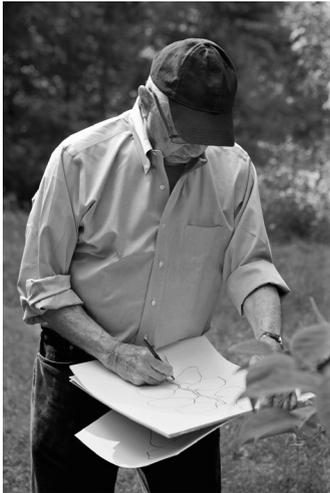


PEDER LUND

Ellsworth Kelly
PLANTS – FORMS, LINES AND CURVES
September 26 – November 9, 2019

Peder Lund is delighted to announce the exhibition *Plants – Forms, Lines and Curves* with fantastic works by the American artist Ellsworth Kelly (1923-2015). The exhibition opens on September 26 and continues through November 9, 2019. An opening reception will be held on September 26 from 6-8 pm.

Ellsworth Kelly is one of the most important figures in the history of modern art. His inventive practices as an abstract painter and sculptor were accompanied by a lifelong passion for objective drawing. Through his persistent interest in the perception of the natural world, the artist created an impressive and truly unique body of work.



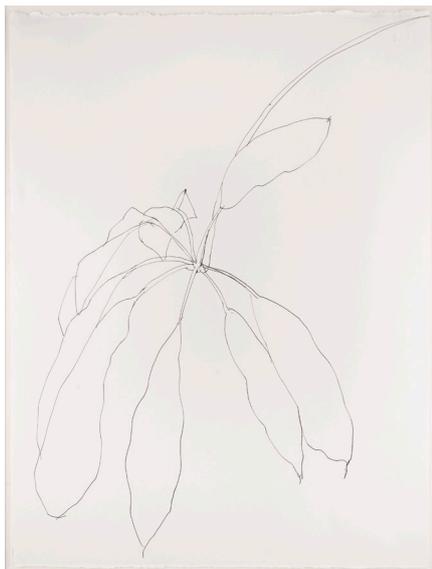
Plants – Forms, Lines and Curves presents twelve of Kelly's important plant drawings. With a span of nearly 50 years, the retrospective highlights how essential the study of nature and the act of drawing was for Kelly throughout his long career. Through a careful selection of refined pieces, which the estate of the artist made available exclusively for this exhibition, as well as loans from the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and renowned private collections, the show underlines how Kelly's oeuvre was influenced by his outstanding ability to analyse structures and transform them into pure compositions of art. As the artist once said about his drawings, "My drawings are to meet the eye directly."

The systematic visual study of nature bloomed in the Renaissance. Following this well-established art historic practice, Kelly created his first plant drawing in 1948, at the beginning of his six-year residency in Paris. In the 1960s, the artist began to produce his first suites of plant lithographs. While these prints were, of course, published in an edition, Peder Lund is proud to present four unique drawings from this decade. Through the generosity of the Louisiana Museum, private lenders and the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, four drawings of different species of plants – *Rubber Plant* (1964), *Chrysanthemum* (1965), *Avocado* (1967) and *Oak* (1969) – are presented in the exhibition. These quietly elegant, observational works were surprisingly created in the same decade in which the artist cemented his status as one of the leading figures of Abstract Expressionism in the US, illustrating Kelly's unique multiplicity of approaches. However, in its core, Kelly's diverse oeuvre is defined by the artist's sophisticated ability to create universal and timeless works which are defined by the form itself.

In 1969, the acclaimed curator Henry Geldzahler was the first to highlight the importance of Kelly's plant drawings by displaying 30 of these works for the first time in the seminal exhibition *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970*, which took place at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The impressive exhibition history of the drawing *Tropical Plant* (1981), created around a decade after the influential Met show and which is also included in the exhibition at Peder Lund, shows that Geldzahler's curation was just the beginning of the rising interest into this aspect of Kelly's practice. *Tropical Plant* premiered in a 1981 exhibition that focused exclusively on Kelly's plant drawings at the renowned Leo Castelli Gallery in New York.

The exhibition at Peder Lund also includes three other important drawings that the artist created in the 1980s. *Fig* (1982) and *Thistle* (1985) were both lent from private collections, while *Leaves, St. Martin* (1984) was made available by the estate exclusively for this show. As in many of Kelly's plant drawings, the creation of this work can be traced to a very specific place and time. As the title and the dating on the sheet indicate, it was drawn during Kelly's winter holiday on the North-Caribbean island St. Martin to which the artist travelled regularly. There Kelly also found inspiration for his collage *St. Martin Landscape* (1979), which is in the collection of the Tate,

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London, and for the lithographic series from the same year as the present work, *St. Martin Triptych* (1984), owned by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. This series was also based on his observation of natural elements on the island.

A prime example of the beautiful shapes Kelly found in nature is, of course, the work entitled *Leaves* (1992), which is the second loan from the Louisiana Museum. Through its simplicity and poignant composition, one can clearly see how Kelly's famous shaped canvases and magnificent sculptures have been influenced by studying these natural principles of form. Additionally, the drawing *Beanstalk* (1990), which was loaned from a private collection, mesmerizes through its nearly abstract depiction, which focuses, like all of Kelly's plant drawings, purely on the outer lines and curves of the plants that form these unique structures.

Finally, the most recent work that is included in the show is the beautiful pair of drawings entitled *Poppies* (2010). The shape of this flower is a form that caught the artist's eye several decades prior, and its influence can be seen in the drawing *Poppy II, Nepenthe, Big Sur* (1984) owned by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. *Poppies*, as well as several other drawings that are included in this exhibition, was kept by the artist privately. Hence, these works have never been shared before; Peder Lund is able to make them available to the public for the first time thanks to the generosity of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation and its president, Jack Shear.

Born in 1923 in Newburgh, New York and raised in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Kelly spent much of his childhood studying birds and nature. Subsequently, the artist credited his interest in ornithology and botany as an important factor that shaped his later work. From 1948-1954, the artist lived in Paris, before he returned to his birthplace New York. In 1970, he moved into his studio in Chatham, New York and purchased a home in nearby Spencertown, where he lived with his long-time partner, the photographer Jack Shear, until the end of his life. Ellsworth Kelly died in 2015.

Major solo exhibitions have been dedicated to the artist by renowned institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art (1973), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1979), The Whitney Museum of American Art (1982), and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1996). In 2002, his plant drawings were shown alongside those of Henri Matisse, whom Kelly had long admired, at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris. A major retrospective of his plant drawings took place in 2011 at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich and traveled in the same year to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Kelly's works are owned by the major artistic institutions of Western Europe and America, including the Reina Sofia, Madrid; the Tate Modern, London; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and many others. Additionally, he created numerous important artworks for public spaces. During his lifetime, Kelly was honored with several awards, including the Praemium Imperiale award for painting, which he received in 2000 from the Japan Art Association, the title of *Commandeur des Arts des Lettres*, which he received in 2009 by the French government and, in 2013, the National Medal of Arts, presented by President Barack Obama.

Illustrations:

- 1 Ellsworth Kelly outside his studio in Spencertown, NY, 2012.
- 2 Ellsworth Kelly, *Avocado*, 1967. Private Collection.
- 3 Ellsworth Kelly, *Chrysanthemum*, 1965. Private Collection.
- 4 Ellsworth Kelly, *Tropical Plant*, 1981. Estate of Ellsworth Kelly.
- 5 Ellsworth Kelly, *Leaves*, 1992. Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; Humlebæk, Denmark.