

## Art | 43 | Basel | 14-17 | 6 | 12



Melvin Edwards: *Pyramid Up and Down Pyramid* (1969-1970), *Melvin Edwards: Works*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970  
*Machete for Gregory* (1974), welded steel, 31h x 40w in.; *Texas Tale* (1992), welded steel, 18h x 8.25w x 11.25d in.

### Art Feature Booth G9 | Art Unlimited

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present a survey of sculpture by Melvin Edwards (b. 1937) for the Art Basel art fair Art Feature sector (Basel, Switzerland). The exhibition includes sculpture spanning four decades, all of which convey Edwards' influence as a pioneering figure in African-American art, showcasing the artist's deep-rooted expressions of social justice. This focused version of the Gallery's 2010 solo exhibition, which was widely praised (including *Artforum's* "Best of 2010" issue), is the artist's first in Switzerland, and first solo exhibition in Europe since the early 1980s.

Included in the Gallery's Art Basel presentation are rare early works from Edwards' Los Angeles years, including *Texcali* (1964), an early wall piece included in the artist's first solo exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and the monumental *Homage to the Music and the Musicians* (1966), which was included in the artist's 1968 solo exhibition at the Los Angeles Municipal Gallery.

Edwards relocated to New York in 1968, and his early experiments with linear forms through the use of barbed wire are showcased throughout Art Basel. In Art Basel's Art Unlimited, Edwards' formal and political concerns are evident in the installation *Pyramid Up and Down Pyramid*. Originally created in 1969 for the group exhibition *X to the 4th Power* at the Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), the work was subsequently presented alongside three other works of barbed wire and chain in Edwards' 1970 solo exhibition, *Melvin Edwards: Works*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Recreated on-site by the artist, the Gallery's presentation at Art Unlimited is the first time the work has been exhibited since 1970. The materials used for the original installation were ultimately repurposed for other sculptures, including works from the early 1970s that are included in the Gallery's Art Feature presentation. *Machete for Gregory* (1974) draws attention to the literary quality of Edwards' work, upturning the metaphors of tools and weapons, agriculture and industry, containment and release. *Five to the Bar* (1973) utilizes a rocking form, a recurring theme in the artist's free-standing and large-scale sculpture. In these works, Edwards marries the toughness of barbed wire and steel with a refined approach to drawing and architectural space.

Perhaps best known in Edwards' oeuvre is the celebrated *Lynch Fragments* series. These works span three periods and five decades: the 1960s, when he responded to racial violence in American history; the early 1970s, 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. Recent *Fragments* display the remarkable range of expression Edwards achieves with his method of welding found objects into mask-like forms—including hammers, chains, and railroad spikes—and how, in the process, he renders violence, humor, and hope from these objects. Through his current work, Edwards continues to investigate the African-American experience—both as history and biography—through the material and formal qualities of his sculptures, and the inherent metaphors of their sources.

Born 1937 in Houston, Texas, Melvin Edwards is represented in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; the Long Beach Museum of Art, CA; the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; the Birmingham Museum of Art, AL; the Smithsonian Institutions, National Museum of African-American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York. Recent exhibitions have drawn renewed attention to his contributions, including the groundbreaking exhibition, *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980*, organized by Kellie Jones for the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Paintings and Sculpture 1945-1970* at the Getty Museum, Los Angeles. The artist lives and works in New York 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 1960s, 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. Gallery summer hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM