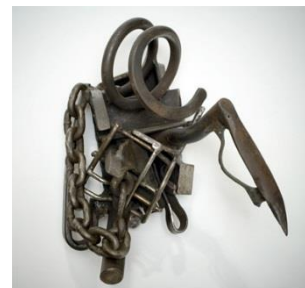


**THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS  
*MELVIN EDWARDS: CROSSROADS***

*Africa is with me every day. It's part of my universe, along with everything else that's part of my universe.  
The problem with most discussions of modernism is that they aren't personal enough.*

—Melvin Edwards, 2019

BALTIMORE, MD (August 15, 2019)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) today announced the presentation of *Melvin Edwards: Crossroads*, an exhibition that explores the cross-cultural connections in the artist's work from 1977 to the present. On view September 29, 2019 through January 12, 2020, this exhibition of 23 sculptures and installations focuses on the ways in which Edward's dynamic welded steel works have been equally influenced by his singular vision of abstraction and by his personal experiences—from growing up during the civil rights era in the U.S. to engaging with a variety of African cultures.



“Mel Edwards is a master of modern sculpture whose cosmopolitan vision of art and life reflects his engagement with the history of race, labor, and violence, as well as with themes of African Diaspora,” said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “Edwards shows us a universe in which African and modern belong to a shared history of materiality and culture.”

Edwards (American, b. 1937) was profoundly energized by his experience at a major arts festival in Lagos in 1977, and since then, his work has increasingly connected to African art, languages, poetry, liberation politics, and philosophy. He has made reciprocal ties to many African countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Senegal, where he has maintained a home for nearly 20 years. The exhibition features 18 of the artist's *Lynch Fragments*, a group of sculptures comprised of raw metal; familiar objects such as knives, hooks, and machine parts; and tools from Africa and the United States. While the artist began the *Lynch Fragments* series in 1963, many of the titles from the 1980s to the present come from African dialects and carry the connotation of return, recapitulation, and exchange. These works are accompanied by two large-scale sculptures, including the room-size installation, *Agricole* (2016) to tell the story of Edwards' travels, the people he engaged, and the larger social history of the period.

*Melvin Edwards: Crossroads* is organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art and co-curated by Katy Siegel, BMA Senior Programming and Research Curator and Thaw Endowed Chair in Modern American Art at Stony Brook University, and Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. A brochure produced in conjunction with the exhibition features an interview with the artist by noted scholar Tobias Wofford, Assistant Professor, Department of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University.

In 2020, *Melvin Edwards: Crossroads* will be presented at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, LA, and Fisher Museum of Art at the University of Southern California.

This exhibition is generously sponsored by the Smart Family Foundation of Illinois and the Henry Moore Foundation.

**MELVIN EDWARDS**

Melvin Edwards (b.1937) is a pioneering African American artist who divides his time between New York, Baltimore, and Senegal. Born in Houston, Texas, he began his artistic career at the University of Southern California, where he met and was mentored by Hungarian painter Francis de Erdely. In 1965 the Santa Barbara Museum of Art organized Edwards' first solo exhibition, which launched his professional career. He moved to New York City in 1967, and his work was soon exhibited at the Studio Museum. In 1970, Edwards became the first African-American sculptor to have works presented in a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Other major solo exhibitions include *Melvin Edwards Sculpture: A Thirty-Year Retrospective 1963–1993* at the Neuberger Museum of Art in

Purchase, NY (1993); *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades* at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, TX (2015), Zimmerli Museum of Art, Rutgers University, NJ; Columbus Museum of Art, OH; *Melvin Edwards: Festivals, Funerals, and New Life* at Brown University in Providence, RI (2017); and *Melvin Edwards: Lynch Fragments* at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo in Brazil (2018). The artist's work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* (2017-2019); *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*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2012-2013); and *African American Art: Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Era, and Beyond*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC (2012).

Edwards' public art projects include *Homage to My Father and the Spirit* (1969) at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; *Holder of the Light* (1985) at Lafayette Gardens, Jersey City, NJ; and *Asafokra* (1990) at the Utsukushi-Ga-Hara Open-Air Museum, Nagano Prefecture, Japan. His work is also represented in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York; as well as at The Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), Philadelphia, PA; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; 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.

### THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,200 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000- square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

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#### For media in Baltimore:

Anne Mannix Brown / Sarah Pedroni  
The Baltimore Museum of Art  
443-573-1870  
[abrown@artbma.org](mailto:abrown@artbma.org) / [spedroni@artbma.org](mailto:spedroni@artbma.org)

#### For media outside of Baltimore:

Sascha Freudenheim/Alina Sumajin  
PAVE Communications & Consulting  
917-544-6057 / 646-369-2050  
[sascha@paveconsult.com](mailto:sascha@paveconsult.com) / [alina@paveconsult.com](mailto:alina@paveconsult.com)