



Melvin Edwards: *Texcali* (1965), 19.75" x 15.25" x 8.5"; *Spring* (1973), 11" x 6" x 8"; *A Symptom Of* (1999), 12" x 8.25" x 6.25"; *Loving Spiral* (2005), 11.75" x 8" x 11"; all welded steel

Melvin Edwards

November 2 – December 22, 2012

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present its second exhibition with Melvin Edwards, spanning the trajectory of Edwards' nearly 50-year career. Concurrently, Edwards is a featured artist in the celebrated exhibition *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980* on view at MoMA/PS1, organized by Kellie Jones for the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the exhibition runs through March 11, 2013.

Edwards' manipulation of industrial materials—and their cultural connotations—is emphasized with a selection of installations, wall reliefs, and free-standing steel sculptures on view. Chains are present throughout the works, reinforcing the relationship between material and image at the foundation of Edwards' oeuvre. The duplicity of meaning inherent in the imagery of chain, a symbol of oppression yet also a metaphor for cultural linkage, lends complex narrative to the modernist forms.

The exhibition centers on Edwards' groundbreaking 1969–70 installation, *Curtain for William and Peter* (1969–1970), a drape of barbed wire hemmed with heavy-gauge chain. Included in the artist's solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970, *Curtain* pays homage to fellow artists William T. Williams and Peter Bradley, utilizing materials of labor and entrapment to create an elegant, fluid form tinged with brutality.

The iconic stainless-steel sculpture *To Listen* (1990) stands at nearly 8 feet tall, anchors a gallery of pedestal-scaled sculptures, dating from the early 1970s to the present. Also included in the exhibition are works from Edwards' renowned *Lynch Fragments* series, spanning from the 1960s to 2012. Among the disc-formed wall sculptures is the rare 1965 work, *Texcali*, which was included in Edwards' 1965 solo exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

Edwards reflects on his use of materials:

I have always understood the brutalist connotations inherent in materials like barbed wire and links of chain and my creative thoughts have always anticipated the beauty of utilizing that necessary complexity which arises from the use of these materials in what could be called a straight formalist style.... Wire like most linear materials has a history both as an obstacle and enclosure but barbed wire has the added capacity of painfully dynamic and aggressive resistance if contacted unintelligently. To use this chain with all its kinetic parts crisscrossing the line as invader and potent container.
—The Afro-American Artist, 1973

Melvin Edwards (b. 1937, Houston, TX) is represented in the collections of Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and the Brooklyn Museum, NY. Since the 1960s, his works have appeared in numerous solo exhibitions at: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA (1965); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (1968); Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (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 numerous group exhibitions, 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; *Traditions and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963–1973* (1985), Studio Museum in Harlem; and *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964–1980* (2006), Studio Museum in Harlem. Edwards' work was included in the multi-venue Getty Foundation initiative, *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980*. Edwards has received a 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, New Jersey, and Dakar, Senegal.