

Alexander Gray Associates

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Melvin Edwards: Sculptures 1964–2010
September 8 – October 16, 2010



Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present its first exhibition of Melvin Edwards' sculpture. The exhibition spans four decades, including his influential series, *Lynch Fragments* (1964 to the present) and a selection of large-scale works from the 1960s and 1970s—all of which convey Edwards' importance both as an American modernist and conceptualist, and the artist's deep-rooted expressions of social justice. The exhibition runs concurrently with an installation of Edwards' works in the contemporary galleries at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Edwards began his series, *Lynch Fragments* in 1963. The works on exhibit from this series span three periods: the early 1960s, when he responded to racial violence in American history; in 1973, when his activism concerning the Vietnam War motivated him to return to the series; and from 1978 to the present, when he began making *Lynch Fragments* to honor individuals, and to explore memory and his interest in African culture. The most recent works, eight of which are included in this show, display the remarkable range of expression Edwards achieves with his method of welding found objects into mask-like forms—including hammers, chains, and rail road spikes—and how, in the process, he renders violence, humor, and hope from these objects.

Also on view are large-scale environmental sculptures by Edwards from the 1960s and '70s. In *Chaino* (1964), *Machete for Gregory* (1974), and *Five to the Bar* (1973), Edwards welds barbed wire, car parts, and chains to create sculptures that investigate volume, weight, and interactivity. Edwards' interest in modernists like David Smith and Julio González is apparent in *Chaino*, but the precariousness with which he has suspended a car bumper evokes menace, as does his use of barbed wire in *Five to the Bar*. In all of these works, Edwards marries the toughness of barbed wire and steel with a refined approach to drawing and architectural space. He also continues to investigate African-American experience—both as history and biography—through the material and formal qualities of these sculptures, and the inherent metaphors of their sources.

Melvin Edwards (b. 1937, Houston, Texas) is represented in the collections of Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Studio Museum in Harlem; and the Brooklyn Museum. Since the 1960s, his works have appeared in numerous exhibitions, including individual shows at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (1965); Walker Art Center (1968); Whitney Museum of American Art (1970); Studio Museum in Harlem (1978); and a retrospective at the Neuberger Museum of Art in Purchase, New York (1993). His work has appeared in group exhibition, including *Five Younger Los Angeles Artists* (1965), Los Angeles County Museum of Art; *Whitney Annual* (1970), Whitney Museum of American Art; *Arts as Advocate* (1971), Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Extensions: Edwards, Gilliam, Williams* (1974), Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; *Drawn and Matched* (1977), Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Traditions and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963–1973* (1985), Studio Museum in Harlem; *Painted Forms: Recent Metal Sculpture* (1990), Whitney Museum of American Art; and *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964-1980* (2006), Studio Museum in Harlem. Edwards' work will be included in the upcoming, multi-venue Getty Foundation initiative, *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980*. Fellowships and honors Edwards has received include Guggenheim Fellowship (1975), National Endowment for the Arts Awards (1970, 1984), and a Fulbright for study in Zimbabwe (1988). Edwards lives and works in New York, Plainfield, NJ, and Dakar, Senegal.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery based in New York. The gallery has established a profile for high-quality exhibitions focused on mid-career artists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Influential in political, social and cultural spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM.