

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

New York

Ellsworth Kelly

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

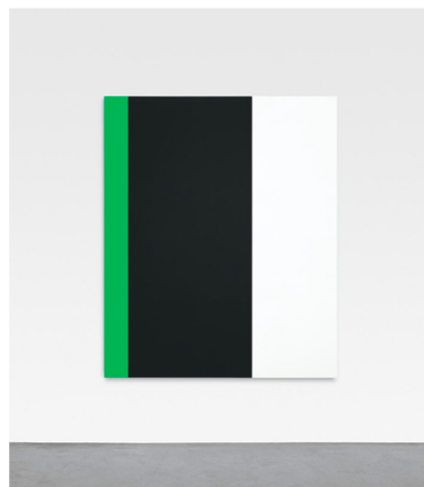
523 West 24th Street, 522 West 22nd Street,
and 526 West 22nd Street

February 6–April 11, 2009

For over six decades, Ellsworth Kelly has produced variations on one theme. The clean edges of his monumental, geometric works blur the much-contested line between painting and sculpture and proved integral to the midcentury transition from the grandiosity of Abstract Expressionism to the myriad reactionary movements it launched. Largely comprising pairs of stacked, wall-mounted panels, one of each rotated to a varying degree, the recent works of “Diagonal” correspond with this tradition. Despite their simplicity, the layered paintings create a sense of illusionism unexpected from such a practice, and as they overwhelm the viewer, their stark, imposing presence creates an almost installation-like work in itself.

Kelly’s early drawings on view contrast with his paintings, revealing a side of the artist that is logical and compatible with his better-known work yet not necessarily expected given the hard-edge painting that established his reputation. The early pieces, many of which incorporate paint and ink, also consist primarily of monochromatic geometric forms but diverge from the more famous works in their implicit tactility. As well, their small scale allows for reinterpretation of Kelly’s standard practice. This shift in size and blurring of medium-specific boundaries are especially evident in images such as *Green Form*, 1959, executed in thinly applied oil on newsprint. The contrast between Kelly’s austere form and the kitschy advertisement on which it appears emphasizes the methodology underlying the artist’s lengthy practice, one that has sustained continued reinterpretation while maintaining contextual relevance.

An accompanying exhibition, “Ellsworth Kelly: Drawings 1954–1962,” is on view at Matthew Marks, 526 West Twenty-second Street, until April 11.



Ellsworth Kelly, *Green Black White*, 2007,
oil on canvas, three joined panels, 80 1/8
x 66".

—Britany Salsbury