

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Martin Puryear

November 8 – January 10, 2015

Opening: Friday, November 7, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce an exhibition of ten new sculptures by **Martin Puryear** in his galleries at 522 and 502 West 22nd Street. This will be the artist's first one-person exhibition with the gallery.

Puryear's abstract organic forms are rich with psychological and intellectual references that explore issues of ethnicity, culture, and history. His new sculptures incorporate a diverse range of materials, from bronze, cast iron, and mirror-polished stainless steel to a variety of woods, including red cedar, tulip poplar, maple, holly, Alaskan yellow cedar, walnut, and ebony. Puryear's sculptures, typically made by hand with labor-intensive methods, often require months to complete. His techniques, developed over a forty-year career, combine practices adapted from many different traditions, including wood carving, joinery, and boat building, as well as recent digital technology.

The exhibition includes works inspired by the form of the Phrygian cap, or "liberty cap," which was worn as a sign of resistance during the French Revolution and adopted as a symbol of liberty during the American Revolution. Puryear explains, "Although I was certainly aware of numerous depictions of this cap in European and early American art when I began work on the *Big Phrygian* sculpture, I only discovered the engraved image of the black man wearing the red Phrygian cap — the image that appears on the exhibition announcement — years afterwards." This engraving is accompanied by the caption "*Moi libre aussi*" ("I am free too") and dates from 1794, the year slavery was first abolished in France, only to be restored eight years later by Napoleon Bonaparte and finally abolished permanently in 1848.

Big Phrygian, a large sculpture made of red cedar painted a vivid red, directly evokes the cap from the engraving, recreating its creases and folds with meticulously applied layers of wood veneer. A wall sculpture, *Phrygian Plot*, derives its shape from the same cap, tracing its profile with a gently curved silhouette composed of alternating bands of black ebony and white holly. The possibilities of this form are further explored in *Up and Over*, a sculpture cast in ductile iron.

Martin Puryear (born 1941) lives and works in upstate New York. His first one-person exhibition opened in 1968. Since then he has had one-person exhibitions at numerous museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, Fundación "la Caixa" in Madrid, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, the de Young Museum in San Francisco, the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, and he has completed public commissions in Europe, Japan, and the United States. In 1989 he represented the United States at the São Paulo Biennial, receiving the festival's Grand Prize, and in 1992 his work was included in Documenta 9 in Kassel, Germany. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, organized a retrospective of his work in 2007, which traveled to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. He is the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation award and a Presidential Medal of the Arts.

Martin Puryear will be on view at 522 and 502 West 22nd Street from November 8 to January 10, 2015, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

For additional information, please contact Stephanie Dorsey at (212) 243-0200 or stephanie@matthewmarks.com.