

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Ellsworth Kelly: The Naming of Colors

February 26 – April 4, 2026

Opening: Wednesday, February 25, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Ellsworth Kelly: The Naming of Colors**, the next exhibition in his gallery at 1062 North Orange Grove in Los Angeles. The exhibition features nine important paintings made between 1953 and 2004 from the artist's estate.

The works in the exhibition highlight Kelly's relentless exploration of formal and chromatic relationships, distilling observations of the world around him into vibrant geometric and curvilinear compositions. Kelly's bold, refined use of color proved controversial early in his career. As Kelly later recalled: "People looked at it and said that it wasn't enough, that there were no marks on it, that it didn't say anything, and that there was no idea. They said it was just a presentation of colors. And I said, *'Well, that's what it is – the naming of colors.'*"

The earliest painting in the exhibition, *Red Yellow Blue White and Black*, made in Paris in 1953, consists of six rectangular canvases, each painted a different color, and arranged together in a seemingly random order. According to Kelly, the idea for the painting stemmed from the accumulation of colorful boats the artist observed in the fishing harbor of Sanary, France.

Green Blue Black Orange (1959) was painted during a pivotal period following Kelly's return to New York from Paris in 1954. New York proved to be a fruitful landscape for Kelly's distinct approach to abstraction, particularly in relation to his exploration of color. The artist described the vibrant colors he encountered in the city as "a very loose, loud, fragmented, haphazard use of color—the yellow/blue, red/yellow taxicabs, the torn bits of packaging all over the streets."

Other works in the exhibition include several large-scale multi-panel compositions. In *Orange and Gray* (1993), Kelly contrasts sweeping curvilinear and geometric forms to produce an irregular composition that draws attention to the relationship between the canvases and their architectural surroundings. As Kelly said, "paintings are traditionally marks on a canvas. Mine are marks on a wall."

Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015) is one of the preeminent artists of our time. His work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions at museums around the world. Most recently, "Ellsworth Kelly at 100," a major survey of the artist's work charting his career and contributions to American abstraction, was organized by Glenstone in Potomac, Maryland, and traveled to the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris and M7 in Doha, Qatar.

Ellsworth Kelly: The Naming of Colors will be on view at 1062 North Orange Grove from February 26 through April 4, 2026, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

For additional information, please call 212-243-0200 or email inquiries@matthewmarks.com.