

Release Date: December 7, 2012

Ellsworth Kelly's Series of Colored Paper Images Featured in Exhibition at National Gallery of Art



Ellsworth Kelly

Colored Paper Image XII (Blue Curve with Brown and Gray), 1976

colored and pressed paper pulp

sheet (irregular): 118.43 x 82.87 cm (46 5/8 x 32 5/8 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Professional Art Group I

© Ellsworth Kelly

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art presents ***Ellsworth Kelly: Colored Paper Images***, a series that includes 23 paper-pulp works by the seminal American artist. Drawn entirely from the Gallery's collection, the exhibition will be on view on the Ground Level of the East Building from December 16, 2012, through December 1, 2013.

When unveiled in 1977, Ellsworth Kelly's (born 1923) Colored Paper Images stood apart from the crisp angles and curves and pristine monochrome surfaces for which he was best known. Each of the Colored Paper Images features erratic edges, irregular textures, and pools and drifts of alluring color.

"The Gallery is pleased to present this extraordinarily beautiful body of work from its substantial holdings of paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints by Ellsworth Kelly," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "Kelly has long been recognized for his mastery of form and color, but even to those who know his work well, these Colored Paper Images will come as a revelation."

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The Exhibition

The Colored Paper Images were created using colored and pressed paper pulp. Kelly worked with textured, white, handmade paper. Shaped molds were placed on dampened individual sheets and colored liquefied paper pulp was spooned into the molds. When the pulp settled, the molds were removed and the white sheet and colored pulp were run through a printing press, fusing the damp paper layers and producing "bleeds." The path of the bleeds was as unpredictable as the colored shape's contours. Multiple impressions were made of each image, resulting in an edition that is visually variable. The project, realized at the HMP Paper Mill in Woodstock, Connecticut, resulted in 23 different prints with editions published by Tyler Graphics Ltd.

Kelly distills his abstractions from a wide array of sources: tree branches, window cornices, cast shadows, and more. Such motifs are reduced and refined through intuition rather than mathematical calculation. His resulting forms transcend the original motif to become unique inventions with scale, contour, color, and texture locked into remarkable equilibrium. While Kelly has periodically allowed accident to play a role in his works, he has never done so more dramatically than in the Color Paper Images.

About the Artist

A key figure in postwar abstraction, Kelly was influenced by the European art he sought out while stationed overseas during World War II and subsequently while living in France from 1948 to 1954. Diverse influences shaped his vision, from romanesque architecture to the work of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. Personal contact with modernists such as the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi and the French artist Jean Arp contributed significantly to his thinking. Their reductive and evocative forms

were formative influences for Kelly, as was the automatic drawing of the surrealists. Returning to the United States in the mid-1950s, Kelly's art appeared cool and refined compared with the emotionally charged work of the abstract expressionists who then dominated the New York art world. Kelly's art was likewise removed from the geometric abstraction of Josef Albers and Ad Reinhardt, for example, who leaned strongly toward theory rather than Kelly's more intuitive approach. While Kelly championed the modernist concept of the abstract painting as object—rather than the painting as a means of depiction—he has alternately created elegant plant drawings made directly from nature.

Ellsworth Kelly and the National Gallery of Art

The first work by Ellsworth Kelly entered the National Gallery's collection in 1975. Since then, the Gallery's Kelly holdings have grown to more than 200 works, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints. An extensive overview of Kelly's limited edition prints may be found in the National Gallery's Gemini G.E.L. (Graphic Editions Limited) Archive; Kelly has worked at the Los Angeles printmaking studio since 1970. The broad range of his art has also been seen in numerous exhibitions at the Gallery. In 1992, the National Gallery presented the groundbreaking exhibition *Ellsworth Kelly: The Years in France, 1948–1954*, a study of the artist's early work. Kelly's work has been highlighted in two National Gallery exhibitions of the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection, in 1996 and 2009. His *Stele II* was one of seventeen principal works on view in the Gallery's Sculpture Garden when it opened in 1999. That same year Kelly delivered the sixth annual Elson Lecture at the National Gallery.

###

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>).

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Press Office

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

phone: (202) 842-6353 e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Deborah Ziska

Chief of Press and Public Information

(202) 842-6353

ds-ziska@nga.gov