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MEL KENDRICK Early Woodprints | Recent Sculpture June 30 – July 31, 2017

The Drawing Room is pleased to present **MEL KENDRICK Early Woodprints | Recent Sculpture**, opening June 30 and on view through July 31. At center stage are three dynamic mahogany sculptures with black and white patterned surfaces and eccentrically shaped voids. The exhibition also includes a series of woodprints and a unique 9' x 8' woodblock on paper that Kendrick made by sawing either hardwood or plywood, then reconfiguring the elements and printing from the newly formed matrices. The exhibition highlights the conceptual and technical synergy between these two bodies of work. In both, the artist's process originates with drawing and cutting and culminates in striking compositions of his original material.

Kendrick began to show his raw wood sculpture in New York City in 1974. Inspired then, as now, by trees and patterns of wood grain, his four-decade career spans critically acclaimed exhibitions of small and large-scale wood and concrete forms.

In 1990 he collaborated with master printmaker Leslie Miller at The Grenfell Press on the individual woodprints featured in this show and a related portfolio of six prints. Inspired by these projects, Kendrick took a hiatus from sculpture in 1993 to create an important series of monumental woodblocks made using 4' x 8' sheets of plywood.



4 Holes, 2017
Sculpture on ebonized mahogany, 42.75 x 28 x 3.5 in



Inset, 1990
woodprint on Sekishu paper, 24 1/2 x 18 7/8 in

In the 1990 woodprints he made with Leslie Miller, Kendrick maximized the expressive potential of the woodgrain. After composing puzzle-like arrangements of up to fifteen hardwood shapes, some reversed to allow for variations in texture, he rolled the black inked brayer across the surface and used a letterpress to print on silky Japanese Sekishu paper. The abstract imagery that emerges evokes experiments in early photography, with crisp contours, shimmering light effects and contrasting shadows.

After mastering the process of printing from cut wood shapes on a small format, Kendrick tackled the woodblock medium on a monumental scale. His innovative approach with multiple sheets of plywood allowed printing from "blocks" up to 8' high and 12' wide. Using circular, sabre and hand saws to cut soft curves and zigzags, he rearranged the plywood forms into expansive, jazzy compositions that combine fine and rough textures. Then, working with a baren in the traditional Japanese technique, he transferred the inked, multi-block image by hand onto long rolls of Kozo paper.

(over)

At 9' x 8', *Balance Point* (1993) is a commanding centerpiece with an anthropomorphic silhouette of alternating black and white shapes set against the roughly textured background. Seen in the context of his recent sculpture, this important print also suggests the direction Kendrick's three-dimensional work would take decades later.

In the three recent sculptures, *2 Holes*, *4 Holes* and *6 Holes*, Kendrick further explores the impact and dynamism of disordered black and white gridded structures. Figural references again come to mind and even cell biology reimagined in three dimensions. Dissecting his inert material - a slab of ebonized mahogany brushed with contrasting bands of white gesso - the artist expands his signature vocabulary of soft-edged loops and voids. When rearranged, these animated constructions give space, itself, materiality.

Mel Kendrick has been the subject of nearly 50 one-person shows and his work has been presented in notable group exhibitions, including The International Survey of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (1984) and the Whitney Biennial (1985). In 2008, he was awarded the Francis J. Greenburger Award; other honors include the Academy Award for Art from the American Academy of Arts. Kendrick's work is represented in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Brooklyn Museum, the Dallas Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Parrish Art Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Storm King Art Center, the Walker Art Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Yale University Art Gallery.

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Gallery Hours: Thursday through Monday 11-5

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