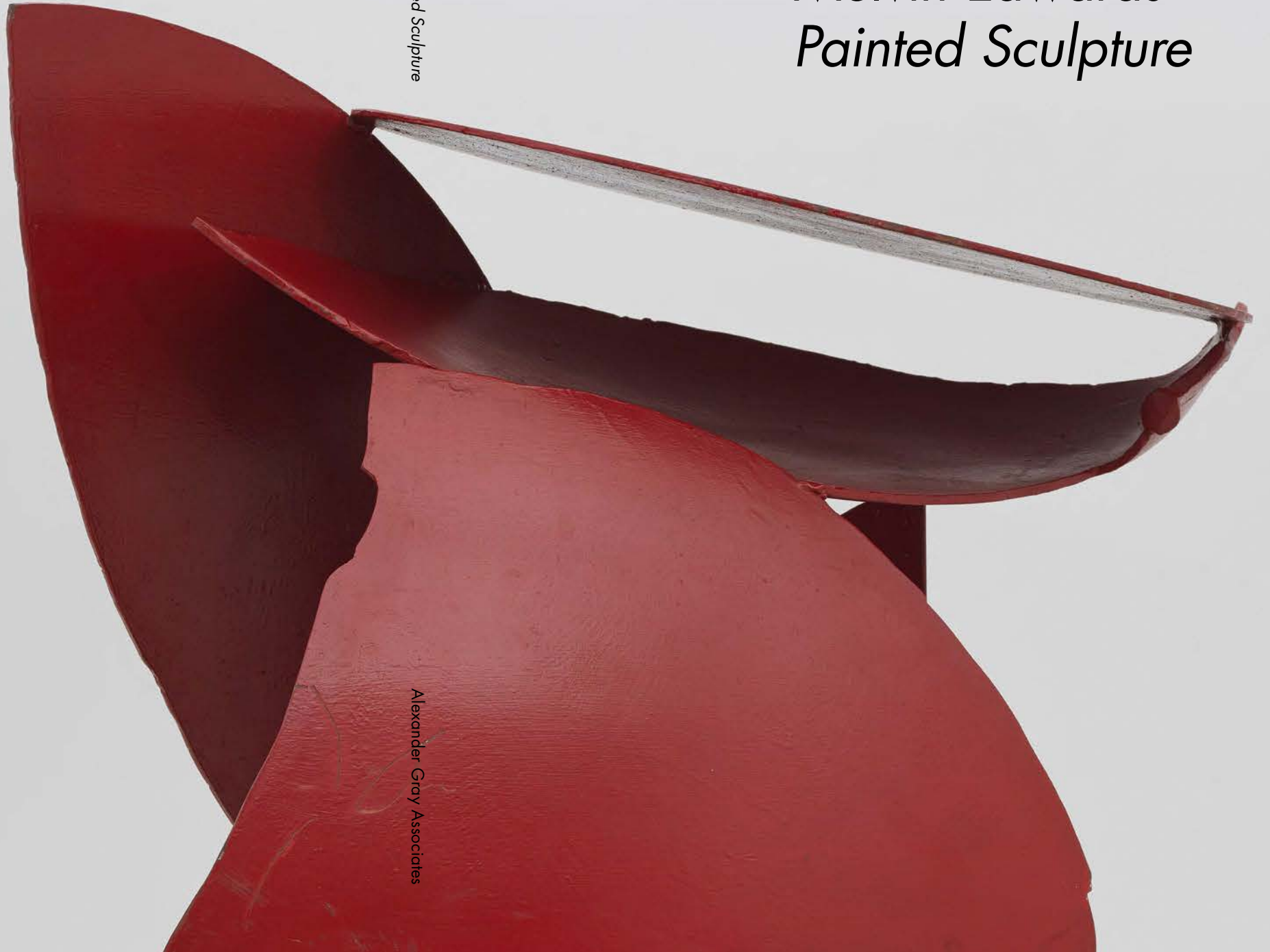


Melvin Edwards
Painted Sculpture

Melvin Edwards: *Painted Sculpture*

Alexander Gray Associates



Melvin Edwards: *Painted Sculpture*

October 24 – December 14, 2019

Alexander Gray Associates



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2019

Lines for Melvin Edwards' Painted Sculpture

By Sérgio B. Martins

In 1968, roughly a decade into his career, Melvin Edwards began making color painted steel sculptures. This might seem an odd turn of events, as there was little in Edwards's initial body of sculptures that pointed to color as one of his potential concerns. How incongruous, for example, is the thought of one of his signature *Lynch Fragments*—a series begun in 1963—covered in color? After all, the power of their abstraction is underpinned by the visible, sheer material contiguity of the hardware parts and scraps of metal the artist welds together, and by the palpable sense of the work involved in fusing the original pieces together and de-figuring them in the process. And yet, Edwards was no stranger to color: initially trained as a painter before turning to his preferred medium of welded metal, he had studied key writings in color theory, such as French chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul's *The Law of Contrasts of Color* and developed a critical perspective on the adherence to primaries by earlier modernist practitioners such as the De Stijl artists and Alexander Calder.¹ Sculptural purity was never a concern for Edwards, let alone a deterrent, and this is crucial for understanding both the immense experimental variety of his work throughout the decades and his relation to modernism.

That his interest in color was revived in the late 1960s is not entirely surprising. Like many other artists, Edwards did feel the impact of Pop culture (and Pop art), which translated, as David Batchelor once put it, in the paradigmatic shift from “analogical color”—“a continuum, a seamless spectrum, an undivided whole, a merging of color in one another,” as

in Chevreul's color wheel—to the plurality of “digital colors”—a “grammarless accumulation of units” in which “every color is equivalent to and independent of every other color.”² Glimpses of this emerging chromatic order appeared also in a number of modernist sculptures by David Smith and Anthony Caro, but for the most part Edwards remained unimpressed with the deployment of color by most sculptors of the time.

There was one notable exception, though: George Sugarman, whom Edwards first met in 1965. Granted, the former's wooden sculptures are a far cry from the latter's welded constructs, both formally and materially. But then again, just like he admired painter



Michel Chevreul, *Exposé d'un moyen de définir et de nommer les couleurs, planche 3.*, 1861



George Sugarman, *Kite Castle*, 1974

Jacob Lawrence's sense of composition, but not his particular brand of cartoonish figuration, Edwards' interest in Sugarman's sculptures derived not from the search for formal affinities, but rather from the array of creative possibilities he saw them opening up.³ Sugarman's bold play of primaries and secondaries went far beyond the "simplistic" color scheme Edwards disliked in most modernist art and sculpture; his colors could be as vibrant as Donald Judd's, but without the latter's Minimalist formal restraint. In short, Edwards saw in Sugarman "the sensibility of painter," a trait that resonated with his own artistic formation.⁴



Yellow Diamond, 1968

More so than Caro's, Sugarman's sculpture struck Edwards with "the idea that more of the environment was covered by a piece"—in other words, the color-driven expansiveness of his manifold and unapologetic formal inventions prompted Edwards to experiment with an entirely different spatiality than that of the remarkably condensed *Lynch Fragments*, with sculpture that would need "more area to put the paint on."⁵

Thus the wide surfaces of *Yellow Diamond* (1968) and *Homage to my Father and the Spirit* (1969)—the latter's formal concision and juxtapositions of primary and secondary colors represent perhaps the closest point between Edwards' sculpture and Sugarman's (one work in the present exhibition, *Luxor-Top*, from 1983, distills some key aspects of these earlier pieces).

But nowhere else was Edwards' newfound environmental awareness more fully on display—and more fully invested in the conjunction between painting and sculpture—than in his short experience as a member of the artist collective Smokehouse Associates alongside William T. Williams, Guy Ciarcia, and Billy Rose. Their pioneering community-oriented interventions in various sites in Harlem mobilized color—everyday color found in people's clothes and street signs—and geometric abstraction so as to displace traditional figurative muralism, fueled by the belief that environmental change could pave the way for social change.

Now, in a cluster of remarkable works from 1974—some of which form the core of the current exhibition—Edwards strikes a somewhat different chord. The forms remain open, rather than condensed, but the wide, geometric expanses of color give way to far more linear compositions, to

the point that he refers to *Augusta* (1974) as "a calligraphic piece" (the title of his drawing series "*Lines*" for John Coltrane and Other Creative People further confirms that linearity was very much in his poetic order of the day).⁶ What Edwards seems to be testing in these pieces is color as a catalyst of sculptural dynamism. It is no coincidence then that his constant reference to music as a generative force is so palpably felt in works such as *Tan Ton Dyminn*s (1974) and *Felton* (1974), as well as—and unsurprisingly, given the title—*Dancing in Nigeria* (1974–1978). The key shared trait of all these sculptures is the fact that they comprise two entirely separate welded units. Their physical separateness plays an important role in prompting the viewer to consider them in dialogical terms, to the point that the relationship between the parts can be convincingly described in musical terms as one of response, reprise, or even, depending on the case, of counterpoint (conversely, the chain linking the parts of a work such as *Ntrytry* (1981) begs a very different reading both of the relation between the parts and of their belonging to a whole). In any case, regardless of one's chosen

metaphor, the pairs are visibly linked by a dynamic play of formal motifs, as if one sculptural ensemble either developed, echoed, or countered a motif introduced by its counterpart.

In one of *Felton*'s units, for example, an open and concise ensemble of lines and curves insinuates a low, balanced horizontal expansion that is complicated by its pair, whose own take on the line and curve motifs results in a condensed upwards escalation towards—or perhaps elevation of—a square-shaped plate inscribed by a hollow circle. The geometric precision of the plate stands as a synthetic resolution that clarifies the formal animation of the piece as a whole; from its standpoint, the other unit may well be read as a cube opened up by the work of the semi-circular curves. The monochrome red coating plays a vital role in that it abstracts from the materiality of steel and emphasizes the piece's quasi-musical sense of progression and cohesion (it is easy

to imagine how an unpainted surface might have led viewers to split their perception instead between the play of formal motifs and the materiality of the steel parts).

But it is equally clear that for Edwards the monochrome is an experiment rather than a dogma: in *Tan Ton Dyminn*s, the sculptural dynamic shifts to



Dancing in Nigeria, 1974–1978



Felton, 1974

one of formal and chromatic contrast between the bright silver unit and its deep-blue counterpart. In this case, the musical liaison lies in how one's apprehension of the sharp angles and reflective surfaces of the former is softened as it falls on the semi-circular and light-absorbing shape of the latter. The use of tread plate in both units contributes to the piece's overall wholeness, but also enhances its chromatic dichotomy, as variations of reflectivity become far more accentuated on the silver surface.

At first sight, the 1974 pieces seem unequivocally to resemble Caro's work, making Edward's coolness towards the English sculptor in interviews puzzling. However, if it is true that these pieces do prompt a temporal mode of experience related to music—that is, if description such as the ones I have been offering are indeed apposite—then it is also clear that they could never be enlisted in the service of a rhetoric of sculptural purity in the way Caro's sculptures were. Let us recall Michael Fried's famous anti-theatrical argument according to which the temporal viewing of Caro's sculptures ultimately coalesces in a synthetic moment of apprehension of the whole ensemble. In prompting viewers to identify and follow motifs as they are reworked and transformed, Edwards' 1974 sculptures display a temporality at odds with the kind of idealistic arrest epitomized by Fried's notion of "presentness."



Tan Ton Dymnins, 1974

This is particularly true of the two-piece sculptures, which can seem to be potentially free to be set at variable distances from one another but also to require a rather exact closeness if their formal resonances are to be maximized. Such reciprocal placement is somewhat theatrical, although not quite in the way Minimalist works are theatrical in Fried's sense of the word. Whereas Minimalist sculpture often relies on formal simplicity and geometric resonance with their architectonic surroundings in order to situate

the viewer's body in the here and now of phenomenological experience, Edwards' pieces draw instead on the potential resonance between their formal dynamism and the viewer's bodily movements—hence the dance metaphor. Curves and straight lines read not so much as variations of a geometrical repertoire than as virtual reconfigurations of a body on par with the viewer's own. Thus Edwards' use of an approximately human scale, so that "a person can walk into [the sculptures] and feel the kind of movement they are involved in."⁷



Amilcar de Castro, Untitled, 1995

It is tempting to relate Edwards' interest in Calder's kineticism to this dynamic, especially since the latter's *Mobiles* and *Stabiles* also influenced another modernist aesthetic predicated on bodily sensuousness, namely that of Brazilian Neoconcretism. Not that any formal similarity exists between Edwards' sculptures and works by Franz Weissmann, Lygia Clark, or Amilcar de Castro—far from that. But Edwards, Calder, and the Neoconcretists (and also Sugarman, for that matter) share at least one common

ground: they all evidence the limitations of canonical histories of modernism and the stakes of questioning well-established lineages and chronologies. The reasons for that, of course, are very different in each case.⁸ The belated art historical reception of Edwards' work is certainly related, in great part, to the difficulties a black artist making modernist sculpture would unavoidably face in the United States in the postwar years.⁹ But it is also very much a consequence of his reworking of the aesthetics of modernism in ways that do not follow the traditional account whereby Greenbergian formalism gives way to Minimalism and post-Minimalist tendencies. Perhaps the drawings "*Lines*" for *John Coltrane and Other Creative People* also stand as a metaphor for this state of things. As Edwards points out, the arched lines he negatively imprinted on the sheets by spraying over wire and chain clash with a very different kind of line—that of the business section of the newspaper.¹⁰ Likewise, properly appreciating and accounting for work such as his—and that of many other creative people—may well involve an unavoidable but also fruitful clash with one's critical and historical assumptions.

Notes

- 1 Melvin Edwards, telephone interview with the author, September 30, 2019.
- 2 David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), p. 105.
- 3 For Edwards' comment on Lawrence, see his interview "Melvin Edwards by Michael Brenson," *Bomb Magazine*, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/melvin-edwards/>, accessed September 15, 2019.
- 4 Edwards, interview with the author, op. cit.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 See Melvin Edwards' walkthrough of his 1978 exhibition at The Studio Museum in Harlem, NY, *Melvin Edwards: Sculptor*, filmed by Anthony Ramos.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 One of the consequences of Brazilian Neoconcretism's peripheral condition was that it took at least three decades after the end of the movement for a consistent international recognition and evaluation of its implications to take place. As for Calder, Clement Greenberg affirmed in 1965 that Calder's "role as an influence has never been commensurate with [his fast growing] reputation," a diagnostic critic Luiz Camillo Osório has recently challenged recalling precisely Calder's enormous influence in Brazil. See Luiz Camillo Osório, "Reverberações cruzadas: Calder e a arte brasileira", in *Calder e a Arte Brasileira* (São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2016). Likewise, a reevaluation of Edwards' work also entail that of Calder's and Sugarman's.
- 9 Art historian Darby English has recently made a case for understanding the work of Black Modernists—including Edwards'—in the early 1970s as a "culturally queer formation," placing a special emphasis on its troubled assimilation by an Afro American art history more strongly invested in art that reflected the identity politics of the day. See Darby English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). For a critique of English's project, see Huey Copeland, "One-Dimensional Abstraction," *Art Journal Open* (<https://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=12200>), July 30, 2019, accessed September 19, 2019. I thank Jennifer Josten for bringing Copeland's review to my attention.
- 10 Edwards, interview with the author, op. cit.



Melvin Edwards with *Double Circles* (1970)
in Harlem, New York, c.1979



Double Circles, 1970, Harlem, NY

Notes on Black Art (1971)

By Melvin Edwards

To talk of Black Art in America is to talk of the African American people. Black Art is works made by Black people that are in some way functional in dealing with our lives here in America. Since the most important thing is our dealing with oppression by White America, our most logical works are those forms of social protest and those which build our self confidence and self reliance. Most African American artists, either deal directly with their own familiar subject matter and symbols, or they indirectly title abstractions with the names of friends, heroes, relatives, harlems, musicians, foods, etc. There is no black artist who has not thought about his condition in America. As soon as Blacks know that a work was made by a black person then it becomes functional. The more explicitly concerned with the ways & symbols of black people, the more positive the response.

In the 20th century in American art there have been times when the confidence of the black artist has been stronger than at other times. When the mural painting social conscious nonwhite Mexicans were affecting the world most dynamically by using the symbols of their being Indian or African. They showed confidently that those were the positive things in themselves and that, to get the positive racial economic truth to their people, was the most important thing about their work. They came to the United States and Harlem and the importance of their ideas were taken into our own works. We are always affected by symbols and ideas that are good for us. Our knowing what is good for us all has not created a one identifiable style, but is getting us closer that organization of our efforts to change our lives in this country. We must make works that use our lives and feelings as their basis for existence.

The work can either take the form of giving and using ideas, subjects & symbols for radical change, or the works can be of such large physical scale, and in the right places, as to make real change. It should always be known that these works are our methods of changing things. We must search for our own processes & symbols, if we can't find them in our individual selves then we must find them in our families and friends, in our cities (Harlem or Watts or South Sides or 5th Wards)



Smokehouse painters, left to right: William T. Williams, Guy Ciarcia, Billy Rose, and Edwards, Harlem, about 1968-70



Edwards working on "look through minds mirror distance and measure time" - Jayne Cortez, in 209 East Second Street studio, New York, February 20, 1970



Augusta, 1974



Pyramid Up and Down Pyramid, 1969

in our rural Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Carolina, Ohio, Nebraska, Arizona, California, Utah. We must take ideas from Guyana, Brazil, Jamaica, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad. From the Philippines, New Guinea, India, Ghana, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Congo, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, etc. They are all ours.

The art establishment is offended by the fact that it can be pressured into an exhibition of the work of the American black artist. Historically, American museums did not show the works of African Americans, because they would not consider African American art an integral part of American art. Now that the social & political pressures of the civil right movement has begun to put pressure on museums the art world takes offense and is reactionary. The facades of liberalism are reacting on all the levels. The basic art establishments, galleries, art magazines, collectors, museums, university art departments, art schools, grant & financial aid giving institutions are upset that they can be identified as noncreative racist operations by their documented exclusion of African American artists from a tangible dynamic participation in the various roles and levels in the American art world. The art world and its dehumanizing institutions are not unique in this form of systematic exclusion of the creative abilities of African Americans. These same conditions are apparent in the music, cinema, theatre, television, and literary works as throughout American life.

In 1971 all of this is known and the consequences of the past are sitting on the heads of the present. Museums are being criticized & picketed because of their basic lack of speed in changing to meet the real needs of the variety of cultures they pretend to represent. The real life of this European post colonial western hemisphere nation in North America is built on the land of the American Indian and the backs of African Americans, and contains a fantastically large amount of absorbed African culture and a much larger amount of unabsorbed unutilized African American creativity. African dance & music forms have been utilized and absorbed both intrinsically and exploitatively. In the visual arts the absorption came through European colonization and the bringing back examples of African art as the prizes & loot of conquest. Certain aspects (cubisms) of African styles have been utilized since the turn of the 20th century in European



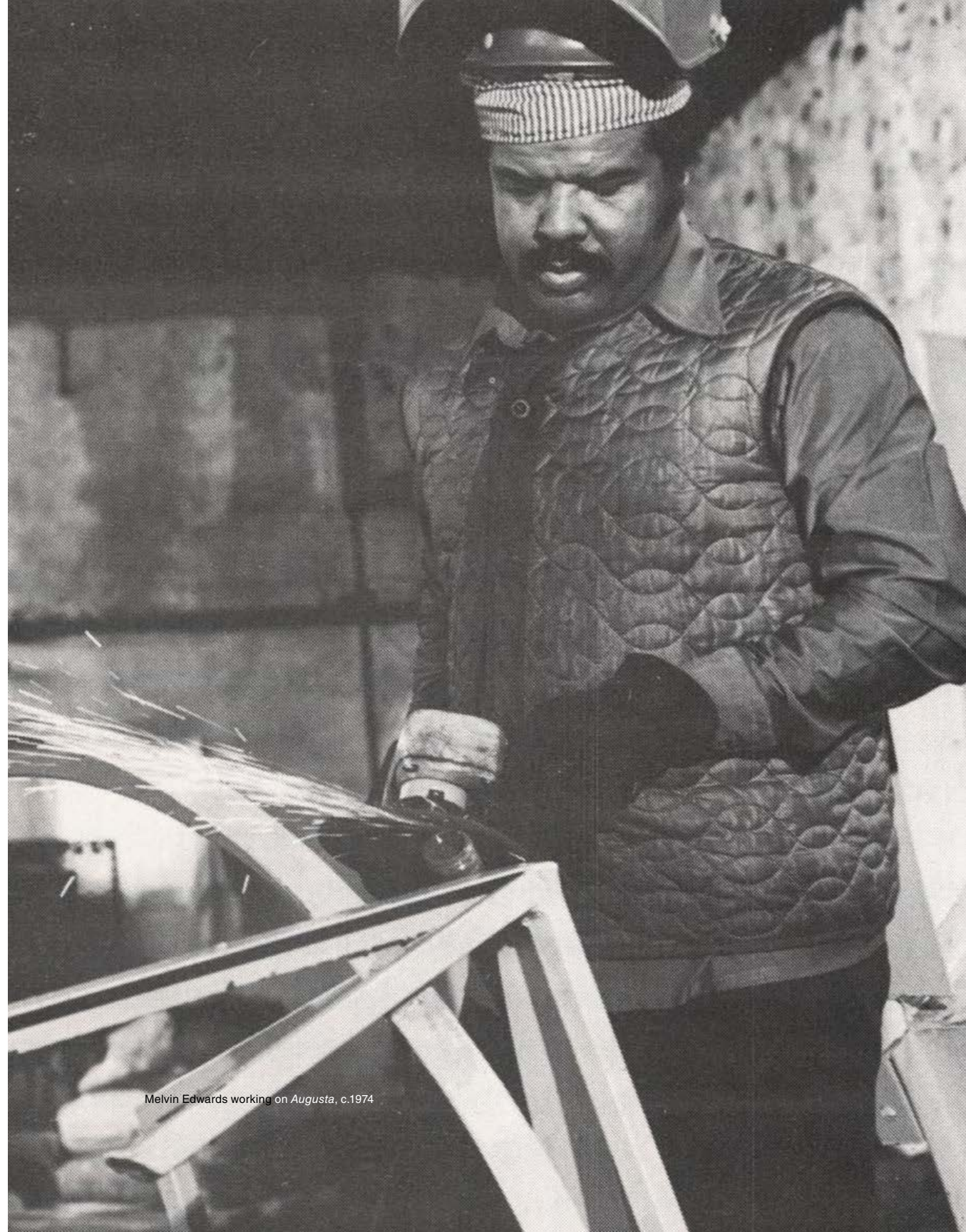
Homage to Coco, 1970

and American art. There was always a body of existing African art survivals in the Americas; in the Spanish, French and Portuguese speaking countries the evidence is highly visible. In the United States the visual creativity of the African American has been ignored and discouraged. Read through any one year of American art periodicals for traces of our heritage. It's not there. However there are survivals. Survivals are positive examples of the strength of our traditional art systems.

Carved wooden grave sculpture in Georgia related to ancestor carvings in West Africa. Iron works with African patterns, shapes & forms as their decorative structure. Traditional plaited hair styles & clean headed Yoruba hair cuts on our men. Painted faces going back to ritual faces. The complex set of African American quilt patterns and systems have real relationships to African plane geometry. The designs are as complex as woven kente cloth from Bonwire & the choices of antisimilar [sic] harmony in accentuated color choices of organic patterns with geometric patterns against plain color are directly observable in how a Fanti woman in Ghana combines her blouse and bottom wrap. These things are all visually apparent as the connections are made with our heritage.

The important thing is not that the establishment has been offended by the pressures of the times but that African American creativity, on all levels, develop the ideas, tools & actions that provide the revolutionary change necessary for a positive world humanism.

Melvin Edwards, 1971



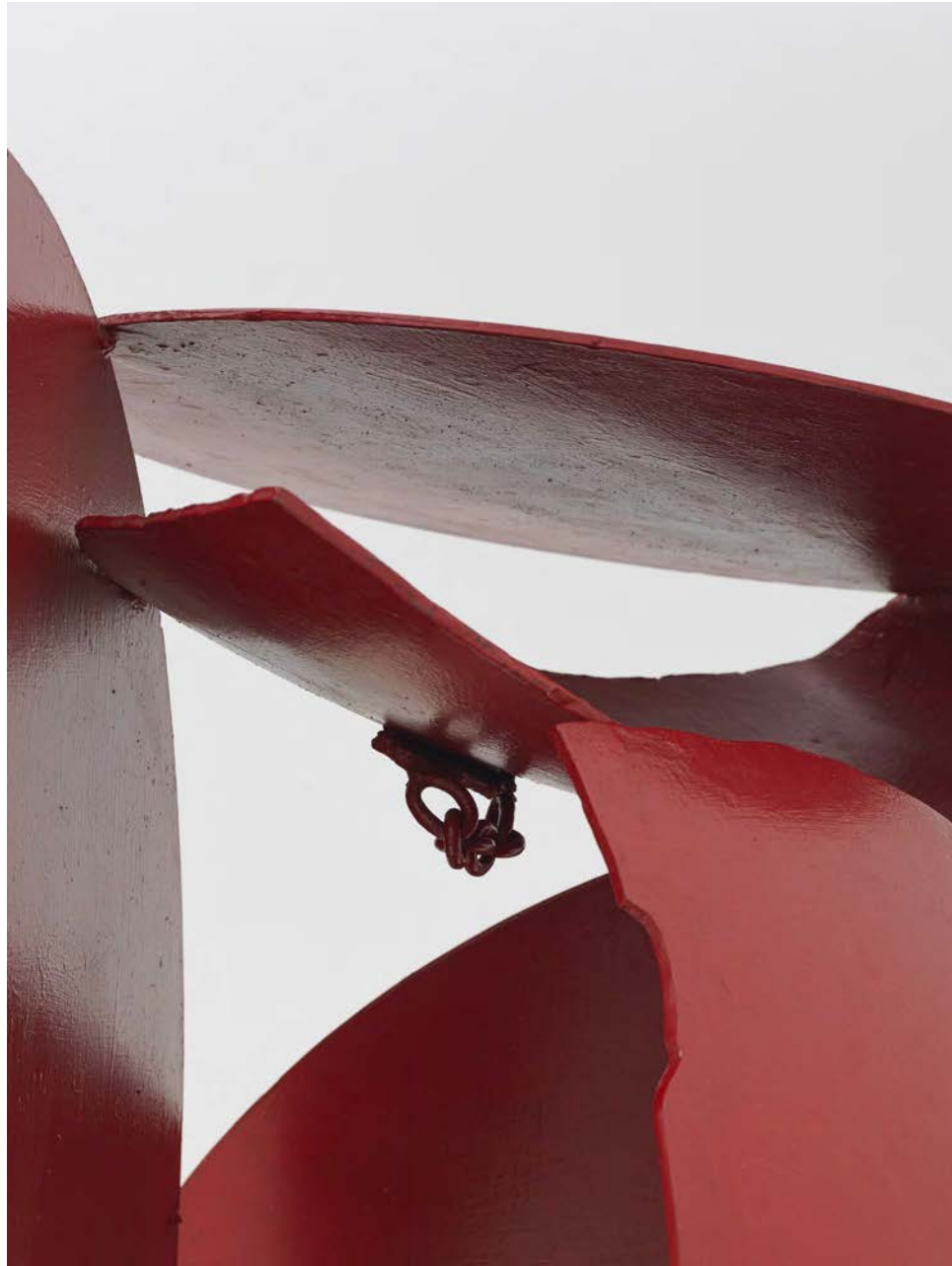
Melvin Edwards working on *Augusta*, c.1974

Melvin Edwards
Painted Sculpture





Luxor-Top, 1983



Luxor-Top, 1983, detail
Right: installation view



Melvin Edwards
Painted Sculpture



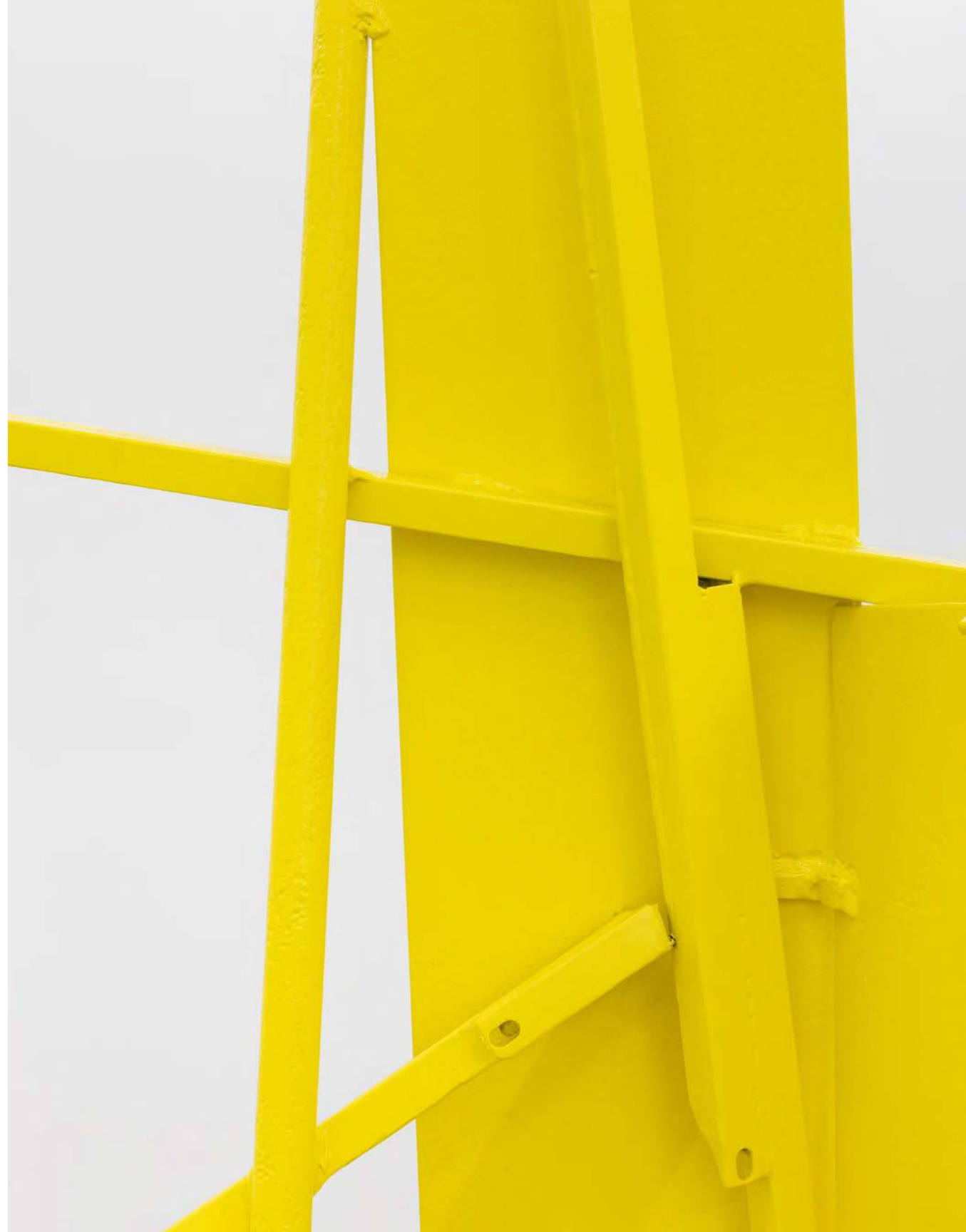
Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2019

Mozambique, c.1974





Mozambique, c.1974
Right: detail





Outdoor view, Germantown, New York, 2019



Felton, 1974



Felton, 1974, detail



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2019



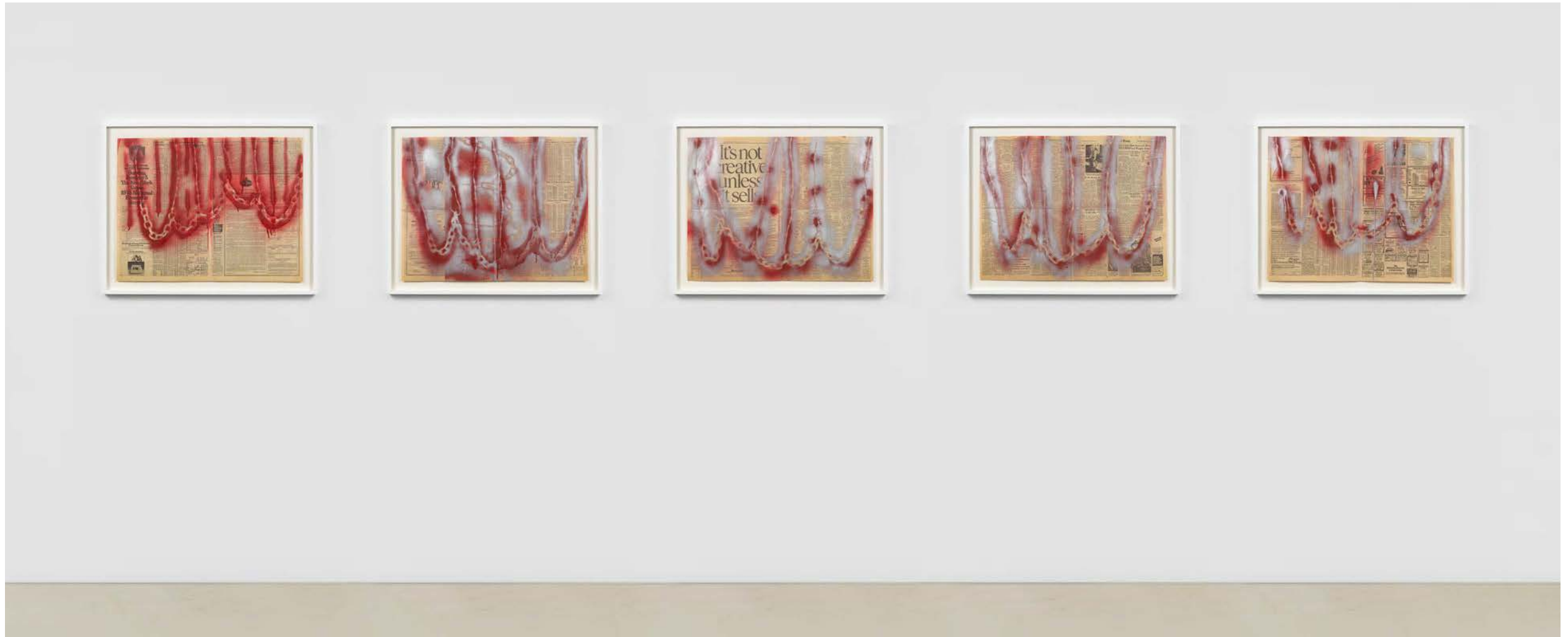
Tan Ton Dymnns, 1974



Tan Ton Dymins, 1974, detail



Outdoor view, Germantown, New York, 2019



"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974

It's not creative unless it sells.

Some have argued that creative advertising is the best way to reach consumers. Others say that creative advertising is a waste of money. The truth is, creative advertising is only as good as the results it produces. If it doesn't sell, it's not creative.

many examples of advertising which are disliked by the very people who are reacting to the message. By the same token, much advertising that is disliked by the critics and consumers alike is successful.

It is not to suggest that advertising is a waste of money or that it is hated to be effective. It is to suggest that if we could always write what we would win awards, that people would not buy our product, and that would sell our product.

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entertainment medium. The success of television advertising is a result of its ability to reach a large audience. It is not the most expensive medium, but it is the most effective. It is the only medium that can reach a large audience in a short period of time.

swarm of words, and the risk of losing a persuasive idea, and the risk of losing a persuasive idea, and the risk of losing a persuasive idea. It is not the most expensive medium, but it is the most effective. It is the only medium that can reach a large audience in a short period of time.

It is not to suggest that advertising is a waste of money or that it is hated to be effective. It is to suggest that if we could always write what we would win awards, that people would not buy our product, and that would sell our product.

Lines for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974, detail

Don't overuse words. A lot of words have no meaning. About advertising entering the intelligence level of 16-year-olds.

not creative unless it sells. The words, is the philosophy that guides

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Eighth Ave
NO FEE
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STUDIOS
(only a few left!)
Call 924-4578

THE PARK
900
Call 924-4578

Call 924-4578

240
CENTRAL PARK
SOUTH
Call 924-4578

85
Eighth Ave
NO FEE
Call 924-4578

THE PARK
900
Call 924-4578

Call 924-4578

80 E. STUDIOS GALDRE
Call 924-4578

85
Eighth Ave
NO FEE
Call 924-4578

THE PARK
900
Call 924-4578

Call 924-4578

55 West 14
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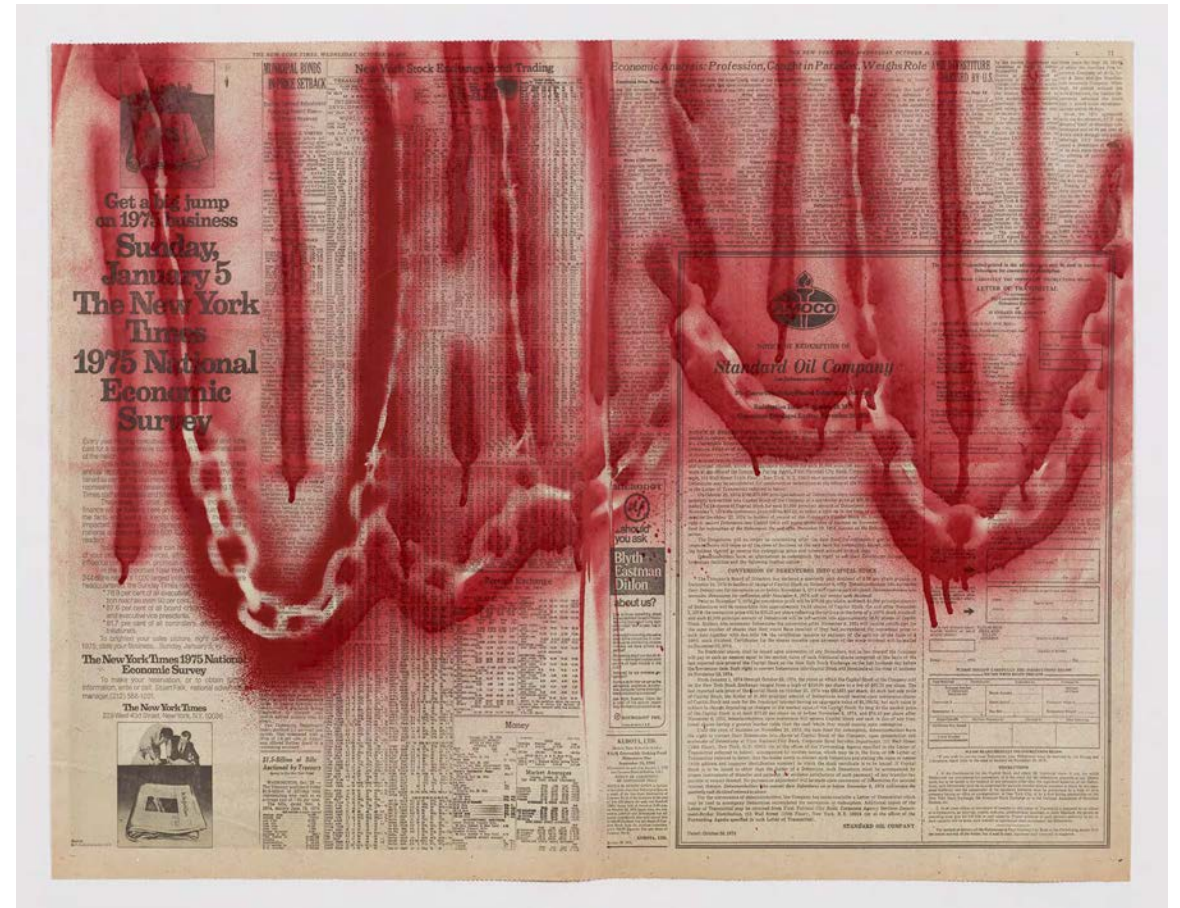
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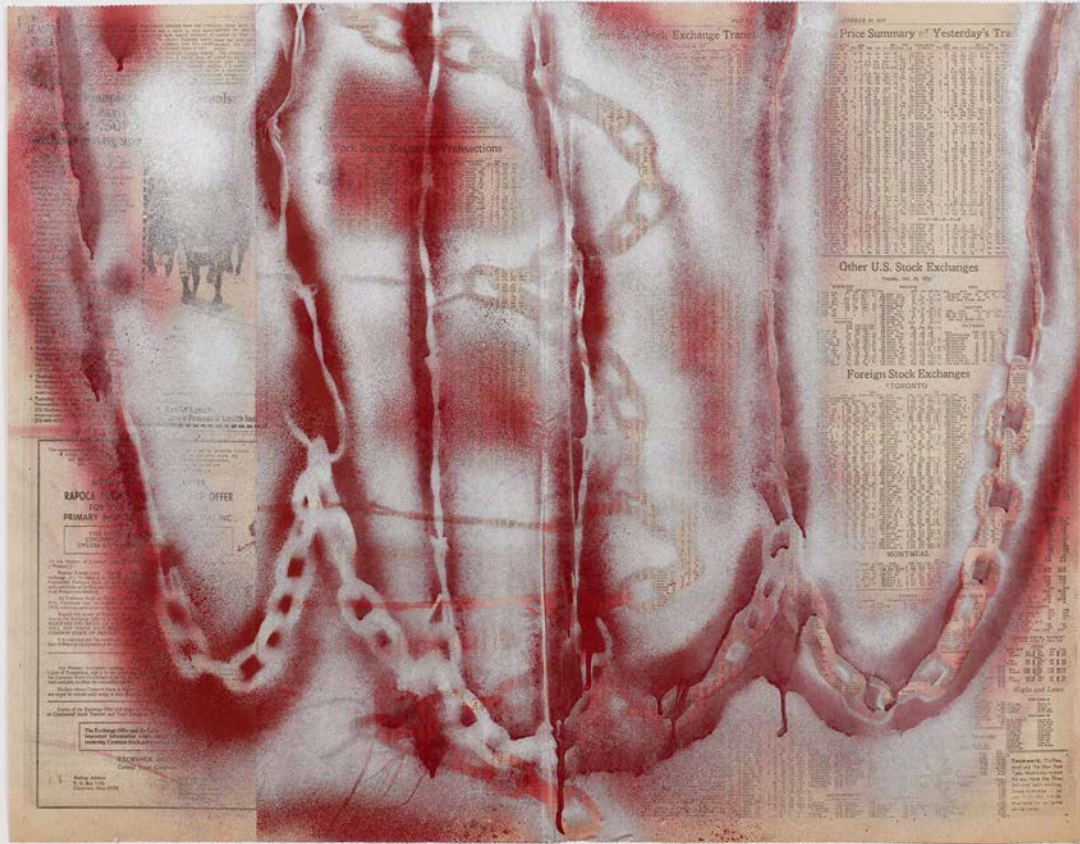
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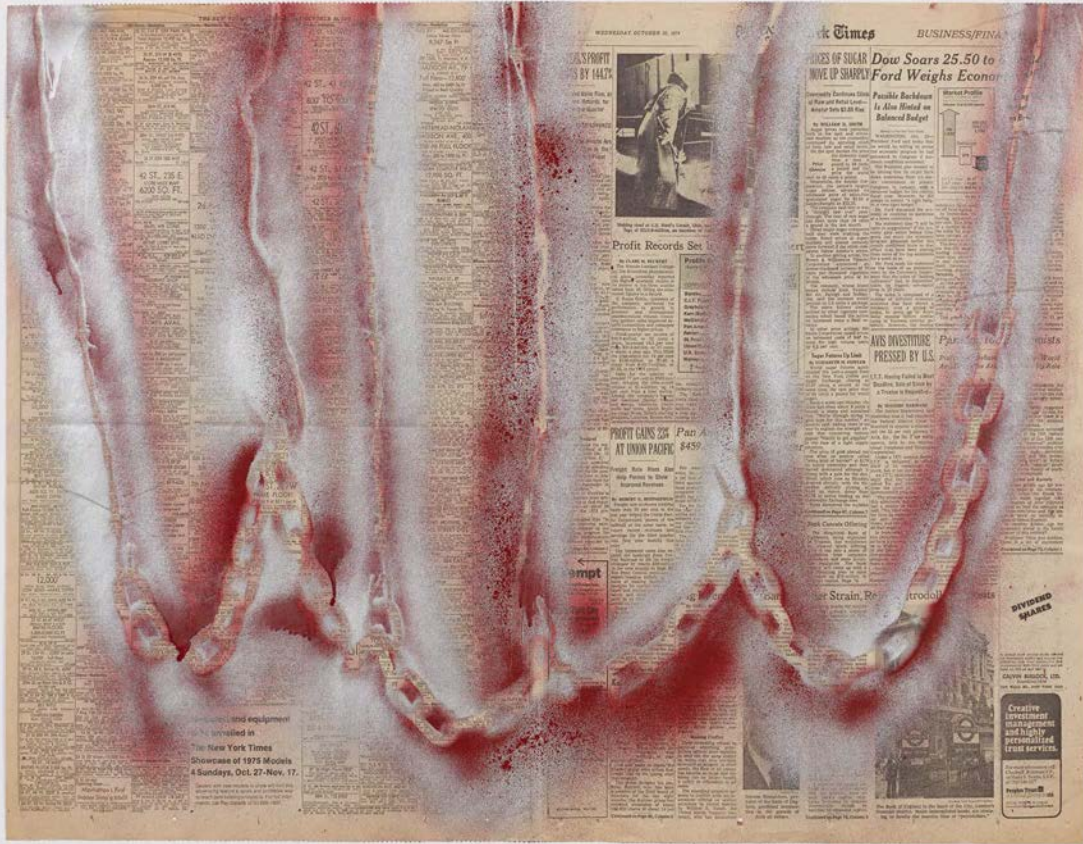
"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974, part 1 of 5



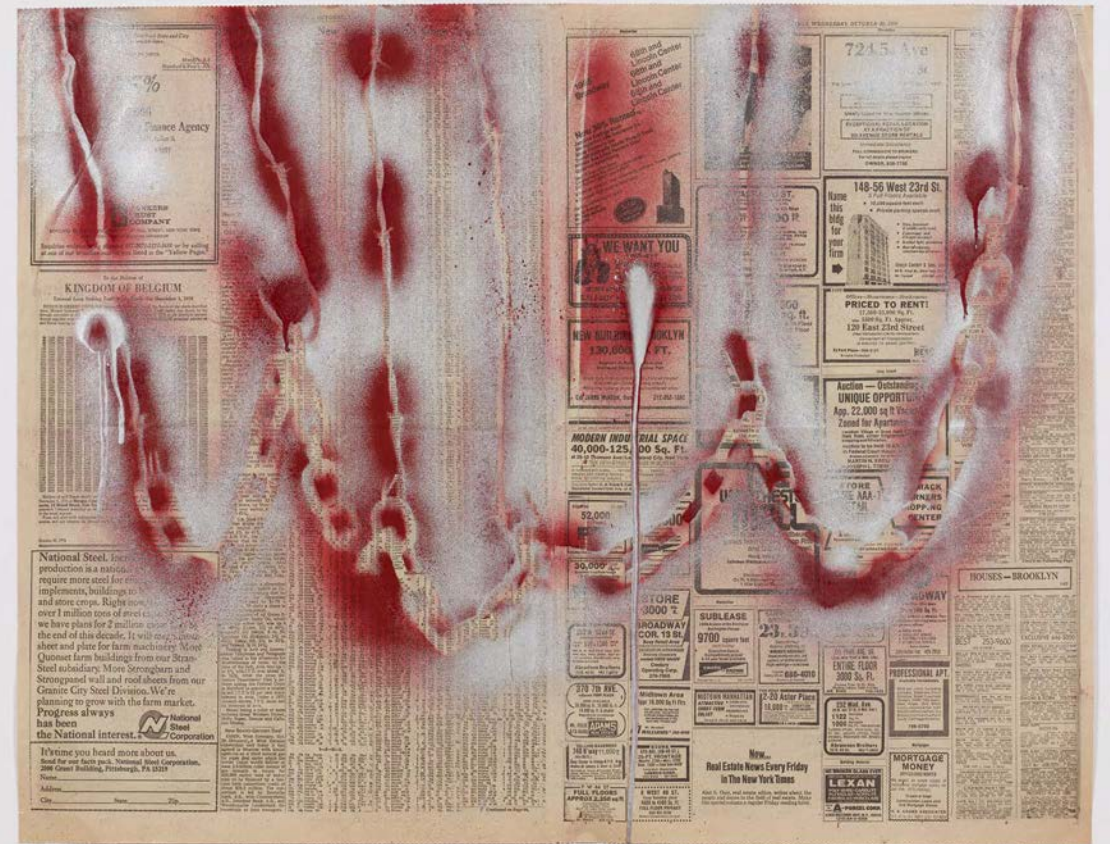
"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974, part 2 of 5



"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974, part 3 of 5



"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974, part 4 of 5



"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974, part 5 of 5



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2019



Ntryty, 1981



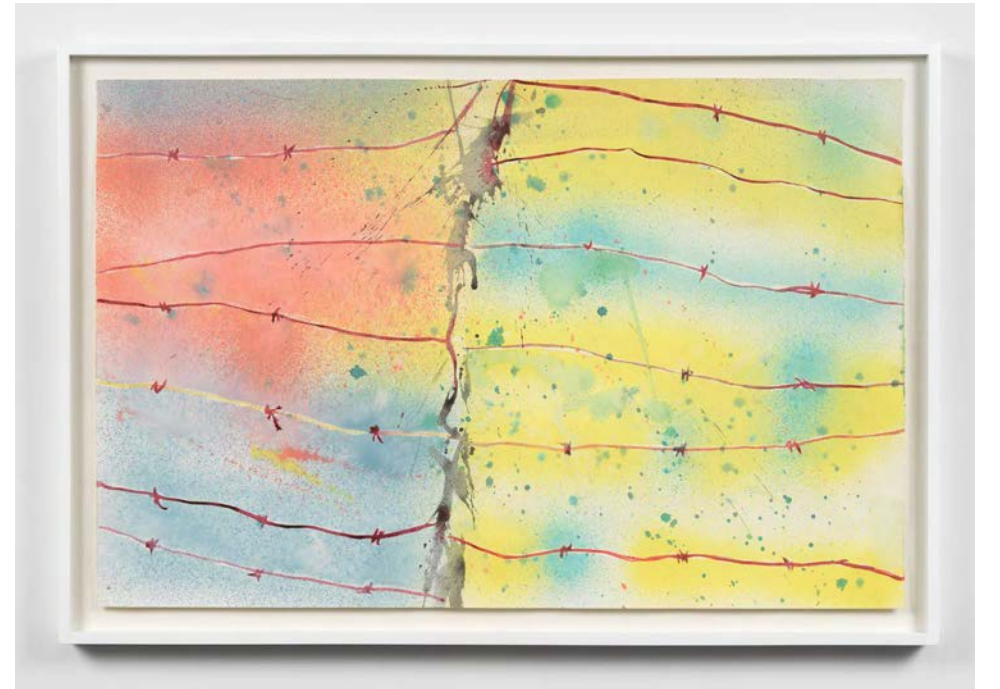
Ntrytry, 1981
Left: detail

Ntryty, 1981, detail

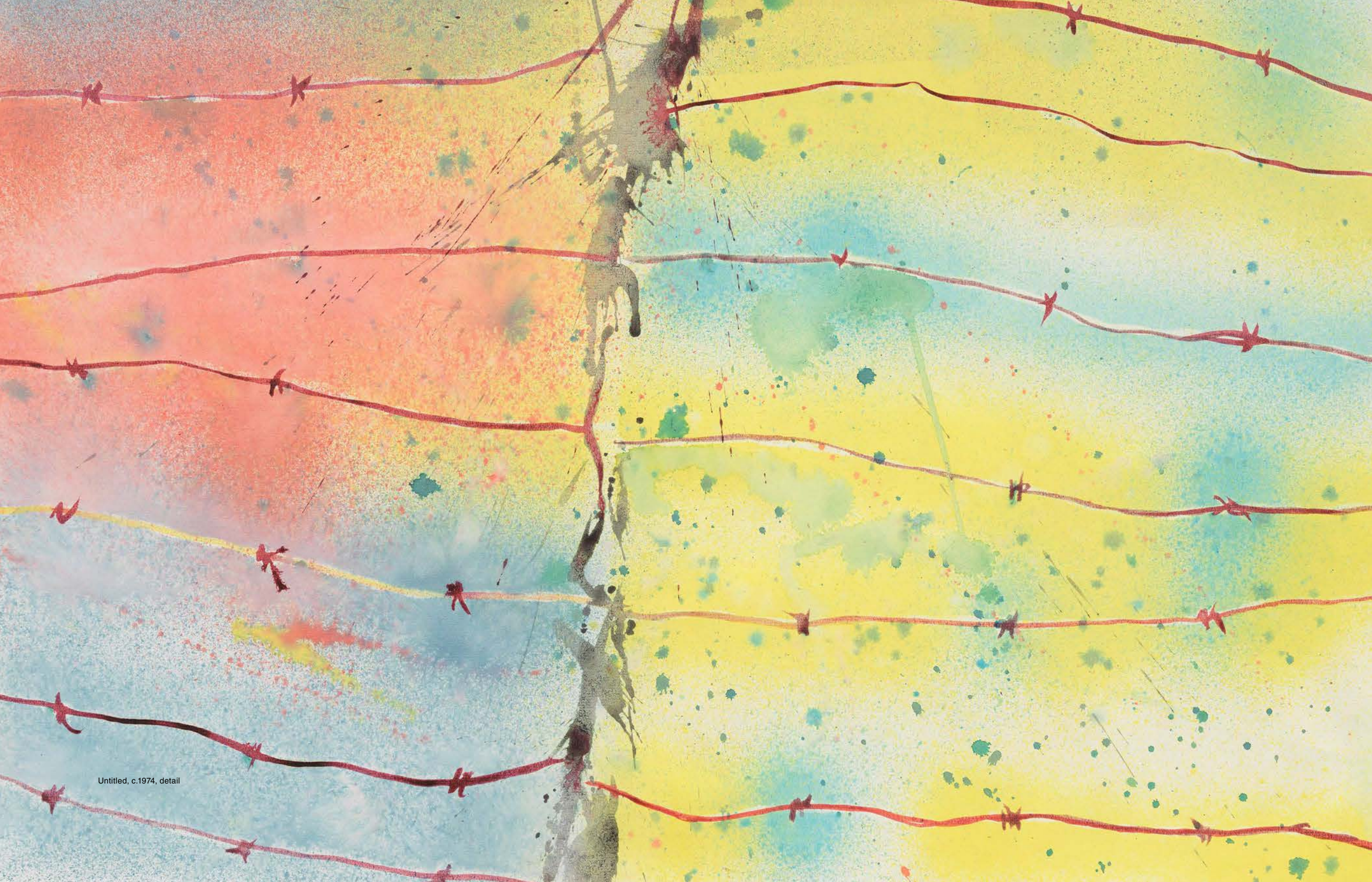




Outdoor view, Germantown, New York, 2019



Untitled, c.1974



Untitled, c.1974, detail



Labadi, 1983



Labadi, 1983

Augusta, 1974





Augusta, 1974, detail



Augusta, 1974, alternative views



Untitled, 1982





Untitled, 1982



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2019



Melvin Edwards, 2019

Melvin Edwards

Melvin Edwards (b.1937) is a pioneer in the history of contemporary African American art and sculpture. Born in Houston, Texas, he began his artistic career at the University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles, CA, where he met and was mentored by the Hungarian painter Francis de Erdely. In 1965, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA organized his first solo exhibition, which launched his professional career. Edwards moved to New York City in 1967. Shortly after his arrival, his work was exhibited at The Studio Museum in Harlem, and in 1970 he became the first African American sculptor to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Edwards' practice reflects his engagement with the history of race, labor, and violence, as well as with themes of the African Diaspora. Making welding his preferred medium, his sculptures are studies in abstraction and minimalism. Ranging from colorful painted sculptures that expand on the modernist vocabulary of artists like Alexander Calder to barbed wire installations to tangled amalgamations of agricultural and industrial elements, his work is distinguished by its formal simplicity and powerful materiality.

Edwards remains best known for his series of *Lynch Fragments*, welded combinations of disparate objects that invite competing narratives of oppression and creation. This body of work spans three periods: the early 1960s, when the artist responded to racial violence in the United States; the early 1970s, when his activism concerning the Vietnam War motivated him to return to the series; and from 1978 to the present, as he continues to explore a variety of themes, including his personal connection to Africa. Edwards first traveled to the continent in the 1970s with his late wife, the poet Jayne Cortez. Since his initial trip, he has returned to Africa many times, teaching welding in different countries before ultimately establishing a studio in Dakar, Senegal in 2000.

In addition, Edwards has a longstanding commitment to public art. Since the 1960s, he has created sculptures for universities, public housing projects, and museums. His commissions include *Homage to My Father and the Spirit* (1969) at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; *Holder of the Light* (1985) at Lafayette Gardens, Jersey City, NJ; and *Asafo Kra No* (1993) at the Utsukushi-Ga-Hara Open-Air Museum, Nagano Prefecture, Japan. Edwards' large-scale sculptures extend his extraordinary range of aesthetic expression, reaffirming his commitment to abstraction.

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*. In 2015, the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, TX presented a second retrospective, *Melvin Edwards: Five*

Decades. This exhibition traveled to the Zimmerli Museum of Art, Rutgers University, NJ and to the Columbus Museum of Art, OH. Other recent solo exhibitions include *Melvin Edwards: Festivals, Funerals, and New Life*, Brown University, Providence, RI (2017); *Melvin Edwards: Lynch Fragments*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), Brazil (2018); and *Melvin Edwards: Crossroads*, Baltimore Museum of Art, MD (2019), traveled to Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, LA (2020) and University of Southern California (USC) Fisher Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (2020). Edwards' work has also been featured in innumerable group exhibitions, including *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2017), traveled to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK (2018), Brooklyn Museum, NY (2018), The Broad, Los Angeles, CA (2019), de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA (2019), and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX (2020); *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic 1945–1965*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2016); *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*, The Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2012), traveled to Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2013); *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980*, MoMA PS1, Queens, NY (2012); and *African American Art: Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Era, and Beyond*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2011), traveled to Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC (2012). Edwards' work is represented in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Houston, TX; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), Philadelphia, PA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), CA; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 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, MA.

Exhibition Checklist

Luxor-Top, 1983
Painted welded steel
40.50h x 42w x 37d in
(102.87h x 106.68w x 93.98d cm)

Felton, 1974
Painted welded steel in 2 parts
Part 1: 23h x 95w x 80d in
Part 2: 59.75h x 68w x 64.5d in

Mozambique, c. 1974
Painted welded steel
92h x 71w x 16.50d in
(233.68h x 180.34w x 41.91d cm)

Tan Ton Dymnns, 1974
Painted welded steel in 2 parts
Part 1: 84.5h x 36w x 37d in
Part 2: 66.36h x 78.5w x 34d in

Ntrytry, 1981
Painted welded steel and chain
57h x 132w x 60.75d in
(144.78h x 335.28w x 154.31d cm)

"Lines" for John Coltrane and other Creative People, 1974
Spray paint on newspaper in 5 parts
Each: 22.5h x 29.13w in

Untitled, c. 1974
Watercolor on paper
23h x 35w in
(58.42h x 88.90w cm)

Other Illustrated Works

Augusta, 1974
Painted welded steel
66h x 61.75w x 56.50d in
(167.64h x 156.84w x 143.51d cm)

Labadi, 1983
Painted welded steel
25.25h x 50w x 32d in
(64.14h x 127w x 81.28d cm)

Untitled, 1982
Painted welded steel
24h x 31.50w x 22d in
(60.96h x 80.01w x 55.88d cm)

Untitled, 1982
Painted welded steel
23h x 29w x 28d in
(58.42h x 73.66w x 71.12d cm)

Homage to Coco, 1970
Painted steel and chain
48h x 96w x 120d in
(121.92h x 243.84w x 304.80d cm)

Yellow Diamond, 1968
Painted welded steel
Dimension unknown

Dancing in Nigeria, 1974–1978
Painted welded steel
Dimensions variable

Double Circles, 1970
Painted steel
8h x 6w x 10.50d in
(20.32h x 15.24w x 26.67d cm)
Bethune Towers, Harlem, NY

Pyramid Up and Down Pyramid, 1969/
Barbed wire
Dimensions variable
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2019

Published by Alexander Gray Associates on the occasion of the exhibition

Melvin Edwards: *Painted Sculpture*

October 24 – December 14, 2019

Publication © 2019 Alexander Gray Associates, LLC

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ISBN: 978-0-578-60422-0

Cover image: *Luxor-Top*, 1983, painted welded steel, 40.5h x 42w x 37d in (102.87h x 106.68w x 93.98d cm)

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Printing: Puritan Capital

Photography Credits:

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p. 6 (bottom), 10–13: courtesy Melvin Edwards and Nasher Sculpture Center

p. 9: Amílcar de Castro, *Untitled*, 1995, corten steel, 3.5 in (80 cm) diameter, courtesy Gallery Marília Razuk, © Instituto Almícar de Castro

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Special thanks to Melvin Edwards, Dr. Diala Touré, Kyle Zynda, Evan Halter, Catherine Craft.

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