

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
June 1990

ARTIST'S CHOICE: ELLSWORTH KELLY FRAGMENTATION AND THE SINGLE FORM

June 15 - September 4, 1990

An exhibition conceived and installed by artist Ellsworth Kelly opens at The Museum of Modern Art on June 15 and continues through September 4, 1990. ARTIST'S CHOICE: ELLSWORTH KELLY, FRAGMENTATION AND THE SINGLE FORM explores the nature and history of abstraction through the selection of two distinct yet associated groups of works drawn primarily from the Museum's permanent collection.

Organized in collaboration with Kirk Varnedoe, director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, this is the second in the Museum's ARTIST'S CHOICE series, in which contemporary artists are invited to organize small shows based upon the Museum's collection. The ARTIST'S CHOICE series is made possible by a generous grant from The Charles A. Dana Foundation.

In the brochure accompanying the exhibition Mr. Kelly writes, "From the beginning of the twentieth century, modern artists have been preoccupied with fragmenting the world and seeking essences of form and experience. Since then, artists have measured themselves against, and have elaborated upon, these impulses within the embrace of a modern tradition that continues into the future." Through his selection of paintings in watercolor and oil, sculpture, bas-relief, collage, and photographs, Kelly seeks to demonstrate how modern artists have used fragmentation or have presented fragments of the visual world as single forms.

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Within the installation Kelly establishes two lineages. One, exploring the history of chance and fragmentation, reaches from the smashed tile-work "collages" of Catalonian architect Antoni Gaudí through the Cubist works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque and on to the collages and paintings of Jean Arp, Francis Picabia, and Kurt Schwitters. The other lineage presents a series of simple, solitary forms. Works as disparate as an early John James Audubon watercolor collage and Constantin Brancusi's sculpture Bird in Space (1928) are thereby linked. Historical and national boundaries are also spanned in the joining of rigorous abstract paintings by Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich with a painting of a garden table by Henri Matisse. As a whole, the exhibition throws new light on the artists Kelly admires, and on his own art and sources of inspiration.

Born in 1923 in Newburgh, New York, Ellsworth Kelly served in the U.S. Army Engineers Camouflage Battalion from 1943 to 1945. He studied drawing and painting at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1946-48), and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris (1948-50). In the early 1950s, while living in Paris, he met the artists Arp, Brancusi, and Picabia, all of whom influenced his development.

A video is being produced in conjunction with the exhibition and will be shown in the Museum's Edward John Noble Education Center beginning early July.

The ARTIST'S CHOICE series was introduced in 1989 with ARTIST'S CHOICE: BURTON ON BRANCUSI. The third installation in the series will be selected by artist Chuck Close and is currently scheduled to open November 16, 1990, and continue through February 19, 1991.

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No. 61

For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.