

MARTIN PURYEAR



In the sweeping silhouette of *Lever No. 3*, a viewer might see either a long-necked animal or a mechanical arm, as suggested by the work's title. While Martin Puryear's sculptures often recall familiar forms, they encourage individual interpretations. This work explores a delicate balance between the heavy, solid-looking "body" and the elegant weightless reach of the giraffe-like "neck." The play between opposing values—heavy and light, animal and mechanical, space and form, movement and stasis—imbues the sculpture with a sense of animation, vitality, and changeability.

While the central form of *Lever No. 3* appears to be sculpted from a heavy block of wood, it is actually a hollow shell, carefully constructed of thin, bent planks of wood. The sculpture is stained light gray, which unifies its appearance but also creates a somewhat uneven patina that emphasizes its hand-crafted quality. Like *Lever No. 3*, Puryear's sculptural objects often blend qualities of fine art and finely crafted utilitarian objects.

Puryear was born in Washington, DC, in 1941. After earning his BA there from Catholic University, he joined the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, Africa, where he had the chance to study woodworking techniques such as basketry and carpentry. Puryear then attended the Swedish Royal Academy of Arts in Stockholm and independently continued his studies in woodworking. He received an MFA in sculpture from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. In 2007 the Museum of Modern Art, New York, organized a thirty-year retrospective exhibition of his work. Puryear lives and works outside New York City.