

Nasher Sculpture Center



Press Release

Nasher Sculpture Center Announces *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*

The Nasher Sculpture Center presents the first retrospective in more than 20 years of the renowned American sculptor, Melvin Edwards, including never-before exhibited works

DALLAS, Texas (October 20, 2014) – The Nasher Sculpture Center announces the exhibition *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*, a retrospective of the renowned American sculptor, January 31-May 10, 2015. Melvin Edwards’s career spans crucial periods of upheaval and change in American culture and society, and his sculpture provides a critical bridge between modernist techniques and materials and contemporary approaches to the art object. In 1988, *New York Times* critic Michael Brenson lauded Edwards as “one of the best American sculptors... [and] one of the least known.” Over the past five decades, Edwards has produced a remarkable body of work redefining the modernist tradition of welded sculpture.

“Exhibiting the work of Melvin Edwards is a tremendous privilege for the Nasher,” says Director Jeremy Strick. “His expansive, decades-long sculptural practice in welded steel fuses vital Modernist traditions with deeply held personal and social convictions, and the results are uniquely powerful artistic responses to some of the most volatile and pivotal events of our times. In addition to its historical and political relevance, Edwards’s work also has important connections with the radical experimentation and international outlook of contemporary art, positioning him as an artist of rare versatility and reach.”

Melvin Edwards: Five Decades bears witness to Edwards’s profound commitment, from the very beginning of his career, to an art that is both abstract and deeply engaged with meaning and expression. A truly international artist well before the advent of today’s global art world, Edwards has brought his experiences of other cultures and languages, particularly those of Africa, into his work, to explore the varied ways that art can forge bonds of connection and kinship. He is best known for his *Lynch Fragments*, an ongoing series of small-scale reliefs begun in Los Angeles in the early 1960s and born out of the social and political turmoil of the civil rights movement. Incorporating tools and other familiar objects, such as chains, locks, and ax heads, Edwards’s *Lynch Fragments* are abstract yet evocative, summoning a range of artistic, cultural, and historical references.

Melvin Edwards: Five Decades will feature a broad selection of *Lynch Fragments*, including early manifestations, which spoke to racial tensions and political and cultural struggles of the 1960s; Edwards’s return to the series in the early 1970s, during the Vietnam War; and a group from 1978 to the present, exploring memory, history, and African and African American culture.

Presenting a full range of Edwards's achievements, *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades* – the first retrospective of his work in more than twenty years – will reveal that his career has extended far beyond the *Lynch Fragments*. Major large-scale sculptures of the 1960s, such as *Chaino*, *The Lifted X*, and *August the Squared Fire*, will be included, as well as his *Rockers* of the 1970s, which incorporate movement and, in some cases, sound.

Melvin Edwards: Five Decades will also feature many works not seen since their creation, and in some cases never before exhibited. With the artist's cooperation, the Nasher will recreate the groundbreaking 1970 exhibition of his barbed-wire sculptures originally shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Several large sculptures have been restored for the Nasher's presentation, most notably the first *Rocker*, *Homage to Coco*, which was in the 1970 Whitney sculpture annual. Also on view will be sculptures Edwards has made in Senegal over the past decade, as well as a selection of maquettes and prototypes reflecting his long career in public sculpture, and rarely exhibited works on paper, including sketchbooks and collaborations with the artist's late wife, the celebrated poet and performer Jayne Cortez.

Organized by the Nasher's Associate Curator Catherine Craft, the exhibition will travel to other US museums and will be accompanied by a richly illustrated scholarly catalogue with essays by Craft, scholars Alex Potts and Tobias Wofford, a conversation with the artist, and a catalogue of Edwards's public sculptures by Nasher Assistant Curator Leigh A. Arnold. Edwards will speak about his work and practice as part of the Nasher's 360 Speaker Series on January 31, 2015.

About Melvin Edwards

Born in Houston, Texas in 1937, Edwards attended college in Los Angeles, graduating with a BFA from the University of Southern California. In 1967, he moved to New York, where he lives today, dividing his time between his studio in Plainfield, New Jersey and residences, with studios, in Accord, New York and Dakar, Senegal. His work is held in many US museum collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

For images and captions from the exhibition, please follow the Dropbox link below:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zdfy9qe6gehdo0b/AABuYs1IGlr_gP_bzfTS4GHFa?dl=0

Melvin Edwards: Five Decades is supported in part by a major grant from the Henry Luce Foundation and by the generous support of Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger.

About the Nasher Sculpture Center:

Open since 2003 and located in the heart of the Dallas Arts District, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculptures in the world, the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, featuring more than 300 masterpieces by Calder, Giacometti, Matisse, Picasso, Rodin, and more. The longtime dream of the late Raymond and Patsy Nasher, the museum was designed by world-renowned architect Renzo Piano in collaboration with landscape architect Peter Walker.

Hailed by *USA Today* as one of the great sculpture gardens where art enhances nature, the roofless museum seamlessly integrates the indoor galleries with the outdoor spaces creating a museum experience unlike any other in the world. On view in the light-filled galleries and amid the landscaped grounds are rotating works from the Collection, as well as blockbuster exhibitions and one-of-a-kind installations by the most celebrated artists of our times. In addition to the indoor and outdoor gallery spaces, the Center contains an auditorium, education and research facilities, a cafe, and a store.

The Nasher brings the best of contemporary culture to Dallas through special programs designed to engage visitors, including artist talks, lecture programs, contemporary music concerts, educational classes and exclusive member events.

The Nasher Sculpture Center is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm and until 11 pm for special events, and from 10 am to 5 pm on the first Saturday of each month. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$5 for students, and free for members and children 12 and under, and includes access to special exhibitions. For more information, visit www.NasherSculptureCenter.org.

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