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Arts & Entertainment

Dynamic sculptures allude to African-American experiences

By ANNE RENNA

Composed of tools and old machine parts, the sculpture of Melvin Edwards is designed to challenge and excite its viewers. Now on view at the Hood Museum, "Melvin Edwards Sculpture: A Retrospective," presents over 30 works by the artist, including the much acclaimed series titled "Lynch Fragments," examples from his series "Rockers," and two large-scale sculptures, titled "Conversations with My Father," and "Dancing in Nigeria."

Known for his use of familiar objects to create references to his African-American heritage, Edwards' sculptures are described by art critic Michael Brenson as "particular histories that touch him and at the same time argue for the need to transform the world and liberate the imagination."

Chains, bolts, gears, hammers, jacks, scissors, spikes and wrenches are welded together to create the "mechanical still lifes," which comprise the series "Lynch Fragments." These 10 to 14 inch relief sculptures are meant to serve as metaphors for the most brutal side of the African-American

experience, as well as "for the whole struggle," Edwards once explained.

Simpler constructions involving flat bridges of steel, and occasionally chains, make up the lyrical, free-standing sculptures Edwards includes in his "Rockers" series, inspired by his grandmother. It is in this series that Edwards introduces movement ("rocking") to his sculpture.

Edwards' artistic development began with the emergence of the Civil Rights movement. "Sculpture allowed me to put in, in a more natural way, things that people were saying you weren't supposed to put in art, like race and politics," Edwards said in a 1992 interview with Brenson. "Lynch Fragments" was begun in 1963. "Rockers" followed in 1970.

The two units which comprise the open-structure sculptures, "Conversations with My Father," and "Dancing in Nigeria," are painted yellow. Developed from choreograph-like drawings, the curved steel forms resemble abstractions of movement, and bring to mind the bold repetition of color and line in African fabrics.

Director and Curator of Con-

temporary Art at the Hood Museum, Timothy Rub, curated the smaller-scale version of "Melvin Edwards Sculpture: A Retrospective," which is now presented at the College. The exhibit was organized by the Neuberger Museum of Art.

"Melvin Edwards Sculpture: A Retrospective" will be on display in the Hood Museum until Dec. 4. On Oct. 28 at 7:30 pm, the Museum will present a program featuring a conversation between the artist himself and Brenson in the Lathrop Gallery.

New hours at the Hood

Beginning today, the Hood Museum offers expanded hours each Wednesday, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tonight the museum hosts an open house to celebrate its new evening hours, featuring musical performances, refreshments and tours of exhibitions. In addition to the sculptures of Melvin Edwards and the photographs of James Nachtwey, you can discover recently hung works on loan, including three paintings by Leon Golub and "Number 8" (1950) by Jackson Pollock.