

forum *art*

Ellsworth Kelly: Wall to Wall

THE MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY in New York opens two exhibitions in May devoted to America's, and perhaps the world's, preeminent abstractionist, Ellsworth Kelly. The show-stopper will no doubt be Kelly's "Sculpture for a Large Wall, 1957," a 104-part, screenlike anodized aluminum construction that will be installed in Marks's 22nd Street gallery. Measuring some 12 ft. in height and 64 ft. in length, it remains Kelly's largest and most ambitious single work to date. In 1956, Kelly had been invited to create a sculpture for the lobby of the Philadelphia Transportation Building, which housed the old Greyhound Bus Terminal. Several years ago the Transportation Building was abandoned, and Kelly's sculpture, plainly one of the most significant works of his career, faced an uncertain future and possible destruction. One year ago the sculpture was removed from the Transportation Building; its installation at Marks constitutes a major operation of salvage and reconstruction. "Sculpture for a Large Wall, 1957" represents a summation of Kelly's Paris-period work of 1948-54, but it also looks forward to the artist's future development. James Meyer, an art historian at Emory University and author of the show's catalogue essay, comments: "In this work Kelly makes a transition from easel painting and small-scale reliefs, releasing shapes from the confines of the canvas as well as liberating them from the grid. He introduces more idiosyncratic shapes, which in later works he will blow up and situate individually against the wall." Indeed, the seven recent paintings that Kelly is showing at Marks's newer gallery on 24th Street display relationships of shape that can in many instances be traced back to his work of the '50s. As such, the two exhibitions will establish a dialogue emphasizing the continuities in Kelly's art over forty-odd years. The concurrent exhibitions run from May 22nd to June 20th. —David Rimanelli

Above and right: The original Philadelphia installation of "Sculpture for a Large Wall, 1957." Photography: Lawrence S. Williams, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery

