

DAVID NOLAN GALLERY

MEL KENDRICK Cutting Corners

March 7 – April 13, 2024

What first drew me to Mel Kendrick's work more than 20 years ago was the total immediacy of his sculptures in the round: playful, fresh and full of vitality. I found them incredibly smart, both rough and sophisticated in all the right ways. I thought of Constantin Brancusi rather than Naum Gabo; rather than an inscrutable intellectualism, the works possessed a powerful physicality. – David Nolan

David Nolan Gallery is delighted to announce an exhibition of new works by Mel Kendrick titled *Cutting Corners*, the artist's first solo exhibition since his celebrated 2021 traveling museum retrospective. The show will include wood sculptures created within the past twelve months, along with works on paper and a cast concrete work that relates to his monumental 2009 exhibition in Madison Square Park in New York. *Mel Kendrick: Cutting Corners*, Kendrick's eighth solo exhibition with the gallery, will be on view from March 7 through April 13, 2024.

Over the course of five decades, Kendrick has established himself as a preeminent American sculptor, pushing the boundaries of the medium through a rigorous and sustained commitment to discerning a work through the process of making it. Though often mentioned in relation to artists such as Sol LeWitt for his conceptual underpinnings, Dorothea Rockburne for her mathematically driven processes, Eva Hesse for her expansive use of materials, and Martin Puryear for his minimalist treatment of wood, Kendrick remains a singular figure in his open and experimental approach to what he has called "drawing within a material." The famed 2009 installation of five monumental black and white concrete sculptures in Madison Square Park, New York, demonstrated Kendrick's prowess as a public art sculptor.

With a material ingenuity and formal inventiveness, Kendrick transforms single blocks of wood into optical puzzles, carving parts from the whole only to reassemble them atop or alongside the excavated base. In this elegant economy of both form and material, nothing is ever wasted, nor is anything added; each block is a question that contains its own answer. The result is something akin to a visual fugue: independent geometric systems are built up within a single composition to create a complex and dazzling harmonic whole, celebrating and complicating their own material and conceptual logic.

Self-contained and self-referential, Kendrick's works bear the evidence of their own making and, crucially, the struggles, errors and mistakes inherent in that process. Graphite marks, paint drips, saw cuts, and fingerprints are all layers of information, markers along a timeline, as if the sculptures were not so much finished pieces as they are stopping points at particular moments within the continuum of creation. And while the wood grain always remains visible, even under a layer of Japan paint, each step in Kendrick's process of assembling, carving and reassembling the wood blocks seems to further remove the material from its ecological origins and push it toward a uniquely physical (rather than theoretical) abstraction.

Indeed, as Kendrick has continued to evolve and reinvent himself within his distinct visual language, his free-standing and pedestal-based works have acquired a new weightiness and thickness, with heavy wood, steel and concrete bases that connect them with the floor. The works have a mass and gravity, an earth-bound physicality, that's countered by their dynamic movement and energy, with lyrical curves and rounded pieces repeated and stacked in undulating cascades. Bands of black, white and yellow Japan paint pull the viewer from section to section, weaving in and out of negative space, from the ostensible front to what could be its reverse, in an elaborately playful game. As the viewer attempts to mentally reassemble the sculpture's constituent parts, the artist confounds our ideas of perception and materiality.

Mel Kendrick (b. 1949, Boston, MA) was the subject of a major retrospective in 2021 at the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, MA, which travelled to the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY, in 2022. He has been included in numerous significant solo and group exhibitions internationally, beginning with his solo debut at Artist's Space, New York, NY in 1974. In 1984, his work was included in *The International Survey of Painting and Sculpture* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the following year in the Whitney Biennial. In 2009 Kendrick was commissioned to create five monumental concrete sculptures for Madison Square Park in Manhattan. He was named a 2023 National Academician by the National Academy of Design.

Kendrick's work is included in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Saint Louis Art Museum, MO; Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN; The Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Toledo Museum of Art, OH; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY, among many others. Kendrick lives and works in New York.