

Andrew Edlin GALLERY

Thornton Dial

Born 1928, Emelle, AL; Died 2016, Emelle, AL.

Born in a cornfield to an unwed teenage mother, Dial grew up in rural Emelle, in Alabama's western flatlands. He began full-time farm work at age five and managed to attend school only rarely. On the eve of World War II, he was sent to live with relatives in Bessemer, just outside Birmingham. There, he married, raised a family, and worked for half a century in heavy industry, building highways, houses and ultimately boxcars during a thirty-year stint at the Pullman Standard Plant.

Dial's life encompasses many of the most consequential episodes in twentieth-century African-American life - sharecropping in the Black Belt, migration from country to city, the upheaval of the civil rights era, and the ethnic conundrums of a rapidly changing postmodern America. As John Beardsley writes, "Dial's life is inseparable from history, because he had made it his business as an artist to be a historian. Dial lived history, then he represented it in paintings and sculptures".

From childhood on, Dial built "things" using whatever he could salvage, recycling even his own work to reuse materials in new creations. Dial referred to what he made only as "things," though late in life he found out that others call them "art." Having developed during the era of racial segregation, Dial's style is both personal and culturally rich, and it speaks with a resolute voice that was denied to him through the years as a black factory worker.

In Dial's art, intense surfaces, multilayered narratives, shifting compositional relationships, and a metaphysical concern with issues of recycling and ancestry exist hand in hand with an ironic, earthy wit. His work exemplifies his almost religious determination to make art's complexities and mysteries central to the human understanding of reality.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021

Thornton Dial: The Earliest Years, 1987-1989, MARCH Gallery, New York, NY

2018

Mr. Dial's America, David Lewis Gallery, New York

2016

Thornton Dial: We All Live Under the Same Old Flag, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY

2015

Thornton Dial: Works on Paper, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY

2014

Thornton Dial, Independent Projects, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2011 - 2013

Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA

2012

Thornton Dial: Viewpoint of the Foundry Man, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY *Thornton Dial*, Virginia Union University and Art Gallery, Richmond, VA
Thoughts on Paper, Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC; Fleming Museum of Art at the University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

2011

Thornton Dial, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2005

Thornton Dial in the 21st Century, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX

1999

Thornton Dial: His Spoken Dreams, Ricco Maresca Gallery, New York, NY

1993

Thornton Dial: Image of the Tiger, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY; American Folk Art Museum, New York; American Center, Paris, France

1992

Thornton Dial: Works on Paper, Luise Ross Gallery, New York, NY

1991

Thornton Dial, Sr.: Works on Paper, Ricco Maresca Gallery, New York, NY

1990

Thornton Dial: Strategy of the World, Southern Queens Park Association/African-American Hall of Fame, Jamaica, NY

Thornton Dial, Fay Gold Gallery, Atlanta, GA

Thornton Dial: Ladies of the United States, Library Art Gallery, Kennesaw State College, Marietta, GA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023

Called to Create: Black Artists of the American South, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

2022

Living Legacies: Art of the African American South, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH

2021

The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, VA

Another Tradition: Drawings by Black Artists from the American South, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

2020

An Alternative Canon: Art Dealers Collecting Outsider Art, curated by Paul Laster, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

In the Presence of Our Ancestors: Southern Perspectives in African American Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN

Vernacular Woman, Ricco/Maresca, New York, NY

2019

Souls Grown Deep: Artists of the African American South, Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA

2018

Beverly Buchanan, Thornton Dial and the Gee's Bend Quiltmakers, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York

History Refused to Die: Highlights from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation Gift, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

2017-18

Revelations: Art from the African-American South, De Young Museum of Art, San Francisco

2016-17

Southern Accent: Seeking the American South in Contemporary Art, Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, NC, Speed Museum of Art, Louisville, KY

2014

When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American South, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY *Social Geographies: Interpreting Space and Place*, curated by Leisa Rundquist, Asheville Museum of Art, Asheville, NC

2013

Seismic Shifts: Ten Visionaries in Contemporary Art and Architecture, National Academy Museum & School, New York, NY

2012

Thornton Dial and Lizzi Bougatsos, James Fuentes, New York, NY *The Soul of a City: Memphis Collects African American Art*, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, TN

Creation Story: Gee's Bend Quilts and the Art of Thornton Dial, The Frist Center for Visual Arts, Nashville, TN

2011

All Folksed Up! Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY The Armory Show, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2002-04

In the Spirit of Martin, Smithsonian Institution, traveling exhibition

2000

Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

1998

Self-Taught Artists of the 20th Century: An American Anthology, Philadelphia Museum, Philadelphia, PA

SELECTED BOOKS & CATALOGUES

2012

Thornton Dial: Viewpoint of the Foundry Man, catalogue, Andrew Edlin Gallery. *Creation Story: Gee's Bend Quilts and the Art of Thornton Dial*, Nashville: Frist Center for the Visual Arts and Vanderbilt University Press, Print.

2011

Thornton Dial: Thoughts on Paper, edited by Bernard L. Herman, Chapel Hill: Ackland Art Museum and University of North Carolina Press, Print.
Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial, catalogue, Prestel, Print.

2009

Outsider Art Sourcebook, Raw Vision, Print.

2006

Arnett, Paul, Joanne Cubbs, and Eugene W. Metcalf, *Thornton Dial in the 21st Century*, Tinwood Books, Print, 1 January.

2001

American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum, catalogue, Print.

2000

Souls Grown Deep, Volumes 1 and 2, Arnett et al, Print, 2000 & 2001.

1993

Passionate Visions of the American South: Self Taught Artists from 1940 to the Present, New Orleans Museum of Art, Print.

American Self-Taught, Maresca & Ricco, Print.
Thornton Dial: Image of the Tiger, Baraka & McEvilly, Print.
20th Century American Folk, Self-Taught, and Outsider Art, Neal-Schuman Publishers, Print.

1990

Museum of Folk Art Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists, Abbeville Press, Print.

SELECTED ARTICLES

2014

Kennedy, Randy, "For Met Museum, a Major Gift of Works by African-American Artists From the South," *New York Times*, November 24.

Niland, Josh, "The Met Hit the Jackpot of African-American Art," *artnet News*, November 24.

Sutton, Benjamin, "The Met Museum Nets Major Collection of Outsider Art from the South," *Hyperallergic*, November 24.

2013

Williams, Paige. "Composition in Black and White," *New Yorker*, August 12 & 19.

2011

Doran, Anne, "Review," *Time Out New York*, April.

Gómez, Edward M, "On the Border," *Art & Antiques Magazine*, February.

Kino, Carol, "Letting His Life's Work Do the Talking," *New York Times*, February. Kuspit, Donald, "Review," *Artforum*, Summer.

Lacayo, Richard, "Outside the Lines," *Time*, March 14.

"Review," *New Yorker*, April 11.

Wilkin, Karen, "Biography, History, Self-Evident Beauty," *Wall Street Journal*, April 21.

2010

Jones, Phillip March, "Thornton Dial, Sr," *White Hot Magazine*, February.

2002

Giovanni, Nikki, Gary Miles Chassman, Walter Leonard, *In the Spirit of Martin*, (Tinwood Books).

1997

Smith, Dinitia, "Bits, Pieces and a Drive To Turn Them Into Art," *New York Times*, February 5.

1993

Lloyd, Ann Wilson, "Thornton Dial at Luise Ross," *Art in America*, May.

Scott, Sue, "Thornton Dial [exhibition review]," *ARTnews* 92, April.

Smith, Roberta, "A Young Style for an Old Story," *New York Times*, December 19.

1991

Kuspit, Donald, "The Appropriation of Marginal Art in the 1980s," *American Art*, Winter/Spring.

1987

Kroll, Jack, "The Outsiders Are In: American Folk Artists Move into the World of Money and Fame," *Newsweek*, December 2.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY

Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL

Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN

Intuit, Chicago, IL

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI

MoMA, New York, NY

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX

New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA

Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY