

Shape, Ground, Shadow

The Photographs of Ellsworth Kelly

October 15, 2023–January 14, 2024

Organized by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, this is the first museum exhibition solely devoted to the photographs of Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015), one of the most revered artists of the past 100 years. From the late 1940s on, Kelly created an era-defining body of abstract art based on forms and phenomena he intuitively found in the environments around him. Largely made for himself, Kelly's photographs record these discoveries across the decades in tightly composed images of nature and architecture, which often include striking geometric effects of bright sunlight and deep shadow.

Ellsworth Kelly's photographs are extraordinary works of art that form a distinct and powerful chapter in this internationally-renowned artist's seven decades of creation. Similar as they may sometimes appear, Kelly did not use photographs as source material for his paintings, sculpture, prints, and drawings. From the start of his career into the 21st century, the camera for Kelly was yet one more artistic tool with which he brilliantly translated his singular visual experience of his lived surroundings into an art that, however abstract, always resonated with his unique perceptions of the actual, everyday world.

To those both familiar with or new to the artist, the photographs of Ellsworth Kelly offer a uniquely direct and vivid opportunity to see his eye and mind at work like no other genre of art Kelly ever created.