



## It's Indisputable - Richard Hunt is Chicago and Chicago is His

**P. Andrews-Keenan**

International sculptor **Richard Hunt** has been able to seep into the heart of this great city without regard for race or creed or gender, attaining a universality that all artists crave. Metal, his material of choice, has no color after all, only form, and Hunt has bent it to his will for more than seven decades. And what's more he's bent us to his will by being a Chicagoan through and through, a son of Woodlawn. He has said of his lifelong pursuit of art that his mom was 'supportive', and his dad was 'tolerant'.

Hunt was honored by the **Leadership Advisory Committee (LAC)** of the Art Institute of Chicago with its **2022 Legends & Legacy Award** on June 9<sup>th</sup>. It is presented to African American artists "who through their lifelong accomplishments and exceptional careers in the visual arts, have influenced generations of artists." **Eldzier Cortor, Dr. Margaret Burroughs** and **Elizabeth Catlett** are among the recipients. And Hunt, at 86, is the youngest honoree.

Visit his extensive Wikipedia page and you'll learn that he traces his ancestry directly from enslaved Africans from West Africa who were sold through the port of Savannah. He began his art journey modeling clay and carving, but says metalwork and sculpture were coming into their own during his college years at the School of the Art Institute. The 1952 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) exhibition "*Sculpture of the Twentieth Century*" in New York changed his trajectory. "It opened my eyes to possibilities," he said. He cites the work of Spanish sculptor **Julio Gonzalez** and work from the British School of Sculpture as inspirations.

While figurative sculptures by the French masters like **Picasso, Degas, Rodin, Renoir**, and even **Matisse** dominated that MoMA show, you also see the emergence of new forms of sculptor. Americans sculptors including **Mary Callery, Alexander Calder, David Smith** and **Isamu Noguchi** were heading, literally, in abstract directions.

Those influences are evident in Hunt's work ***Hero Construction (1958)***, which holds pride of place on the Woman's Board Grand Staircase at the Art Institute. The piece was composed of found objects—old pipes, bits of metal, and automobile parts that the artist discovered in junkyards and on the street and was a nod to mythological heroes. It was the first work the museum purchased from the new SAIC graduate the same year it was created. It is where Board Chair **Denise Gardner** took the photograph announcing her historic appointment to the institution.



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Hunt joined Pigment International during Black Fine Art Month in October of 2021 for one of our signature Salon Talks and replay of his 1986 interview with another Chicago icon **Studs Terkle**. Both are inextricably bound to this city, inseparable from it, as are **Gwendolyn Brooks, Lorraine Hansberry** or **Dr. Margaret Burroughs**. It says something to be a Chicagoan. It says you are brash and bold and most of all persistent. Anyone who has visited Hunt in his studio will tell you. he is perpetual motion. He engages in conversation and then leaves to cut or burnish or reassemble. It is, he says, “what I do.”

Over 150 of Hunt’s sculptures can be found in the U.S. and abroad. Chicago is home to 30 his works including the piece **Book Bird**, which will be at the Obama Presentational Center in Jackson Park.

Hunt is mentoring a new generation of sculptors, among them Pigment International’s own **D. Lamar Preston**, a third generation artist and sculptor, first introduced to us by noted sculptor, artist and writer **Debra Hand**. Duane spent time in Hunt’s studio just ahead of the event and will be returning soon. The cycle continues.

And yes it is indisputable Richard Hunt is Chicago’s, and we are his.

Click [here](#) to purchase our 2020 Pigment Magazine with an article by Hummingbird Press founder **Thomas Lucas** who worked with the artist on an original print, and [here](#) for our 2021-22 magazine featuring Hunt during Black Fine Art Month 2021.

Want to take the Richard Hunt Tour of Chicago? Click [here](#).

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