

# ESSEX STREET

## ORDER

Romare Bearden

Melvin Edwards

K.r.m. Mooney

Christina Ramberg

Richard Rezac

December 17 2015 – January 31 2016

Opening Thursday December 17 6–8PM

Organizing principles are what dog us and not just in art...

Must we sacrifice some part of our vision to buy into a received language that we all share?

Or is it possible that there are visual systems that lie deeper within us, deeper than culture, that can serve artists as organizing frameworks?<sup>i</sup> The line between the vessel and what is being contained is completely wiped out, implying an ongoing metamorphosis and dialogue.<sup>ii</sup> ...but with the far more essential notion of representation – with opening up the authentic and experiential through formal means.<sup>iii</sup>

In this group the representations of the physical body has transformed into the psychical body.<sup>iv</sup> Such work has a resonance lodged in its capacity vividly to evoke and somehow to forge together deeply embedded tensions, and to do so in a way that the work's political and ethical content is inseparable from its material and sculptural qualities.<sup>v</sup> ...the suggestive interplay between the integrity of recognizable found items and the amalgamation and refashioning of component parts that make their origins almost impossible to determine.<sup>vi</sup> The front and back "views" of what we know to be a three-dimensional form (the head) is transposed to two dimensions, or rather two opposite plans of a thin rectangular volume, so that we are forced to confront the differences between the ways we read two dimensional images and our knowledge of the three-dimensional thing pictured and reflected.<sup>vii</sup> Juxtapositions of scale also help increase the tension created by the spatial divisions of the composition.<sup>viii</sup> ...becomes another object, loaded with memories and history, including those of its own making.<sup>ix</sup>

Windows, steps, stoops, and roofs form a grid that is both inexact and precise.<sup>x</sup> Keys, locks, and doors are the most literal examples, but the same logic applies to the abstract ways different compounds move in and out of objects and architectural spaces.<sup>xi</sup> The batons were each composed of plastic product parts—aquarium-heater elements, fluorescent lights, tubes, clamps, plugs, joints, and straps—that were plated with metals, including copper, nickel, and silver, and garnished with a single lavender stem cast in bimetals whose oxidized surface had it a taupe patina.<sup>xii</sup> ...lavished such a profusion of gores, darts, tucks, insets, double seams, gussets, panels and bias cuts...<sup>xiii</sup> ...like plastic, cursive, flexible, changeling, how things warp when they should woof and vice versa, how every detail is separate while also being totally integrated into the whole, how line and mass and volume weave into and out of each other, how nothing is irrelevant, there's no filler, how integrity and commitment are imbued into the placement of each and every stone.<sup>xiv</sup>

She then suggests a number of ways of drawing, including one that results in what she calls a *hybrid/graft* and describes as *a cross between one or more objects or QUALITIES of those objects*...consider a transfer of function (or of texture) from one image to another as well as a denial of function...*How would a comb that cannot untangle hair look?*<sup>xv</sup> "Spiral," alluding to the mathematical symbol of the Archimedean spiral, "because, from a starting point, it moves outward embracing all directions, yet constantly upward."<sup>xvi</sup> A blade-shaped triangle of metal unfurled at the left, and just in front of it, a chain dangled down, an inchoate lump of metal at its end.<sup>xvii</sup> ...a mixture of atoms that share enough properties to allow them to be brought together but that generate others that are unpredictable and normatively unintelligible.<sup>xviii</sup>

The elements are often coagulated or compacted into one another, while the liquefying effects of welding leave traces here and there with solidified lumps of viscous steel.<sup>xix</sup> Instead, they coalesce in a process of alignment, attachment, and migration, giving rise to emergent properties that exceed the sum of any parts...In quantum terms, this is known as *entanglement*, and in ontological terms, as *difference*, and it is the way we have come to describe the nature of all systems.<sup>xx</sup> What seemed ubiquitous, common, invisible, almost beneath notice – in this case, domestic architecture – becomes almost excruciatingly pertinent and active, an encounter that completely reframes that experience, both of and not of our understanding of the world, extending a language we thought we knew with fresh harmonies and challenges.<sup>xxi</sup>

114 Eldridge Street, New York

(917) 263-1001 info@essexstreet.biz

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“Bearden had collected,” Amos said “an enormous picture file, all cut out in shapes and stuffed in a bag.”<sup>xxii</sup>

For Ramberg, the partial figure operates in a number of ways; when such a fragment nearly fills the pictorial format or at least touches (or is rather terminated by) one of its edges, the scale of the image is enhanced because we complete the “truncated” form to dimensions which exceed that of the picture itself.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Steel’s ubiquitous availability as a useful material means that the *Lynch Fragments*, are practically speaking, polymorphously perverse, their components able to become tools again, or scrap that can be used for something else. Gears hammer heads, chains: these items and more can be found in Edwards’s sculptures, but they can also be used to *make* a sculpture – or build a house, or be taken up as weapons by intended victims as readily as aggressors.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Rezac then subjects that source element or pattern to what seem intense and hypersensitive adjustments and permutations that cull out its essence, employing unexpected materials and colors that can range far from the original impetus, somehow refining and clarifying it, making it pertinent and heightened.<sup>xxv</sup>

Mooney asserts sculpture’s capacity as assemblage in the chemical sense: the works push forward the alchemical properties of materials by conceiving of them as migrants, fluid and unordered forms that pass through, inside, around and near each other, thereby becoming each other.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Craftsmanship must be grounded in meaning or it is nothing but treasure.<sup>xxvii</sup>

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i Thomas Nozkowski, “Richard Rezac,” *Bomb*, Spring 2003, 100.

ii Deborah E. Gimelson, “Metamorphosis: Christina Ramberg and the Imagists,” *GALO - Global Art Laid Out*, January 11, 2012, galomagazine.com/artdesign/metamorphosis-christina-ramberg-and-the-imagists/.

iii Thelma Golden, “Projecting Blackness,” in *Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964*, ed. Gail Gelburd and Thelma Golden (New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997), 40.

iv Carol Becker, “Christina Ramberg in Retrospect,” in *Christina Ramberg, A Retrospective: 1968–1988* (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1988), 25.

v Alex Potts, “Melvin Edwards’s Sculptural Intensity” in *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*, ed. Catherine Craft (Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center, 2015), 55.

vi Potts, “Melvin Edwards’s Sculptural Intensity,” 51.

vii Dennis Adrian, “Christina Ramberg,” in *Christina Ramberg, A Retrospective: 1968–1988* (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1988), 7.

viii Gail Gelburd, “Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964,” in *Romare Bearden in Black and White: The Photomontage Projections of 1964*, ed. Gail Gelburd and Thelma Golden (New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997), 24.

ix Catherine Craft, *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades—The Lynch Fragments*, exhibition brochure (New Brunswick: Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, 2015), 1.

x Golden, “Projecting Blackness,” 45.

xi Anthony Huberman, *En, Set* (San Francisco: The Wattis Institute, 2015), 12.

xii Catherine Taft, “K.r.m. Mooney,” *Artforum*, May 2015, 240.

xiii Adrian, “Christina Ramberg,” 7.

xiv James Yood, *Richard Rezac: Selected Sculpture and Drawing, 2003–2008* (Glen Ellyn, Illinois: College of DuPage, 2009), 5.

xv Barbara Rossi, “Some Reflections on Christina Ramberg’s Drawings,” in *Christina Ramberg Drawings* (Chicago: Gallery 400, 2000), 59–60.

xvi Gelburd, “Romare Bearden in Black and White,” 18.

xvii Catherine Craft, “This Life as a Sculptor,” in *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*, ed. Catherine Craft (Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center, 2015), 13.

xviii Huberman, *En, Set*, 8.

xix Potts, “Melvin Edwards’s Sculptural Intensity,” 49.

xx Huberman, *En, Set*, 4–5.

xxi Yood, *Richard Rezac: Selected Sculpture and Drawing, 2003–2008*, 2.

xxii Gelburd, “Romare Bearden in Black and White,” 18.

xxiii Adrian, “Christina Ramberg,” 4.

xxiv Craft, “This Life as a Sculptor,” 14.

xxv Yood, *Richard Rezac: Selected Sculpture and Drawing, 2003–2008*, 4.

xxvi “K.r.m. Mooney,” *Sculpture Notebook*, July 16, 2015, sculpture-center.tumblr.com/post/124250141585/featured-artist-krm-mooney-trained-as-a.

xxvii Nozkowski, “Richard Rezac,” 101.

## ESSEX STREET

Romare Bearden (b. 1911, Charlotte, NC; d. 1988, New York, NY) lived and worked in New York. He graduated from New York University in 1935 and studied at the Art Students League from 1936 to 1937. Bearden has been the subject of a number of major retrospectives including those at the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina in 1980, the Detroit Institute of the Arts, Michigan in 1986, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York in 1991 and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC in 2003. The Perez Art Museum, Miami, will present a survey of his Photostats in 2016. His work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and The Studio Museum in Harlem, among others. In 1987 he was awarded the National Medal of the Arts.

Melvin Edwards (b. 1937, Houston, TX) lives and works in New York; Plainfield, New Jersey; Accord, New York; and Dakar, Senegal. He received his BFA from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles in 1965. A career survey of his work, *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*, curated by Catherine Craft, was originally held at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas earlier this year and is currently on view at the Zimmerli Museum of Art at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. It will tour to the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, in 2016. His work has recently been included in *All the World's Futures*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, at the 56th Venice Biennale and *A Constellation* at The Studio Museum in Harlem. His work is in the collections the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, among others.

K.r.m. Mooney (b. 1990, Seattle, WA) lives and works in Oakland, California. Mooney received a BFA in Jewelry and Metal Arts from the California College of the Arts in 2012. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *En, Set*, curated by Anthony Huberman, at The Wattis Institute, San Francisco, and  $\sigma$ , with Piotr Lakomy at Hester, New York. Mooney's work is in the collections of the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Christina Ramberg (b.1946, Fort Campbell, KY; d. 1995, Chicago, IL) lived and worked in Chicago where she received her both her BFA and MFA from the School of the Art Institute in 1968 and 1973, respectively. The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston held a career survey of her work, curated by Jenelle Porter, in 2013. Recent group exhibitions include *What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art, 1960 to the Present* at the RISD Museum, Providence in 2015 and the *2014 Liverpool Biennial* at the Tate Liverpool, UK. Her work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the MCA Chicago, and the Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, among others.

Richard Rezac (b. 1952, Lincoln, NE) lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. He received his BFA from the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon in 1974 and his MFA from The Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore in 1982. A survey of his work, *Richard Rezac: Sculpture 2003-2012*, was held at the Mesaros Gallery at the College of Creative Arts at West Virginia University in 2012 and Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London, will mount a career retrospective of his work in 2017. Recent group exhibitions include *Carved, Cast, Crumpled: Sculpture* at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago in 2014 and *Chicago Conceptual Abstraction, 1986-1995* at the MCA Chicago in 2013. His work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, among others.