



Kelly, 1953  
Photograph: Michel Grinberg

[Ellsworth Kelly Foundation](#)

[Kelly at Matthew Marks Gallery](#)

[Kelly at MoMA](#)

Kelly served in a unit known as the Ghost Army during World War II. Read about how his experience with [camouflage](#) impacted his artistic style.

In 1956, Betty Parsons Gallery installed Kelly's first New York exhibition. [See installation images](#) on the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation website. He was later included in major New York exhibitions, including MoMA's [Sixteen Americans](#) (1959) and the Jewish Museum of Art's [Primary Structures](#) (1966).

The Museum of Modern Art produced Kelly's [first retrospective](#) in 1973. Scroll through installation images and read a digitized version of the [catalogue](#).

Kelly was the [inaugural artist](#) to participate in the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's [MATRIX series](#) in 1975.

[Ellsworth Kelly: The French Years, 1948-54](#) was organized by the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in 1993 and traveled to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Read a [review](#) of the exhibition by John Russell in the New York Times and the [Phaidon article](#), "How Paris Changed Ellsworth Kelly."

In 1996, *Ellsworth Kelly: A Retrospective* was organized by the [Guggenheim Museum](#) and covered five decades of the artist's career. The exhibition then [traveled](#) to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The Tate Gallery, and Haus der Kunst in Munich.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art installed five sculptures, [Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof](#), in 1995. Read Carol Vogel's article ["On the Use of Buildings for Decorative Effect"](#) about the display.

Read a 2011 [interview](#) with the artist and Gwyneth Paltrow for Interview Magazine and [watch a studio visit](#) with Kelly and his longtime friend, Agnes Gund, President Emerita of the Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibition [Ellsworth Kelly. Schwarz & Weiß](#) at the Haus der Kunst was the first comprehensive retrospective of Kelly's black and white works.

Kelly also curated exhibitions throughout his career. In 1990, he curated [Artist's Choice: Ellsworth Kelly Fragmentation and the Single Form](#) at MoMA. Other exhibitions include a 2014 [exhibition of Matisse drawings](#) at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum and [Monet/Kelly](#) at the Clark Institute the following year. Read a review of the Clark exhibition by Holland Carter, ["When an Abstract Artist Falls in Love with Monet."](#)

In 1986, Kelly began designing [Austin](#), a 2,715 square foot stone chapel for the Blanton Museum of Art. The designs were finally realized in 2018. Read more about Kelly's final project in [Artforum](#) and [Artnet](#).

Read one of Kelly's [last interviews](#) in Artspace. The year of his death, the artist proclaimed to [The Guardian](#) "I want to live another 15 years."

The United States Postal Service released a set of [Ellsworth Kelly stamps](#) in 2019.



Kelly in his Spencertown, NY studio, 2012  
Photograph: Annie Leibovitz



Ellsworth Kelly (American, 1923-2015)

**Block Island Study**, 1959

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2022:17.1

“I think that if you can turn off the mind and look only with the eyes, ultimately everything becomes abstract.” Ellsworth Kelly is known for his hard-edge, bright, minimalistic color field works. Born and raised in upstate New York, Kelly served in World War II before using the GI Bill to study at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. From 1947 to 1953, the artist lived and worked in Paris, where he encountered avant-garde and other modernist artists that greatly influenced his turn to abstraction. **Block Island Study** was created after Kelly’s return to New York. The painting was completed in 1959, the same year the artist was included in the Museum of Modern Art’s famously controversial *Sixteen Americans* exhibition alongside Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), Jasper Johns (b. 1930), and Frank Stella (b. 1936).

*On view June 22 – September 25, 2022*

Ellsworth Kelly (American, 1923-2015)

**West Coast Landscape Study**, 1958

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:182.1

After serving in the 603<sup>rd</sup> Engineers Camouflage Battalion during World War II, Ellsworth Kelly used the G.I. Bill to study at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Kelly's hard-edge, bright, minimalistic, color field works, often employing multiple canvases, were unlike other postwar American painting in the United States in the 1950s, marking a truly innovative departure. **West Coast Landscape Study** was painted when the artist lived in Manhattan's Coenties Slip neighborhood alongside fellow artists Agnes Martin (1912-2004), Jack Youngerman (1926-2020), and Robert Indiana (1928-2018). The abstracted landscape builds from saturated black, green, and blue bands of color that evoke layers of earth, greenery, and sky. A thin red vein, presumably lava, runs beneath the brown layer of the painting that suggests the earth's crust. This telling detail points to the volcanic geology of the west coast landscape in the painting's title.

*On view February 16 – May 22, 2022*

