



Melvin Edwards, *Angola*, 1992, Welded steel
11 ¾ x 10 ¼" x 12 in. The sculpture is a high relief wall-hanging that incorporates found metal objects. It is part of a series of works that Edwards has been creating since the late '60's called *Lynch Fragments*. It is currently on view at Ogden Museum of Southern Art in the exhibition *Melvin Edwards: Crossroads*, where it shares wall space with approximately ten other related but unique *Lynch Fragment* works.

Melvin Edwards was born in 1937 in Houston, TX. He is still living at 84 years of age and is considered a pioneer in the history of contemporary African American art and sculpture. He traveled to California to pursue college on a football scholarship, but instead found a new passion, welding and making sculpture! He began his artistic career at the University of Southern California (USC) in 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 and, shortly after his arrival, his work was exhibited at The Studio Museum in Harlem. In 1970, he became the first African American sculptor to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

OGDEN MUSEUM ONLINE LESSONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

ANGOLA | MELVIN EDWARDS

1-3 HOURS
5-12TH GRADES

ABOUT THE ART

This sculpture, *Angola* was created in 1992 by contemporary African American sculptor Melvin Edwards. The piece is composed of welded steel and measures



In addition to living and working in the US, Edwards has spent many years exploring, living and working all over the African continent. This piece *Angola* is the name of an African country, south of the equator on the west side of the continent and holds a particular significance for the artists. Angola is also the name of the infamous Louisiana State Penitentiary. Why do you think that this country might hold significance for Edwards? Why do you think a prison halfway across the world might bear the same name?

ART ACTIVITY

OVERVIEW

This activity introduces students to a dynamic living African American artist who uses found objects and traditional blacksmithing techniques to create high and low relief sculptures. Students will learn about the significance of the artist's travels to Africa and how his time living and working there has influenced his artwork. Students will create their own hanging sculptures using cardboard, a hot glue gun, and black and metallic paints.

SUPPLIES

- A variety of cardboard (thick and thin), heavy paper scraps, toilet paper rolls, other interesting and malleable cardboard pieces.
- Heavy duty scissors and/or a safe utility blade (younger students need supervision while using this tool)
- Small glue gun and glue sticks
- Black and/or metallic paint
- Paint palette and water cup
- Paint brushes

PROCESS

1. Ask students to consider a place that is significant to them. What are some landmarks or aspects of this place that make it special or unique? How can you capture some of those details in the shapes you add to the sculpture?
2. Ask your students if they have ever created a work of art using found objects before.
3. Ask students to start by cutting out a larger base from a thicker piece of cardboard
4. Have students gather and play with the cardboard and whatever other paper-based materials they have brought to the table.
5. Once students have found a collection of objects that are working together, have them use the hot glue gun to glue all of the shapes down. Encourage them to



consider which objects overlap, bend, twist, or rise above or below other objects. Ask students to create objects that are both in low and high relief, i.e some shapes are closer to the base while others are further away.

6. Remind students to consider the relationship between background, middle ground and foreground, and how this plays into their sculpture. What objects move forward, which ones fill the middle space, which shapes are closest to the viewer?
7. Once students have a significant amount of pieces glued down ask them to paint over the entire piece with black or a dark color paint. Watering down the paint will make it spread easier and more quickly on the first coat.
8. Let the sculpture dry and then add a layer of metallic paint
9. Ask students to turn the sculpture around in front of themselves and choose an orientation that they like best. Once they have chosen the orientation, have students glue a small string or wire, in a loop, on the back so it can hang on a wall.
10. Ask students to glue a string or wire to the back of the sculpture in a loop. Sign and date the back of the sculpture.

KEY TERMS

Sculpture is the art of making two- or three-dimensional representative or abstract forms, especially by carving stone or wood or by casting metal or plaster.

Abstraction is a non-realistic style of art that uses colors, lines and shapes to express emotions and ideas.

A Blacksmith is a metalsmith who creates objects from wrought iron or steel by forging (to make or shape (a metal object) by heating it in a fire or furnace and beating or hammering it) or the metal, using tools to hammer, bend and cut.

Form as an element of art is three-dimensional and encloses space. Like a shape, a form has length and width, but it also has depth. Forms are either geometric or free-form.

Angola is a country in northwest Africa between Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Angola is also the name of the infamous Louisiana State Penitentiary, which is named "Angola" after the former plantation that occupied this territory. The plantation was named for the [African country](#) that was the origin of many slaves brought to Louisiana.

Found object is a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it.

Relief means a sculpture is on a flat surface and not "in the round." A relief sculpture is able to be hung on the wall, against its flat surface as opposed to a free-standing sculpture, which is



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OF SOUTHERN ART

viewable on all sides. High relief means that the forms are carved quite deeply and cast strong shadows. Low relief is smoother, flatter and shows less contrast of lit and shadowed areas.



**SEE MELVIN EDWARD'S ANGOLA, IN MELVIN EDWARDS:
CROSSROADS AT OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART
THROUGH JULY 5, 2020.**

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