

Douglas R. Ewart

Sound Forest

September 11 – October 26, 2025

Welcome to *Sound Forest*, an exhibition of totems, block flutes, didgeridoos, and stamping sticks by the artistic polymath, Douglas R. Ewart. Hopefully you can hear his song. Here, in the gallery, there is not a specific song - the forest does not compose, it just plays, only asking you to listen. Its instruments play a free jazz of winds through branches and leaves, the rustlings of critters and creatures, meandering or maybe rushing waters, and the cheeps, chirps, trills, warbles, hoots, screeches and caws of the birds in its canopy. Even when still and silent, it is merely a pause, as if catching its breath before resuming its nameless tune.

A musical performance by Douglas R. Ewart, and his reservoir of collaborators, is but a microcosm of his daily life. And part of that daily life is creating the instruments for his body to play, whether using his breath and mouth, his arms, hands and fingers, or his entire corpus, moving about, lifting, turning, stomping. Living in the moment, Ewart's sonic and visual art is improvised and often made from what is immediately available to him. With his instruments and sculptures, this may include found materials, or as he calls them, crepuscular objects, like crutches, hubcaps, pots and pans; readymade crafts such as nylon cords, ribbons, beads and gemstones; fine art materials like oil paint; or even the household hardwares of wire, epoxy, and nails. Of course, there is also wood.

Bamboo, technically speaking, belongs to the grass family *Poaceae*. Yet, the stalks can grow to a height of 150 feet, often at incredibly quick rates of an inch and a half an hour. Versatile as a building material, food source, and fuel, it is also one of the toughest plants on the planet. As horrific as was the bombing of Hiroshima, "Little Boy" was unable to destroy the city's bamboo. Ewart's use of bamboo embodies this tenacity, utility and resilience, giving harvested shoots a second life as sculptural objects, drawn upon, banded, and ornamented. A third incarnation materializes as a musical instrument, an extension of both Ewart's lifelong artistic practice and his finite body, as temporal as all living things. Yet there is a fourth life, too, one that could be an eternal song, singing to one's ancestors, or sacred places of enchantment, mysticism, nourishment, and refuge, while proudly celebrating Black history, perseverance, and liberation. This may or may not be a song we have heard before, or can quite comprehend. All that Ewart asks is that we listen.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1946, Douglas R. Ewart immigrated to Chicago, Illinois in 1963. A Professor Emeritus at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Ewart has been the recipient of many distinguished awards, including the 1997 Bush Artists Fellowship, 2022 McKnight Foundation Distinguished Artist Award, the Jamaica Musgrave Silver Medal for Outstanding Merit in the Arts, Education, and Culture 2019, and Chicago's Outstanding Artist Award. Additionally, he has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Minnesota Composers Forum/McKnight Foundation, and the Naropa Institute. He has performed nationally at Mobius (Boston), The Contemporary Art Center (New Orleans), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), 1750 Arch Street (Berkeley), Painted Bride (Philadelphia), Creative Arts Collective (Detroit), Lincoln Park Zoo and the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago), Merkin Hall, the Public Theatre, The Kitchen and Carnegie Hall (New York), as well as internationally in Brazil, Tokyo, Perth, Havana, Paris, Stockholm, London, Düsseldorf and Berlin. Currently, Ewart lives and works in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood in south Minneapolis.

Douglas R. Ewart & Inventions will perform Saturday, September 13 at the Walker Art Center as part of the 60th anniversary celebration of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM).

[Peace.](#)

DAVID PETERSEN GALLERY

4116 Cedar Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55407

+1 612-221-9539

www.davidpetersengallery.com