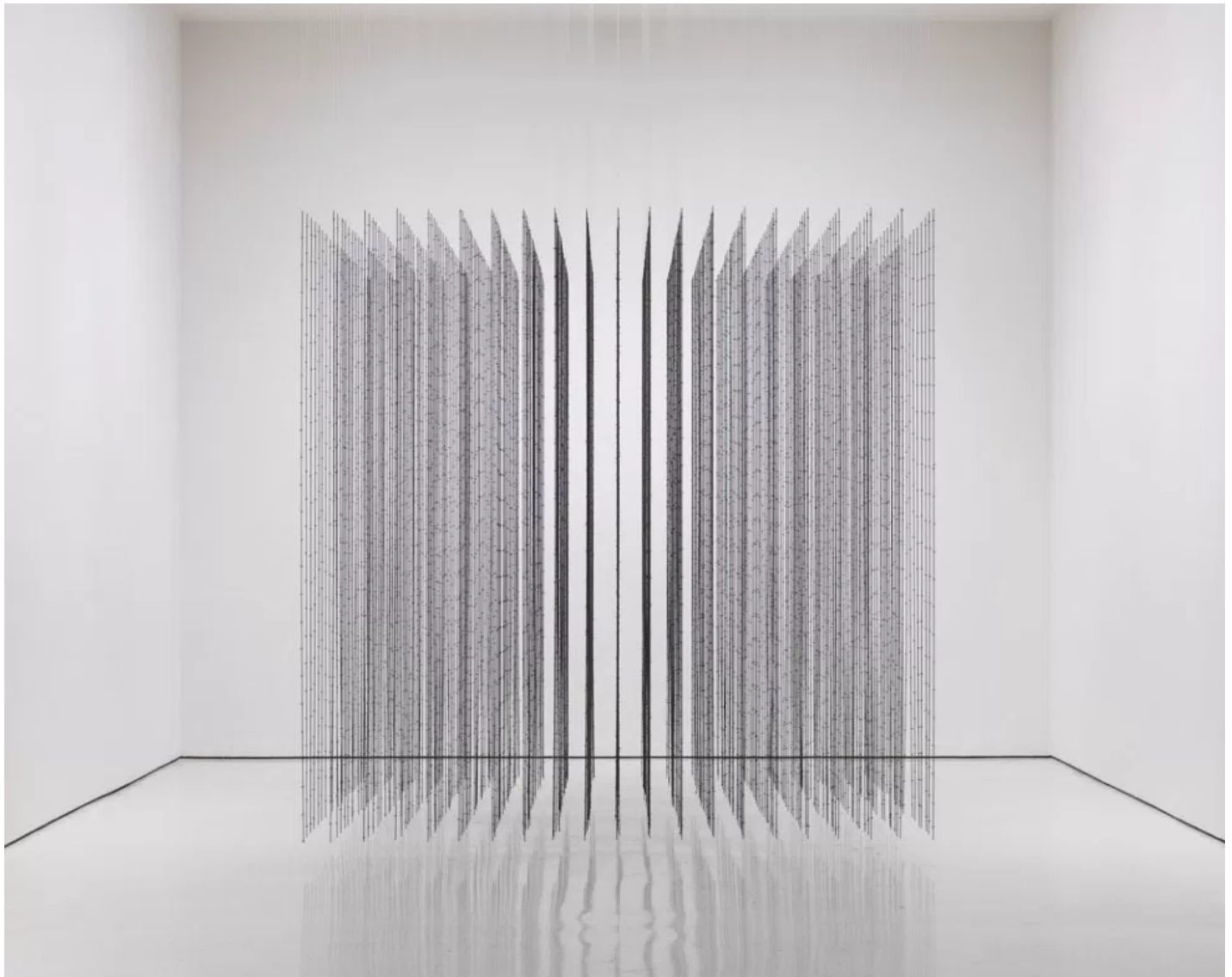


Mona Hatoum's 2009 work *Impenetrable* pivots on the viewer's approach. Seen from a distance, it appears to be a cube that floats improbably above the gallery floor, but as you close distance with the work, that impression disintegrates and the cube reveals itself to be an array of precisely suspended lengths of barbed wire. The arrangement of the wire recalls the geometric shapes of [Minimalist](#) sculpture, while the title of the work, *Impenetrable*, gives a nod to sculptor Jesús Rafael Soto's *Penetrables*, a 1967–97 series of works that invite viewers to move into and out of their structure (one person does just that in [this video](#)). Hatoum's sculpture literally rescinds this invitation, its material repelling touch but all the same being arranged to allow the eye to gaze through; vision, desire, and imagination can fathom what would slice the hand.

Installing *Impenetrable* for the *Lasting Images* exhibition at the Guggenheim required laborious attention and effort. Assistant Curator Lauren Hinkson, who organized the presentation, notes "the installation of this sculpture in many ways reflected the seductive and threatening nature of the piece. Realizing *Impenetrable* required the exhibition crew to thread each very sharp barbed wire rod with filament, like a needle, and

then secure it to a screw in the ceiling.” Row by row, the installation team aligned each of the work’s 441 rods, hanging them straight and spacing them evenly in four directions to construct the sculpture. Hinkson praises their efforts: “Our talented crew worked tirelessly, navigating the perceptual challenges viewers experience in the final work, as they created this floating cube of perfect symmetry. And all this work had to be done with necks craned in a cherry picker mere inches from the ceiling. The architecture of confinement that the work references was literally on display during the installation and I think Hatoum intended for this process to mimic the final experience of the work in the exhibition.”

Impenetrable is now on view at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. See it before [Lasting Images](#) closes on January 10, and read more about [Mona Hatoum](#) in the [Collection Online](#).



Mona Hatoum, *Impenetrable*, 2009. Steel and nylon monofilament, 300 × 300 × 300 cm, edition 3/3. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Purchased with funds contributed by the Collections Council; International Director’s Council; with additional funds from Anne Ames, Tiqui Atencio Demirdjian, and Marcio Fainzilber 2012.10 © Mona Hatoum. Installation view: *Lasting Images*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, October 14, 2013–January 12, 2014. Photo: Kristopher McKay