

DAVID NOLAN GALLERY

MEL KENDRICK

TILT

April 23 – June 6, 2026

David Nolan Gallery is delighted to announce *TILT*, an exhibition of new and recent work by preeminent American sculptor Mel Kendrick (b. 1949), on view from April 23 through June 6, 2026. Marking the artist's ninth solo presentation with the gallery, the exhibition includes free-standing and wall-based painted wood sculptures as well as cast paper drawings that represent Kendrick's singular capacity for innovation within his own inimitable visual language. *TILT* features a body of work that is as immediately familiar as it is startlingly novel.

Over a career spanning more than five decades, Kendrick's adventuresome experimentation has found seemingly endless expression within a narrow band of materials and processes. Working primarily in wood, the artist approaches sculpture as a form of drawing, using carpentry and construction tools as extensions of his own hands. Kendrick makes no preparatory sketches, but instead develops his ideas in the sculpture itself, reacting to the material's natural resistance. Unlike drawings, however, where mistakes can be erased, wood retains every cut, slice, and misstep. Embracing the Joycean belief that errors are portals to discovery, Kendrick does nothing to cover up his misguided marks. Rather, every piece contains a timeline of its own making: developmental ideas and final draft visible in the same instant.

Kendrick's material ingenuity informs his enduring fascination with spatial relationships, especially that of an object's interior to its exterior. This is particularly evident in his more cubical freestanding works and their smaller variations. Working from a single block of wood, Kendrick cuts rough geometric forms from the interior and reassembles them on top of the now-hollowed base, linking the inside and outside in a vertical conversation. These works playfully engage the viewer with the conundrum of how one emerged from the other, a conceptual challenge realized in material form. Often, Kendrick applies a layer of Japan paint in straight-from-the-can colors of red, blue, yellow, or green. For him, paint is not so much color as it is material, generating a surface that's distinct from what it covers, much like a tree's bark differs from its core.

In other works, Kendrick escalates the optical complexity by first painting the wood in alternating bands of color, taking inspiration from the striking black and white marble of the Duomo di Siena and other Gothic churches. Again, the artist is not interested in the chromatic properties of color as much as how it can function as a coding system and, crucially, one that is stacked against another system. In the cathedrals, the black and white bands run through the architecture without responding to it; in Kendrick's sculptures, the colors are independent of the carved and reassembled forms. He takes this coding to its exuberant crescendo in the largest, multi-color wall work on view in the north gallery. A visual corollary to a Bach organ fugue, its independent voices double, invert, and overlap each other only to converge in a single enthralling chromatic harmony.

Significantly more subdued but no less beguiling are Kendrick's cast paper works. Here, he makes a rubber mold from a wood carving, adds pigment to the mold, fills it with wet pulp, and then extracts the water with a press. Much like the wood's resistance can generate surprising results in the carving process, the fluid, uncontrolled movements of the pigment within the wet pulp can reveal unexpected relationships among the carved components. Ideas of interior and exterior are further complicated as the pulverized wood becomes the finished paper that holds the cast impressions of its carved whole. Kendrick's investigations are never merely theoretical exercises, but inquiries worked out through the making of a physical object with texture, dimension, and weight.

At its core, Kendrick's work maintains a staunch resistance to representation, an emphatic commitment to abstraction in which any narrative element must come from within the work itself, from the process of its own creation. And indeed, his sculptural works wear all the marks of their making—ghostly traces of graphite, dried oozeings of glue, errant chainsaw cuts and oily fingerprints—and with them, all the internal doubts and frustrations that arise when attempting that grand task of making something that doesn't yet exist in the world. If there is a narrative in Kendrick's work, perhaps it is a story of struggle and repair, of material that has been through an artistic transformation, and survived.

Mel Kendrick (American, b. 1949) was recently the subject of a major retrospective, *Mel Kendrick: Seeing Things in Things*, at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, NY, and the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, MA. Kendrick has also had solo exhibitions at the St. Louis Art Museum, MO; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, OH; Tampa Museum of Arts, FL; Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, NH; and The Drawing Room, East Hampton, NY. In 2009, five massive sculptures by Kendrick were displayed in the heart of New York City in Madison Square Park.

About David Nolan Gallery

Established in 1987, David Nolan Gallery is a New York-based modern and contemporary art gallery renowned for its eclectic programming. Located half a block from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan, David Nolan Gallery showcases both emerging and established international artists working in a spectacular array of media. The mission of the gallery is to contribute to the narrative of art history through a dynamic and ever evolving conversation between legacy and contemporary vision.