

Press Contacts

Michelle Perlin
212.590.0311, mperlin@themorgan.org

Patrick Milliman
212.590.0310, pmilliman@themorgan.org

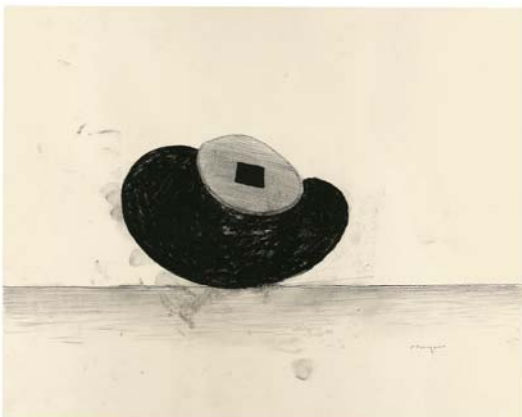
THE MORGAN PRESENTS THE FIRST EXHIBITION OF MARTIN PURYEAR'S DRAWINGS

Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions
October 9, 2015 through January 10, 2016

****Press Preview: Thursday, October 8, 10-11:30 AM****
RSVP: media@themorgan.org

New York, NY, October 9, 2015 — One of the most important contemporary American artists, Martin Puryear (b. 1941) is known primarily for the refined elegance of his abstract, hand-made sculptures. However, throughout his career he has consistently turned to drawing to elaborate ideas and forms for works in three dimensions. *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions*, on view at the Morgan Library & Museum from October 9 through January 10, 2016, is the first exhibition to explore the essential role drawing plays in the artist's practice. The show includes about seventy works, primarily drawings—from quick sketches to monumental, finished compositions—borrowed largely from Puryear's own collection. Most of the drawings have never been exhibited and span the artist's undergraduate years to the present. The exhibition also includes a selection of prints and sculptures related to the drawings.

Puryear has described his development as "linear in the sense that a spiral is linear. I come back to similar territory at different times." The exhibition highlights this iterative process, showing how the artist takes an elemental form and rediscovers and refashions it in diverse media, often over many years, moving among levels of abstraction and experimenting with scale and materials.



Left: Martin Puryear, *Drawing for Maroon*, 1986/88, Conté crayon, with smudging, over graphite on paper. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. Right: Martin Puryear, *Drawing for Untitled*, ca. 2009. Compressed charcoal on ivory wove paper. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.

“We learn from this exhibition that Martin Puryear’s graceful, carefully handmade three-dimensional objects have their origins in explorations on paper that show him working and reworking key concepts and themes,” said Colin B. Bailey, director of the Morgan Library & Museum. “The graphic is central to his creative approach, and the works in the exhibition offer an exciting, often surprising, perspective on this important contemporary artist.”

THE EXHIBITION

Spanning two galleries, the exhibition opens with an examination of Puryear’s beginnings as a draftsman and printmaker. It introduces visitors to Puryear as a young artist, with figurative drawings and prints from his time spent as a teacher in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone from 1964 to 1966. While there, Puryear recorded his environment—houses, plants, animals—and the people around him in meticulously detailed drawings. As an example, *Gbago* (1966), a contour line drawing, depicts a night-watchman with whom Puryear had developed a friendship. Although he made the drawing in Africa, the artist revisited the subject later, while in Stockholm, in a print of the same title that is also on view in the exhibition.

From 1966 to 1968, Puryear studied printmaking at the Swedish Royal Academy of Art in Stockholm. Based on drawings he made in West Africa as well as on observations of architectural elements, the prints he made there typically mix a range of techniques—etching, aquatint,



Left: Martin Puryear. *Gbago*, 1966. Drypoint on ivory wove paper. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. Middle: Martin Puryear, *Gate*, 1966, Soft ground etching, with burnishing, Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago. Right: Martin Puryear, *Rune Stone*, 1966, Soft ground etching, aquatint, and open bite, with scraping and burnishing, in green-black on ivory wove paper. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago.

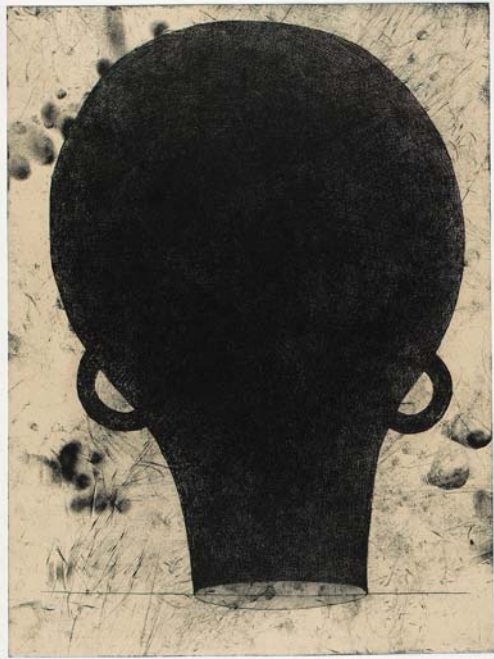
drypoint—all involving incised lines and furrowed surfaces. At that time, Puryear also began making sculpture. As he explained, “it might have been the different ways of incising, which is a kind of carving, that got me considering again the way things are made.” To represent this period, works such as *Gate* (1966) and *Rune Stone* (1966) are displayed. *Gate*, one of the earliest prints Puryear made in Stockholm, marks a shift towards abstraction. The bifurcated arch motif will recur throughout his sculptures, prints, and drawings, including the monumental land work, *Bodark Arc* (1982)—a drawing for which is also included in the exhibition.

The main part of the exhibition focuses on Puryear’s use and reuse of motifs. Since Puryear turned his focus to sculpture in the late 1960s, his drawings have been mostly preliminary studies for three dimensional works (only rarely does he make a drawing after completing a sculpture). He explores on paper varied materials, angles, details of form, and methods of building and joining, as well as the various vantage points of a sculpture.

One of the dominant motifs is the “head” series, which Puryear revisited in a series of works, in bronze, wood, black Conté crayon, and graphite. In the print *Untitled (LA MoCA Portfolio)* (1999), his contribution to a benefit for the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, the motif reads either as a head with hoop earrings or as an inverted jug with handles. The print, which signals Puryear’s return to printmaking after nearly thirty years, introduces the *chine collé* technique, whereby a thin silky sheet of paper (*chine*) is laid down to a primary support sheet during printing. As the *chine* picks up minute particles of ink, it yields extraordinary depth to the etched black area.

The Phrygian cap is another motif to which Puryear has returned in several works over the years, depicting it in his drawings, prints, and sculptures. He experiments with the conical shape of the cap by orienting it upside down or sideways.

The exhibition also presents several of Puryear’s projects related to public sculptures, an important aspect of his practice. These large-scale pieces rehearse the organic shapes of his overall body of work. Like his indoor sculptures, the public commissions are developed through studies on paper and models. The clean elegance of the finished works belies the complexity of the thought process made visible in the drawings. Works presented include a small model for



Left: Martin Puryear. *Untitled (LA MoCA portfolio)*, 1999. The Art Institute of Chicago. Restricted gift of Kaye and Howard Haas, 2007.88. © Martin Puryear. Right: Martin Puryear, *Shackled*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist. © Martin Puryear. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago.

Bearing Witness (1994), a sculpture in the Federal Triangle in Washington, D.C., and *Shackled* (2014), a small-scale iron version of a 40-foot-tall sculpture that will be installed in New York's Madison Square Park in 2016, among others.

ABOUT MARTIN PURYEAR

Over the last fifty years, Martin Puryear has created a body of work that defies categorization and draws on diverse cultures and histories. His sculpture combines modernist abstraction with traditions of crafts and woodworking, in shapes informed by the natural world and by ordinary objects and made with materials such as wood, tar, wire mesh, bronze, and stone.

Born in 1941 in Washington, D.C., Puryear was educated at Catholic University, the Royal Swedish Academy of Arts in Stockholm, and Yale University. His longstanding interests in nomadic cultures, furniture and boat building techniques, ornithology, falconry, and archery, all inform his work. "I think there are a number of levels at which my work can be dealt with and appreciated," Puryear has said. "It gives me pleasure to feel there's a level that doesn't require knowledge of or immersion in the aesthetic of a given time or place."

His first one-person museum exhibition was in 1977 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and since that time his work has been exhibited throughout the world, with public commissions in Europe, Japan, and the United States. He represented the United States at the 1989 São Paulo Bienal, where he was awarded the festival's Grand Prize, and his work was included in the 1992 Documenta. He received a MacArthur Foundation award in 1989, the Gold Medal in Sculpture by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2007, and has recently been awarded the Presidential Medal of the Arts.

EXHIBITION TOUR

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| The Morgan Library & Museum | October 9, 2015 through January 10, 2016 |
| The Art Institute of Chicago | February 7, 2015 through May 1, 2016 |
| Smithsonian American Art Museum | May 27, 2016 – September 5, 2016 |

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The accompanying catalogue, *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions*, explores the artist's process, featuring numerous drawings, prints, and small-scale sculptures that have never before been published. This catalogue is the first to examine Puryear's work across media, providing invaluable insight into his visual thinking, from sketches to working drawings and constructions for sculpture. Handsomely illustrated with nearly 120 color plates that demonstrate the evolution of Puryear's ideas between drawings, prints, and sculptures, this beautiful volume draws back the curtain on the methodology of this important and enigmatic artist. Mark Pascale, curator in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago and an expert on modern and contemporary printmaking techniques, will contribute an essay on Puryear's print production. Ruth Fine, recently retired curator of special projects at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, will provide insights into the artist's drawings in her essay.

Public Programs

GALLERY TALK

Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions

Nadia Perucic, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawings

Friday, October 23, 6:30 pm

Tickets: All gallery talks are free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary.

ARTIST TALK

Artist Talk: A Conversation with Martin Puryear

Martin Puryear, Isabelle Dervaux, and Nadia Perucic

In conjunction with the exhibition *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions*, the artist discusses the role of drawing in his practice and the

relationship of his works on paper to his sculptures with Isabelle Dervaux, Acquavella Curator of Modern & Contemporary Drawings, and Nadia Perucic, Assistant Curator of Modern & Contemporary Drawings.

The exhibition *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions* will open at 5:30 pm

Tuesday, October 27, 6:30 pm

Tickets: \$15; \$10 for Members; free for students with valid ID

Organization and Sponsorship

Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions is organized by The Art Institute of Chicago. It is curated by Mark Pascale, Janet and Craig Duchossois Curator of Prints and Drawings at The Art Institute of Chicago. The organizing curator at the Morgan Library & Museum is Nadia Perucic, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawings.

This exhibition is made possible through the generous support of Agnes Gund, the Ricciardi Family Exhibition Fund, Glenstone, Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, Matthew Marks Gallery, Helen and Chuck Schwab, Martha and John Gabbert, Leon and Debra Black, Nancy Schwartz, and an anonymous donor in memory of Parker Gilbert.



The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

The Morgan Library & Museum

The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), one of the preeminent art collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today, more than a century after its founding in 1906, the Morgan serves as a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. In October 2010, the Morgan completed the first-ever restoration of its original McKim building, Pierpont Morgan's private library, and the core of the institution. In tandem with the 2006 expansion project by architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan now provides visitors unprecedented access to its world-renowned collections of drawings, literary and historical manuscripts, musical scores, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, printed books, photography, and ancient Near Eastern seals and tablets.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

212.685.0008

www.themorgan.org

Just a short walk from Grand Central and Penn Station

Hours

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

Admission

\$18 for adults; \$12 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop, Café, or Dining Room.