

GARDEN@GUN

GOINGS-ON

The Southern Agenda: October/November 2019

Goings-on in the South and beyond

by **CAROLINE SANDERS, CJ LOTZ, DACEY ORR SIVEWRIGHT, KATHLEEN PURVIS, KINSEY GIDICK, AND
MIKE GRUDOWSKI**

October/November 2019



ILLUSTRATION: TIM BOWER

ART

Maryland

Man of Steel

Although Melvin Edwards has been shaping steel into massive welded sculptures for more than fifty years, only in the last ten has the Texas-born

sculptor's work received the respect it deserves. "He is a titanically important artist and pioneer," says Christopher Bedford, the director of the Baltimore Museum of Art. "There is a generation of object makers who work in his conceptual debt." The exhibition ***Melvin Edwards: Crossroads*** (September 29–January 12) features nearly two dozen abstract and layered steel sculptures by the eighty-two-year-old artist, who is the great-great-great-grandson of a West African blacksmith. Since the 1970s, Edwards has traveled throughout Africa, meeting blacksmiths and carvers, forging connections between their work and his creations, and mentoring the next generation of African welders. Born in Houston in 1937, Edwards played football and studied art at the University of Southern California, and then, in 1963, began his seminal series Lynch Fragments, forming found objects into welded steel works made up of nails, spikes, chains, and bolts that suggest bondage. Many of those pieces will appear in this exhibition, along with some of his larger works, including *Agricole*, which depicts a welded steel plow blade suspended by chains. artbma.org
