

Andrew Edlin GALLERY

For Immediate Release

THORNTON DIAL

March 19 - April 30, 2011

Opening reception: Saturday, March 19th, 4 – 6 PM

Andrew Edlin Gallery is proud to announce the opening of *Thornton Dial*, its first-ever exhibition of work by the renowned, Alabama-based, self-taught master of contemporary mixed-media-painting and assemblage sculpture, whose art the gallery now exclusively represents.

This showing of Dial's work, the artist's first solo exhibition in New York in more than a decade, will coincide with the presentation of "Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial" at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (through September, 2011). Highlighting the ways in which Dial's work addresses some of the most urgent issues of our time—war, racism and bigotry, homelessness, the affirmation of personal dignity in the face of oppression—this museum exhibition is the most comprehensive survey ever mounted of the artist's work in various media.

Similarly, the gallery's exhibition will offer a focused selection of works that evoke the artist's enduring themes and that showcase the variety, richness and complexity of his art-making techniques. Dial, who was born in 1928, worked in and around Bessemer, Alabama, as a bricklayer, carpenter and later as a welder in a railway-carriage factory. He also made steel furniture in a family-owned business and went on to produce mixed-media constructions in the Southern, African-American tradition of homemade yard art, which later evolved into the large, abstract assemblages and wall-mounted, three-dimensional paintings for which he is now internationally known.

Among other emblematic works, *Thornton Dial* will feature such wall-mounted, mixed-media paintings as *We All Live Under the Same Old Flag* (2010), Dial's multi-textured take on Old Glory made of cloth, wood, bones, wire, canvas and other materials, all painted red, white and blue, and *Master of Space* (2004), a picture of a noble eagle with spread-open wings made of painted neckties, set against a gridded background, that exudes a haunting, funereal air. The exhibition will also feature *Freedom Cloth* (2005), a free-standing piece made up of numerous, paint-colored swatches of fabric tied to a metal frame and little bird forms made of similar scraps of cloth. Also made with coat hangers, artificial flowers and spray paint, this sculptural work, at once enigmatic and charming, has the strange allure of a large-scale talisman.

As Joanne Cubbs, the IMA's curator of "Hard Truths" writes in the exhibition's catalog: "While inspiring our humanity, Dial's art also stirs the imagination.... There is an unexpected and beguiling beauty in Dial's compositions of crumbling castaway materials, a dark poetry that turns the world's detritus into a medium for dreaming its highest aspirations."

Dial's work began to attract art-world attention in the 1980s. In 1993, it was the subject of a large exhibition that was presented simultaneously at the New Museum of Contemporary Art and the American Folk Art Museum in New York. In 2000, the artist's work was included in the Whitney Biennial, and in 2005-2006, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, presented a major exhibition titled "Thornton Dial in the 21st Century." Dial's works can be found in many notable public and private collections, including those of, among other institutions, the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Indianapolis Museum of Art.