

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 six important paintings made between 1953 and 2014 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.

Other works in the exhibition include several large-scale multi-panel compositions. The three panels of *Blue Yellow Red III* (1971) explore the visual relationship between primary colors. Writing shortly after Kelly painted *Blue Yellow Red III*, critic Hilton Kramer described how "Kelly's art is at once extremely austere and utterly delectable. It abounds in bold, delicious color – bright blocks of color that fill the eye with an intensity of concentration unlike anything else in contemporary art."

In *Green White* (1988), Kelly pairs a diamond-shaped green canvas with a white rectangular canvas 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.