

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

523 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011 Tel: 212-243-0200 Fax: 212-243-0047

PRESS RELEASE

Ellsworth Kelly: Blue Curve
September 16 – October 10, 2020

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce the online exhibition **Ellsworth Kelly: Blue Curve**. The centerpiece of the exhibition, on view for the first time, is *Blue Curve IV* (1972), a key work from Kelly's first series of curve paintings, each of which features a curved shape in a single color on a white or black ground. Accompanying *Blue Curve IV* are fifteen related works on paper made between 1948 and 1985. Executed in a range of mediums, including drawing, collage, and photography, these works offer a glimpse into Kelly's far-reaching exploration of the curve, an essential formal element he turned to repeatedly in his seven-decade career.

The origins of *Blue Curve IV* are rooted in Kelly's close observations of the world around him. A drawing of a figure from 1948, the earliest work in the exhibition, conveys his fascination with the curves of the human body, some of which echo the sweeping form in *Blue Curve IV*, as do the elegantly bowed stems and leaves of the three plant drawings on view. Abstract curved forms became a central focus of Kelly's work shortly after his return to New York in 1954. The two shapes in the drawing *Study for Red Curves* (1954) became a painting for his 1956 exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery, his first one-person show in New York, and the rounded forms in the collage *Study for Blue White* (1959–62) were expanded into an eight-foot painting.

For two black and white photographs in the exhibition, Kelly captured graceful arcs from the natural and built worlds: a snowy hill in *Curve Seen from a Highway, Austerlitz* (1970) and a stone archway in *Arch, Pont Neuf, Paris* (1978). Found compositions like these were essential to Kelly's abstraction, even in his most geometric works. Shortly after moving upstate in 1970, he began making paintings based on the radial curve, a segment of a circle larger than the canvas itself. The sweeping arc of *Blue Curve IV*, one of his first examples, is a quarter slice of a circle centered just beyond the edge of the canvas. *Study for Large Gray Curve (Blue)* (1973), meanwhile, features a gradual arc with a much longer radius. As art historian Gottfried Boehm wrote of Kelly's work, "Incomplete curves, the beginnings and ends of which we cannot reconstruct with our eyes, are simple means that create visual situations rich in potential meaning."

Ellsworth Kelly: Blue Curve is online at matthewmarks.com from September 16 to October 10, 2020. For additional information, please contact Jacqueline Tran at 212-243-0200 or jacqueline@matthewmarks.com.