

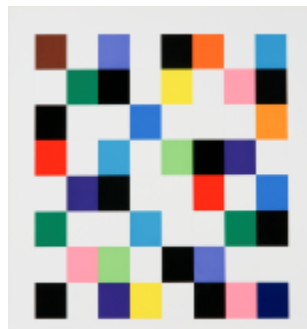
LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: ELLSWORTH KELLY: PRINTS AND PAINTINGS

ON VIEW: JANUARY 22–APRIL 22, 2012

LOCATION: BCAM, LEVEL 2

LACMA PRESENTS FIRST RETROSPECTIVE OF MORE THAN 100 WORKS ON PAPER BY ELLSWORTH KELLY



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 4)

(Los Angeles, December 15, 2011)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Ellsworth Kelly: Prints and Paintings*, the first retrospective of the artist's prolific print practice since the late 1980s. This exhibition coincides with the forthcoming revised and updated catalogue raisonné of Kelly's prints, and features more than 100 works on paper, in addition to a selection of paintings from local collections. *Ellsworth Kelly: Prints and Paintings* is organized thematically by key motifs, demonstrating the artist's long-standing engagement with elemental form and pure color.

"This exhibition allows us to see the consistency of Kelly's print practice, and how the formal hallmarks of his paintings and drawings have an important place in his graphic work," notes Stephanie Barron, senior curator of modern art and exhibition co-curator.

Britt Salvesen, curator of prints and drawings and exhibition co-curator adds, "Whether created in series or individually, these prints offer an opportunity to explore Kelly's ongoing interest in pure form and color."

Kelly produced his first editioned prints in 1964-65, with Maeght Éditeur in Paris. Although he has explored intaglio and screenprinting methods, his primary affinity is for lithography. His growing interest in the medium coincided with the founding of Gemini G.E.L., the now-legendary print workshop located on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles. Gemini's founders – Ken Tyler, Sidney Felsen, and Stanley Grinstein – first approached Kelly in 1968. Based on strong recommendations by artist Frank Stella and critic Barbara Rose, Kelly accepted their invitation and first visited the workshop in 1970, initiating a collaboration that has lasted more than forty years. In total, the artist has created 336 editions.

Exhibition Overview

Spanning five galleries on the second floor of the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM), the exhibition is organized thematically by major formal motifs: curves, contrast, and grids. The final room, with four major paintings, suggests the reciprocal connections between Kelly's paintings and prints. A majority of the prints on view come from the collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, a Portland, Oregon based collector with an extensive holding of Kelly's prints. Together with examples from LACMA's collection, the exhibition provides a thorough overview of the artist's prolific printmaking activity.

Throughout his career, Kelly has worked with curvilinear shapes, exploring their abstract potential without losing their biomorphic allusions. As seen in the first gallery, he introduces variations of scale and color, suspending forms gracefully on the white ground of the paper. The second gallery presents Kelly's first engagement with printmaking – *Suite of Twenty-Seven Lithographs* (1964-65), created for Maeght Éditeur – which is a kind of concordance of forms Kelly had been refining in his paintings during the prior decade. The inherently repetitive nature of the printing process allowed the artist to reshuffle these basic shapes in a range of colors while maintaining cohesion throughout the suite.

Kelly is one of modern art's great colorists, but black has also featured prominently in his work: more than half of his prints are black-and-white compositions. The exhibition's third and largest gallery demonstrates the astonishing variation Kelly has achieved within the discipline of monochrome. Plant lithographs have the delicacy of drawings and the

immediacy of direct observation; while the monumental *States of the River* prints (2005) are gestural, even impressionistic.

Kelly usually develops an idea first in a collage or drawing before realizing it as a painting, sculpture, or print. Exceptionally, the artist has lent sixteen examples of these initial studies for inclusion in LACMA's exhibition, including his 1949 first study for a lithograph made when he was in Paris. Two examples address a third recurrent formal motif: the grid, which maps the artwork's surface and eliminates theme, narrative, and perspectival space. The dimensionality of canvas returns in the exhibition's concluding gallery, which features LACMA's *Blue on Blue* (1963) and *Blue Curve III* (1972); *Red Orange White Green Blue* (1968) from the Norton Simon Museum of Art; and *Black Relief over White* (2004), generously on loan from a Los Angeles private collection. Together with LACMA's *White Sculpture II* (1968, a gift of Ray Stark, on display at the exhibition's entrance), these objects illustrate the many thematic overlaps between Kelly's prints and his works in other media.

About Ellsworth Kelly

American artist Ellsworth Kelly (b. 1923) is universally recognized as one of the most important purveyors of American abstraction. Born in Newburgh, New York, Kelly studied at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn until he was drafted into the U.S. Army at the age of twenty, spending the majority of his military service in Europe. From 1948 through 1954, he lived in France, teaching, traveling and studying both art and architecture. French abstraction greatly influenced the young artist, whose style changed drastically during this early moment in his career. He abandoned figuration and easel painting, choosing instead to develop a vocabulary of simple geometric shapes and swatches of pure, vibrant color. Returning to New York, Kelly established his critical reputation in the 1960s.

During this time, his connection to the Los Angeles art scene also flourished. He had his first solo show at the Ferus Gallery in 1965, where he continued to exhibit regularly, and in 1967 he showed at Irving Blum's gallery. His paintings appeared in LACMA's *Post-Painterly Abstraction* exhibition in 1964, alongside artists such as Frank Stella, Morris Louis, Sam Francis, and Helen Frankenthaler, among others. Local collectors and art patrons devoutly supported his career, with the result that he is well

represented in the city's private and public collections. In addition to the paintings and sculpture mentioned above, LACMA's collection includes over 70 prints, many of them gifts of the artist and Gemini G.E.L.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography-and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing Transformation project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: noon-8 pm; Friday: noon-9 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 11 am-8 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 5 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Images L-R (from page 1)

Ellsworth Kelly, *Red/Blue (Untitled)*, from the portfolio *Ten Works by Ten Painters*, 1964, edition of 500, collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, © Ellsworth Kelly and Wadsworth Atheneum

Ellsworth Kelly, *Colors on a Grid (1976)*, lithograph on 350-gram Arches 88 paper, edition of 46, collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, © Ellsworth Kelly and Tyler Graphics, Ltd.

Ellsworth Kelly, *Suite of Plant Lithographs: Lemon (Citron) (1964-65)*, edition of 75, collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, © Ellsworth Kelly and Maeght Editeur, Paris

Ellsworth Kelly, *The Seine*, from *States of the River*, 2005, lithograph, 45 1/4 x 32 in., collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

Press Contact: For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at press@lacma.org or 323 857-6522.

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