



**FRIEZE
ART
FAIR**

Dancing in Nigeria, 1974–78, painted welded steel, dimensions variable

Frieze New York | May 5 – 8, 2016 | Stand D40

Alexander Gray Associates presents a selection of work by **Melvin Edwards** (b.1937), spanning his five decade career, including large-scale sculpture, works on paper, and examples from the artist's renowned series "Lynch Fragments." Coinciding with the artist's critically acclaimed retrospective, organized by the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas and currently on view at the Columbus Museum of Art, OH, and on the heels of Edwards' participation in the 2015 56th Venice Biennale, Italy, the works on view present an intimate portrait of the artist as a committed sculptor, deeply engaged with formal concerns and socio-political narrative.

Central to the presentation is *Dancing in Nigeria* (1974–78), a large-scale sculpture that directly references Edwards' connection with Nigerian culture, music, and architecture. The title comes from a dance Edwards saw during his first trip to Nigeria in 1970, where he encountered the West African musical forms of Highlife, Afrobeat, and Jùjú, which he associates with this sculpture. *Dancing in Nigeria* was created during a unique and under-explored moment in Edwards' practice in which he painted free-standing sculptures, and will be on view for the first time in twenty years.

Pivotal within Edwards' practice, the "Lynch Fragments" are wall sculptures that incorporate complex forms rendered from welding steel objects. He began the series in 1963, a year of widespread racial and political violence in the United States. Since the 1970s, through this series, Edwards has explored notions of nostalgia by honoring individuals and investigating his personal interest in African culture. The "Lynch Fragments" often incorporate geometric bases to establish a consistent foundation for different welded steel forms. Edwards typically incorporates chains, hammers, nails, padlocks, scissors, spikes, and wrenches, as evidenced in *Freedom Fighter* (1992) and *A Symptom of* (1999). These wall reliefs present abstract forms using materials that retain referentiality. The dimensions and placement of the works are crucial to their effect, evoking the human head and the attendant complexities and nuances of identity, both personal and political.

Also on view are early works on paper that Edwards produced using spray paint and watercolor to imprint the negative of two elements: chains and barbed wire. These two components would become key in his barbed wire installations exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970, the first solo exhibition of an African-American sculptor at the museum. The artist's use of these materials in his two-dimensional work stems primarily from formal concerns, as he explores the aesthetic qualities and complex historical meaning behind this medium.

Melvin Edwards' work has been widely exhibited nationally and internationally. In 1993, the Neuberger Museum of Art in Purchase, NY, organized *Melvin Edwards Sculpture: A Thirty-Year Retrospective 1963–1993*, an exhibition documenting his artistic development. In 2015 the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, TX organized a second retrospective, *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*, featuring work from the early 1960s to the present. This retrospective exhibition traveled to the Zimmerli Museum of Art, Rutgers University, NJ, and is currently on view at the Columbus Museum of Art, OH. His work has recently been included in the exhibitions *All the World's Futures*, 56th Venice Biennale, Italy (2015); *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties*, Brooklyn Museum, NY (2014); *Blues for Smoke*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2013) and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2012); *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980*, MoMA PS1, New York (2012) and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2011); *African American Art: Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Era, and Beyond*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC (2012) and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2011); among others. His work is included in the upcoming exhibition *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic 1945-1965*, at Haus der Kunst, Munich (2017) and a solo exhibition of his work will open at Oklahoma Contemporary, OK (Fall 2016). Edwards' work is represented in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the 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; Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College, Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Winter Park, FL; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; among others. Edwards taught at Rutgers University from 1972 to 2002. In 2014, he received an Honorary Doctorate from the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery in New York. Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Gallery spotlights artistic movements and artists who emerged in the mid- to late-Twentieth Century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is a member of the Art Dealers Association of America. Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM.