

Serpentine Gallery

Teachers' Notes

Ellsworth Kelly

18 March – 21 May 2006

Ellsworth Kelly exhibition

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Introduction and Contents

These notes are designed to support teachers in the planning, execution and following up of a visit to the Serpentine Gallery. They are suitable for all age groups, but include specific activities that relate to **Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5**. They are not intended as a definitive prescription, but as a collection of ideas and suggestions that we hope will be helpful. Feel free to adapt them to suit your needs, or use them to inspire discussion or practical work.

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Please let us know what you think about the Teachers' Notes

Planning a visit to the Serpentine Gallery

Serpentine Gallery
Kensington Gardens
London
W2 3XA

Tel 020 7402 6075
Fax 0207402 4103
www.serpentinegallery.org

Transport

Nearest tube stations are South Kensington (1.25km walk), Knightsbridge (1.25km walk) or Lancaster Gate (1km walk)

Car parking is available near the Gallery (£1.50 per hour)

Bus routes 9, 10, 53, 94 and 148 stop near the Gallery

Contact Details

Sally Tallant, Head of Education and Public Programmes
Rachel Moss, Education Coordinator
Serpentine Gallery
Kensington Gardens
London W2 3XA
Tel 020 7298 1516
Email rachelm@serpentinegallery.org

Education and Family Events

Education is at the core of the Serpentine Gallery's activities. Through workshops, events and projects, the Education Programme offers a range of innovative ways to engage with modern and contemporary art.

Education Projects in 2006 supported by

Bloomberg

Please refer to the exhibition bulletin or the website www.serpentinegallery.org for information on events and activities taking place as part of the Education Programme during the *Ellsworth Kelly* exhibition.

Ellsworth Kelly

Background Information

Ellsworth Kelly is among the greatest living artists. Throughout a career that has spanned almost 60 years, he has worked independently of trends and movements. The resulting body of work, defined by the abstract aesthetic he pioneered, is vital to the evolution of art after the Second World War and is one of the major achievements of American art.

Kelly was born in Newburgh, New York, in 1923, and his career began in Paris, where he lived and worked for six years from 1948. There he was influenced by European modernism, including the work of Jean (Hans) Arp, Constantin Brancusi, Pierre Bonnard, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Kelly's rigorously spare and elegant approach to abstraction was based on a vocabulary of forms and colours that would become the core of his artistic practice. Working concurrently with, but unaware of, the development of the more subjective style of Abstract Expressionism, he produced a distinctive form of panel painting that was unlike anything that had come before it and was a forerunner of the Minimalist art of the 1960s.

Kelly finds his forms and colours 'already made' in the real world, taking inspiration from the images and objects around him, such as architectural details or patterns of light and shadows. His paintings, however, are not direct representations but abstractions and transformations: in his hands, shadows become shapes, and negative spaces become forms.

For this Serpentine exhibition, the artist has selected 18 works made since 2002, shown together here for the first time. These exemplify the breadth of scale, colour and forms that characterise his art, including multi-panel works in vibrant contrasting colours, as well as shaped canvases and sculpture. Also featured in this exhibition are several reliefs, paintings in which one panel is set on top of another to create a piece that challenges the boundaries between two- and three-dimensionality. Kelly's shaped panels also display his interest in sculpture – although painted, they are themselves objects with sculptural qualities.

Key Themes

These notes on Ellsworth Kelly have been broken down into the following themes:

- **Colour**
- **Windows**
- **Structures**
- **Nature**

Key Theme: Colour

Such is the intensity of the colours in Ellsworth Kelly's paintings 'that you find yourself stepping up close to each canvas, allowing your senses to be engulfed in the almost physical sensation of pure scarlet or intense lemon yellow'.¹

Since the early 1950s Kelly has been making abstract paintings that consist of flat areas of bright colour, mostly set within rectangular canvases. During the mid-1960s, he became one of the first artists to use a shaped canvas. In addition to painting, he works as a printmaker and sculptor.

In his pursuit of aesthetic perfection, Kelly has developed a technique that makes his brushstrokes almost invisible. He increases this sense of anonymity by leaving his canvases unsigned. It is this absence of brushmarks that makes Kelly the 'most profoundly classical of all American Artists'².

Kelly describes his paintings as 'memories that haven't quite gelled'.³ These recollections could be of things or images that he has seen, but are sometimes unconsciously used in his work. When, for example, he showed a series of his drawings and collages to the painter and sculptor Jean Arp, the older artist picked out one collage that juxtaposed orange and pink and asked Kelly why he had chosen to place those two colours alongside one another. 'No special reason', Kelly responded, 'they're just two colours that are close'.⁴ But Kelly's inability to give a better reason troubled him. A few years later, he was walking through the National Gallery in London when he passed a painting in one of the galleries. 'My god!', he thought. 'There it is!'⁵ He suddenly remembered that when he was in Boston he had spent a whole summer copying the *Virgin and Child*, 1319, by the Sieneese painter Ambrogio Lorenzetti, a work in which those two colours were used side by side.

A similar example of this, which can be seen in the series of works on display at the Serpentine, is *Red Relief over Dark Blue*, 2004, where the juxtaposition of the brilliant red against the dark blue is reminiscent of the red robe worn by the Madonna underneath a deep blue cloak in many fourteenth-century Sieneese paintings.⁶

¹ Richard Dorment. 'Ellsworth Kelly: A Retrospective'. *Art Critic London*, June 1997

² *ibid*

³ Sarah Whitfield. 'Shaping Memory', in *Ellsworth Kelly*. London: Serpentine Gallery, 2006

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

Key Theme: Windows

'Everything is shapes, and when a shape falls against another shape, and the shapes are far apart, there's a space between the shapes. You think windows and ceilings and walls are squares and rectangles ... [But I] look at that window for example. From where I'm sitting, it's a very strange parallelogram. This side is much longer than that side, and that's going to a point, and that is flat. If you move a little, the whole world adjusts.'⁷

When Kelly moved to Paris in 1948, he was delighted and inspired by his surroundings. He was intrigued by Parisian architectural details and the patterns of light and shadow that fell upon them. 'A sidewalk grill, an awning, a window, a door, or panes of glass in a Paris restaurant might suddenly prompt the thought "This is the right size for something. This is something I can deal with, this is something I want."⁸

He began to draw everything he saw around him, ignoring perspective and the purpose and function of the building, then condensed his drawings into abstract colours and shapes.

Window I, 1949, is an example of how Kelly developed his practice of distilling an abstract form from an everyday object, in this instance a window. Another work, *Kilometer Marker*, 1949, was based on a roadside marker.

In 1949, he had another breakthrough during a visit to the Paris Museum of Modern Art, where he found that he was more interested in the windows between the paintings than the artworks themselves. He later recreated the window to display in his studio.

'Holes and spaces opening on to the dark, such as windows seen from across a street, cellars, doorways and stairwells have always intrigued him, spaces where the black is felt spatially as much as optically.'⁹ This is illustrated in Kelly's *White Relief over Black*, 2002, where the black has an almost luminous quality that draws the eye in through the canvas.



⁷ Ellsworth Kelly. 'Where the Eye Leads'. *Modern Painters*, June 1997, p 62

⁸ Sarah Whitfield. 'Shaping Memory', in *Ellsworth Kelly*. London: Serpentine Gallery, 2006

⁹ *ibid*

Key Theme: Structures

'The glass and steel reinforced concrete structures have created a new form and a new space to work upon. The artist has new materials to work with. The monochrome buildings demand colour, and the spaces demand an image on a large scale – powerful statements which are very much alive.'¹⁰

In France, Kelly was able to indulge his passion for architecture, and he became fascinated with Romanesque art and architecture. He loved the effect of these large stone structures and the spaces they created. One particular memory he has is of a monastery near Arles, where, from the top of a tower, he could see the graves of all the monks who had died during the Black Death: 'Hundreds and hundreds of graves spread out across the country in incredibly beautiful patterns.'¹¹ It has been claimed that it was at this point that he decided to become a painter.

His fascination with structural forms and architectural details filtered through into his paintings, and the influence of these can be seen in works such as *Brooklyn Bridge VII*, 1962, which emulates the curves and forms in the structure of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. Another example of this can be seen in *White Curve over White*, 2004, and *Gray Curve over Gray*, 2004, included in the Serpentine exhibition. The same curving line is echoed in *Untitled (Totem)*, 2004, in a sculptural form.

During the 1970s, Kelly made a series of outdoor sculptures that were vertical or horizontal planes made of steel and aluminium. One such example is *Stele II*, 1973, whose distinctive shape echoes some of his earlier abstract pieces and is loosely based on the French kilometre marker.

In 1989, Kelly was commissioned to create a permanent display for the inner courtyard of the Art Institute of Chicago's Rice Building, where many of his drawings were on display. He responded to the space in the courtyard with a series of aluminium panels called *The Chicago Panels*. These were irregular rectangles and trapezoids, some with curved sides, approximately four feet across. Each panel was painted with a single matt colour – blue, orange, yellow, green, red and black – and sat roughly three inches away from the wall to give the illusion that they were floating. As the viewer walks around the courtyard, the panels appear and disappear between the classical columns, and the colours and shadows interact with the surrounding building.



The Brooklyn Bridge



A French kilometre marker

¹⁰ Patterson Sims and Emily Rauj Pulitzer. *Ellsworth Kelly: Sculpture*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982

¹¹ Tim Adams. 'Curve Oeuvre'. *Observer Life*, 1 June 1997, p 19

Key Theme: Nature

'Birds fascinate me. I like their colouring and the fact that they fly. Their coloration is almost chance – the red body and the black wings of a scarlet tanager, for example – when you see one, it's really overwhelming in colour.'¹²

The influence of nature on Kelly's shapes and colours can be seen in works such as *Red Black White*, 2004, at the Serpentine and, in earlier paintings such as *Blue Curve*, 1994, where the clean curved edge of the canvas could be said to mimic the negative space that is created around a bird in flight.

Kelly responds to all aspects of nature, drawing from everything around him. From the early 1960s to the present day he has made a series of plant lithographs that were displayed in an exhibition called *Drawn from Nature: The Plant Lithographs of Ellsworth Kelly* at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Michigan, 2005. Kelly states, 'with the plant drawings I was interested in the forms and how they make patterns of negative and positive space; they're not so much about the flowers, but more about investigating the way the form works.'¹³

Another important element of Kelly's paintings is the way they relate to their environment and the space in which they are hung. In an interview that took place in his studio in 1997 he discussed this notion – 'If you look at this red painting, you start relating it to everything else in the room. To the blue rectangle of sky and those green pine trees against it or to the white and grey rectangles of the door.'¹⁴ At the Serpentine Gallery, Kelly has chosen to leave the windows uncovered, exposing the surrounding space of Kensington Gardens.



Scarlet Tanager

¹² Ellsworth Kelly. 'Where the Eye Leads'. *Modern Painters*, June 1997, p 60

¹³ *Ibid* p 63

¹⁴ Tim Adams. 'Curve Oeuvre'. *Observer Life*, 1 June 1997, p 17

Artistic Links: Influences

Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954)

French painter, sculptor, draughtsman, printmaker, and designer, one of the most illustrious artists of the twentieth century. From the 1920s he enjoyed an international reputation alongside Picasso as the foremost painter of his time. His early pictures – mainly still-lives and landscapes – were sober in colour, but in the summer of 1896, painting in Brittany, he began to adopt the lighter palette of the impressionists. In 1905 he began painting with Marquet, Derain and Vlaminck and together with these and other friends from his student days he took part in the sensational exhibition at the Salon d'Automne that gave birth to the name 'Fauves' [wild beasts]. Matisse had met Picasso as early as 1906, and like him was excited by African sculpture at this time. During the second decade of the century he was influenced by Cubism and painted some of his most austere and formal pictures. From 1916 he spent most of his winters on the Riviera, mainly at Nice. The luxuriously sensual works he painted there – odalisques, still-lives of tropical fruits and flowers, and glowing interiors – are irradiated with the strong sun and rich colours of the south. In his bedridden final years Matisse also embarked on another kind of highly original work, using brightly coloured cut-out paper shapes arranged into purely abstracted patterns. 'The paper cut-out', he said, 'allows me to draw in the colour. It is a simplification for me. Instead of drawing the outline and putting in the colour inside it – the one modifying the other – I draw straight into the colour.' Matisse also made sculptures at intervals in his career, the best known probably being the four bronzes called the *The Back I – IV*, in which he progressively removed all detail, paring the figure down to massively simple forms.

Constantin Brancusi (1876 – 1957)

Romanian sculptor, active for almost all his career in Paris, one of the most revered and influential of twentieth-century artists. In 1896 he won a scholarship to the Bucharest School of Fine Arts, and in 1903 he moved to Munich, then in 1904 to Paris, where he endured years of poverty. The first works he exhibited in Paris were influenced by Rodin, but when offered a job as an assistant to Rodin, Brancusi refused with the famous comment, 'No other trees can grow in the shadow of an oak.' From 1907 onwards his work (in both stone and bronze) consisted largely of variations on a small number of themes (heads, birds, a couple embracing), in which he simplified shapes and smoothed surfaces into immaculately pure forms that sometimes approach complete abstraction. He was particularly fond of ovoid shapes – their egg-like character suggesting generation and birth and symbolizing his own creative gifts. Brancusi's originality in reducing natural forms to their ultimate – almost abstract – simplicity had profound effects on the course of modern sculpture, as did his masterly skill as a stonecarver, which helped to bring about a revival of direct carving.

Kasimir Malevich (1878 – 1935)

Russian painter, designer, and writer, with Mondrian the most important pioneer of geometric abstract art. He was born in Kiev, where he studied at the School of Art between 1895 and 1896. His early paintings were in an unexceptional Post-Impressionist manner, but he began to absorb the influence of contemporary French art and of Russian avant-garde artists. By 1912 he was painting peasant subjects in a massive 'tubular' style similar to that of Leger and had also produced some exhilarating Cubo-Futurist pictures, combining Cubism's fragmentation of form with a Futurist multiplication of the image. Over the next few years Malevich moved away from absolute austerity, tilting rectangles from the vertical, adding more colours and introducing a suggestion of the third dimension by overlapping forms; there is sometimes even a degree of painterly

handling. However, around 1918 he returned to his purest ideals with a series of *White on White* paintings, in which a tilted white square is placed on a background of the same colour, the difference between them being visible only through variations in the brushwork.

Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973)

Spanish painter, sculptor, draughtsman, printmaker, ceramicist, and designer, active mainly in France, the most famous, versatile and prolific artist of the twentieth century. He was the dominant personality in the visual arts during much of the first half of the twentieth century and he provided the incentive for many of the revolutionary artistic changes during this time. He studied at the School of Fine Arts in Barcelona from 1896–7, before attending the Academy in Madrid for a few months in 1897. In 1900 he made his first visit to Paris and by this time had already absorbed a wide range of influences. From 1900–1904 he alternated between Paris and Barcelona, and this era has been called his 'Blue Period', when he took his subjects from the poor and social outcasts, and the predominant mood of his paintings was one of slightly sentimentalized melancholy. A brief phase between 1904 and 1905 was known as his 'Rose Period', where the predominant blue tones of his earlier work gave way to pinks and greys and the mood became less austere. The period between 1906 and 1907 is sometimes referred to as Picasso's 'Negro Period' because of the influence of African sculpture on his work at this time. This period culminated in *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)*, which in its distortions of form was as violent a revolt against tradition as the paintings of the Fauves in the realm of colour. It is now seen not only as a pivotal work in Picasso's personal development but as the most important single landmark in the development of twentieth-century painting. It was the herald of Cubism, which Picasso developed in close association with Braque and then Gris from 1907 up to the First World War. Towards the end of this period, Picasso made an almost equally revolutionary contribution to sculpture by creating works from pieces of commonplace material such as cardboard, paper and string.

Jean (Hans) Arp (1886 – 1966)

French sculptor, painter, and poet who was prominently involved with several major avant-garde groups and movements in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1915 he moved to Zurich, where he was one of the founders of the Dada movement and met his future wife Sophie Taeuber, with whom he collaborated in experiments with cut-out paper compositions and collages. During the war years in Zurich he also made his first abstract polychrome relief carving in wood. From 1920 Arp worked mainly in Paris and from 1925 he participated in the Surrealist movement, his work including experiments with chance arrangements. In 1931 he took up sculpture in the round (previously he had only made reliefs) and began to produce what are now his most familiar and distinctive works – sensuous abstract pieces (usually in bronze or marble) that convey a suggestion of organic forms without reproducing actual plant or animal shapes.

(Ian Chilvers. *Oxford Dictionary of 20th-Century Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Artistic Links: Other Artists

Piet Mondrian (1872 – 1944)

Dutch painter, one of the most important figures in the development of abstract art. His early paintings were naturalistic and direct, often delicate in colour, though greys and dark greens predominated. Between 1907 and 1910 his work took on a Symbolist character, partly under the influence of Jan Toorop and perhaps partly because of his conversion to Theosophy, and he also experimented with a kind of loose Neo-Impressionist technique, using large blobs of pure colour. By 1914 he had virtually eliminated curved lines from his work, using a structure that was predominantly horizontal and vertical, with the merest suggestion of natural forms underlying the patterning. In 1915 he met Theo van Doesburg and two years later he joined him in founding the association De Stijl; it promoted a new kind of rigorously geometrical abstract painting of which Mondrian became the main exponent. In this style, which he named Neo-Plasticism, he limited himself to straight lines and basic colours to create an art of great clarity and discipline. Typically he used a bold grid of black lines to form an asymmetrical network of rectangles of various sizes that were painted with a narrow range of colours.

Mark Rothko (1903 – 1970)

Russian-born American painter, one of the outstanding figures of abstract expressionism and one of the creators of Colour Field Painting. In the 1930s and 1940s he went through phases influenced by Expressionism and Surrealism, but from around 1947 he began to develop his mature and distinctive style. Typically his paintings feature large rectangular expanses of colour arranged parallel to each other, usually in a vertical format. The edges of these shapes are softly uneven, giving them a hazy, pulsating quality as if they were suspended and floating on the canvas. His paintings are often very large and the effect they produce is one of calmness and contemplation, but in spite of their tranquillity, they cost him enormous emotional effort.

Damien Hirst (b.1965)

British sculptor, painter, and designer, a flamboyant personality whose flair for self-publicity has helped him become the most famous British artist of his generation. From his youth he had a fascination with death and his best known works use dead animals or fish as the raw materials. In 1995 Hirst was awarded the Turner Prize. The work he showed at the exhibition at the Tate included *Mother and Child Divided*, consisting of four tanks containing the severed halves of a cow and a calf. Hirst's other works include paintings consisting of rows of coloured spots and the interior design of the Quo Vadis restaurant in London.

(Ian Chilvers. *Oxford Dictionary of 20th-Century Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Key Words

The following table of key words can be used in the classroom in the lesson objectives, and as a word bank either to generate discussion or to aid analysis and written work about the artist.

Suggested Activities

Primary

Using a writing frame, ask the students to write a descriptive piece about one of Kelly's artworks with some of the words below to help. The words may need to be edited to differentiate for KS1 and KS2 pupils; however, the words in the paler font are suggested for use with primary pupils.

Secondary

Ask students to select a word from the theme/context column and then to research Kelly's artwork to find images that could relate to their specific word. They should then write a short analysis of the artwork using the original theme/context as a starting point and the key words in the other columns to describe the visual qualities, mood, media and processes used in the artwork.

Theme / Context	Concepts / Visual Language	Mood / Feelings	Media/ Processes
Abstract	Colour	Boring	Painting
Nature	Primary	Peaceful	Sculpture
Environment	Secondary	Calm	Printmaking
Surroundings	Complimentary	Warm	Canvas
Silhouettes	Black	Cold	Painted Aluminium
Shadows	White	Powerful	Collage
Positives	Grey	Bold	Drawing
Negatives	Square	Quiet	Cut Outs
Simplification	Triangle	Nothing	Layers
Flags	Oblong	Exciting	Lighting
Symbols	Geometric	Zen / Trance	Multiples
Minimal	Shape	Meditative	Photographs
Personal/Impersonal	Form	Compulsive	Stretched fabric
Representational	Flat	Driven	Low relief
Architectural	Bright	Repetitive	Oil paint
Grid	Composition	Mad	
View finder	In front	Intense	
Windows	Behind	Orderly	
Self Contained	Ordered	Obsessive	
Plants	Layered	Self Contained	
Sequence	Scale	Controlled	
	Background	Serene	
	Line		

Questions and Discussion Topics

Key Stage 1 and 2

What type of shapes can you see in his work?

Where do you think Ellsworth Kelly might have taken these shapes from?
(Have a look around your classroom and look outside through the windows)

What type of colours does he use?

What kind of feelings could you connect with the colours? What colours could you use to describe your own different moods?

Key Stage 3 and 4

Why do you think Ellsworth Kelly's work is so important?

What makes his work stand out in the art world?

Can you think of any contemporary artists who make similar artwork?
(Use **artistic links** to help)

What elements of the world have influenced the shapes in Kelly's paintings and sculptures?

How do you think he gets the colour so flat?

Who were his favourite artists? (Use **artistic links** to help)

Key Stage 5

Is Ellsworth Kelly's work conceptual or thematic?

How was he influenced by other artists working around the same time?
What elements of their work may have had an effect on the way his art developed?

Kelly talks about his artworks as 'memories that haven't quite gelled'.¹⁵ What does he mean by this statement?

Kelly paints his canvases in such a way that hardly a trace of a brushstroke is visible. Art critic Richard Dorment states that this is what makes Kelly the 'most profoundly classical of all American Artists'.¹⁶ Do you agree with his opinion?

¹⁵ Sarah Whitfield. 'Shaping Memory', in *Ellsworth Kelly*. London: Serpentine Gallery, 2006

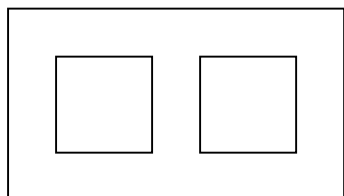
¹⁶ Richard Dorment. 'Ellsworth Kelly: A Retrospective'. *Art Critic London*, June 1997

Activities

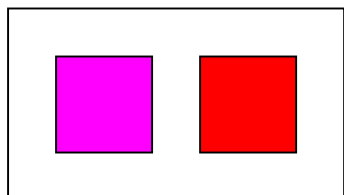
The following activities have been designed to use in the classroom. The worksheets can be photocopied and used in the gallery or in the classroom

Limited Colour – selecting colours from your environment

- Make a viewfinder from a piece of card with two holes cut out of it as shown below:



- Hold the card up and move it around the room until you can see two squares of pure colour or white and black.



- Look through the frame (close one eye).
- Compare the two colours to each other while considering the following:
The relationship to each other – are they harmonious, do they clash, are they complimentary, are they a similar colour, and are they a similar tone?
How do they contrast with the edges of the viewfinder?
- Try changing the colour of the viewfinder and the size and shape of the holes to see if this affects the colours you see.

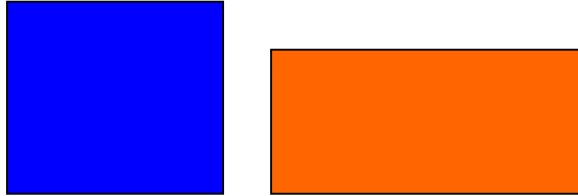
Follow-up or extension activities:

- This could be used as a starting point to work with KS2 or KS3 students to help teach colour theory or to recap on prior knowledge of primary, secondary, tertiary and complimentary colours.
- Students could try to mix the colours they see through their viewfinders using only primary colours.
- Use paint charts to try and identify the colours they see through their viewfinder.
- As a class, create a giant artwork in the style of Kelly's *Colours for a Large Wall*, 1951, by painting the squares of colour the students saw through the viewfinder, then cutting them out and creating a grid of colours.

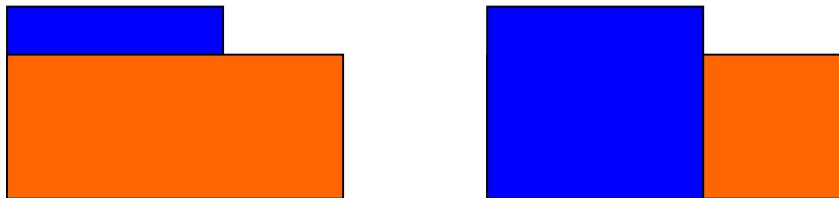
Activities

Background – How does the environment affect art?

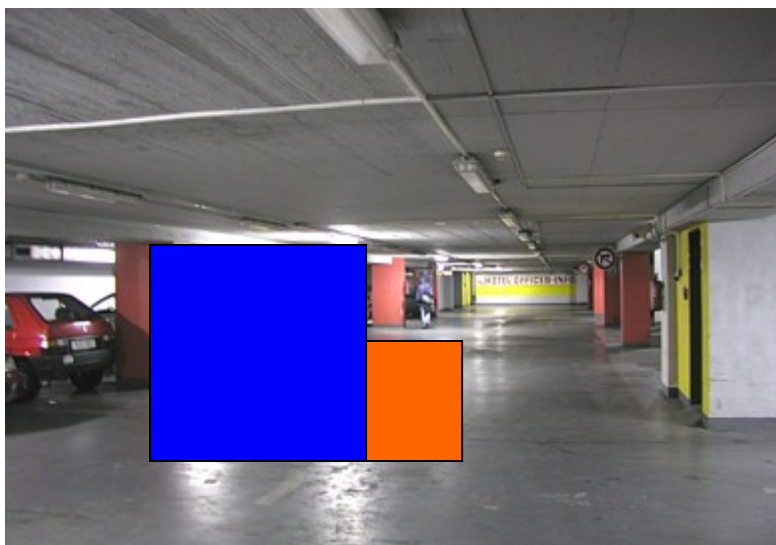
- Look at Ellsworth Kelly's artworks *Red Relief over Dark Blue*, 2004, and *Blue Relief over Green*, 2004, as seen at the Serpentine Gallery.
- Using two pieces of coloured paper cut out a rectangle and a square.



- Place the square on top of the rectangle and then try it the other way round, placing the rectangle on top of the square. Which looks better on top and why? Does it make any difference? Paste it down the way you prefer.



- Cut out three different environments from magazines. These could include a cityscape, a countryside scene, a room in a house, a white-cube-type space or a derelict car park.
- Try placing your artwork in the different environments. How do the various backgrounds affect the way your image looks? Stick it down on the one you would like your artwork to be exhibited in. Give your artwork an interesting title.



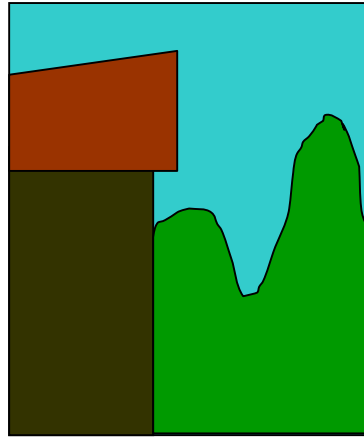
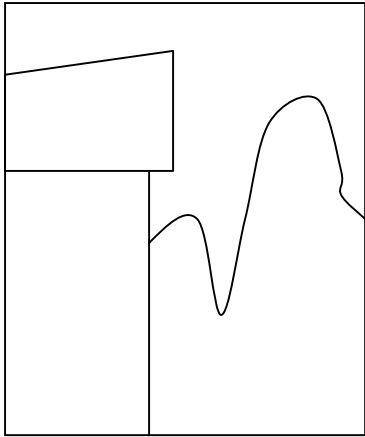
Follow-up or extension activities

- Try using more complex shapes and structures to layer over the top of each other and place in your exhibition space.
- Create an interactive artwork. Cut out a variety of shapes using coloured paper or card (approximately 20 different shapes). On a display board, stick down all the different shapes using Blu-Tack or Velcro. Each lesson or week, choose a different student or group to rearrange the shapes to create their own unique composition. The students should be encouraged to discuss their artwork and why they chose a particular composition. They may choose to make a recognisable image out of the shapes or create an abstract composition.

Activities

Through the looking glass

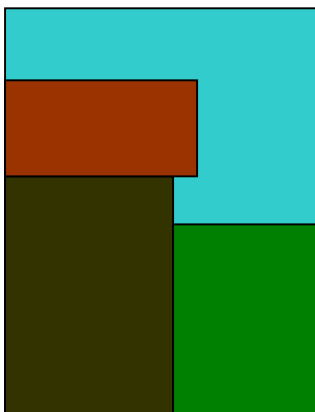
- Draw what you can see through one pane of a window, or create a small viewfinder out of white card and draw what you can see through that one square. Remember, the further you hold the card away from you the less you will see through the viewfinder. Spend no more than 20 minutes drawing.
- Using your own drawing to work from, this time only draw an outline of the three main shapes.



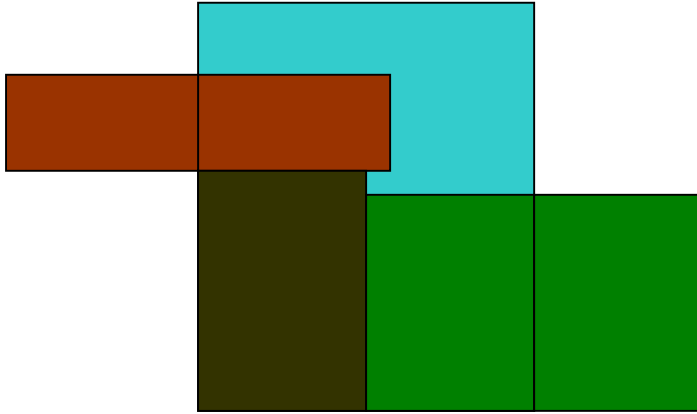
- Colour in the main areas using flat colour – you could use coloured paper, paint or colouring pencils. Use a single colour for each shape to represent the colours you saw when you did your initial drawing.
- Try using different colours so your image becomes more abstract and less like your original drawing, or try swapping the colours around in your composition.

Follow-up or extension activities

- Abstract the image further by making the shapes in your composition even more simplified.



- Try changing the shape of the canvas by mirroring some of the shapes to extend the composition outwards.

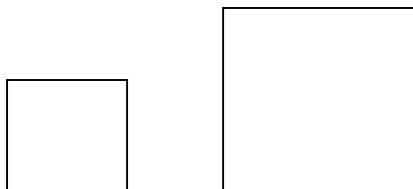


- Encourage the students to talk about why most artists choose to work within the boundaries of a rectangular canvas.
- How much has their composition changed from the original drawing they did through the windowpane or viewfinder? Has it helped them understand why artists might choose to make abstract paintings and how they would develop their ideas?

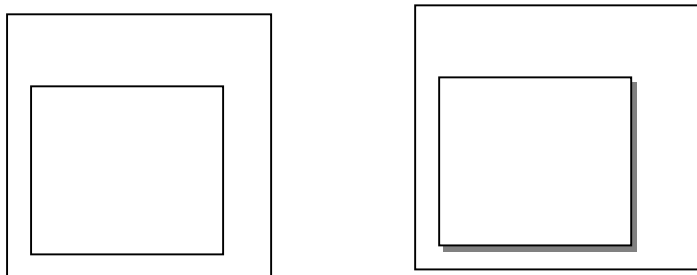
Activities

White on White

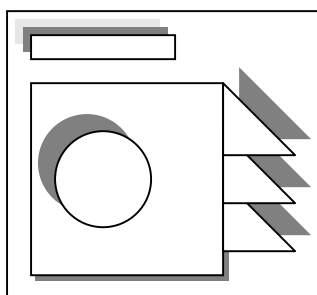
- Look at Kelly's artwork *White Relief over White*, 2002.
- Ask the students whether they think there is more than one type of white. Do light and shadow affect the different tones created on a plain white surface?
- Cut out 2 squares of white card, one bigger than the other.



- Lay the smaller piece of card over the larger square; it is up to you whereabouts on the larger piece you lay the card. Does it create an exciting composition? Or do you find it rather plain and uninteresting?



- Now try using a thicker square of card on top so it starts to create a shadow.
- Continue to add different shapes to your composition, using varying thicknesses of white card to create an interesting relief artwork.



Follow-up activities

- Further develop your white-on-white relief piece by cutting out parts of the composition to create another layer to your artwork.
- Create a similar artwork, only this time try using different types of white paper that will help create varying tones and textures. Use materials such as cartridge paper, kitchen roll, corrugated card painted white, tissue paper, and wallpaper. How does this affect the look of the artwork? Does it make the composition appear more exciting?

Take this worksheet around the gallery with you and see how many of the questions you can answer.

There are also some activities for you to do back in the classroom.

Please note that you are not allowed to use pencils in the gallery space, so you will need to discuss the answers to the questions.

1. How many different shapes can you see in the paintings around the gallery?
2. Find the name of the painting that could look like four flags blowing in the wind.
3. How many different colours can you see in the paintings? Use descriptive words to describe these colours. For example – sky blue.
4. If the paintings could talk, what kind of moods or emotions do you think they would tell you they were feeling? Find the paintings listed below and use your imagination to come up with different ideas. Use the word bank below to help you:
 - a. *Yellow Relief over Red*, 2004
 - b. *Blue Black Red-Violet*, 2004
 - c. *White Curve over White*, 2004
5. Ellsworth Kelly thinks the walls of the gallery are as important as the artwork. What do you think of the walls? How would you change them to make the work look even better?
6. Find the artwork that you like the most and describe the appearance of the painting.
7. Kelly says that a lot of the colours he uses in his paintings are from his early memories. Choose one artwork. Look very carefully at the painting and when you get home or back to the classroom try to draw it from memory. Try to remember the colours the artist used so you can recreate them when you get back to school.
8. When you get back to school, create your own artwork inspired by the exhibition. Use cut-out squares of coloured paper or card to layer over each other to create an exciting and colourful artwork. Give your work a title too.

Word Bank

Angry

Bold

Bored

Calm

Cold

Cheerful

Determined

Excited

Happy

Joyful

Lonely

Mad

Meditative

Nothing

Obsessive

Peaceful

Playful

Powerful

Quiet

Sad

Serene

Relaxed

Strong

Warm

Take this worksheet around the gallery with you and see how many of the questions you can answer.

Please note that you are not allowed to take pencils into the gallery space, so you should use the worksheet to generate discussion with your teacher or your peers.

1. What are your initial impressions of the artwork?
2. Look out through the gallery windows. How do the paintings and sculptures relate to the surrounding environment?
3. Where do you think Kelly gets his inspiration from, both in terms of the composition of his paintings and of the colours that he uses?
4. How do you think Kelly conveys emotions through his paintings?
5. Are there any artworks that you feel particularly drawn to and if so, why?
6. Look carefully at the artworks. Can you see the brushmarks on the canvas? How does Kelly achieve this?
7. What types of structures (natural or man-made) do you think Kelly is inspired by?
8. Which artists do you think may have inspired Kelly?
9. What other artists can you think of that make similar work to Kelly's?
10. Select the artwork you like the most and describe both its appearance and its mood.
11. Consider how you would compose your own painting to convey an emotion or feeling. What colours would you use and what shapes would make up the composition?
12. On returning to your school, or at home, try to create an artwork inspired by the work you have seen in this exhibition.

Further Reading

Selected Books and Catalogues

- 1982 Patterson Sims and Emily Rauj Pulitzer. *Ellsworth Kelly: Sculpture*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art.
- 1998 Ian Chilvers. *Oxford Dictionary of 20th-Century Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2006 *Ellsworth Kelly*. London: Serpentine Gallery.

Selected articles and reviews

- 1996 Lisa Liebmann. 'Kelly's Green – painter Ellsworth Kelly', *Artforum International*, 10 January.
- 1997 Ellsworth Kelly. 'Where the Eye Leads'. *Modern Painters*, June, pp 60-62.
- 1997 Richard Dorment. 'Ellsworth Kelly: A Retrospective'. *Art Critic London*, June.
- 1997 Tim Adams. 'Curve Oeuvre'. *Observer Life*, 1 June, pp 17-19.

Evaluation

We are currently reviewing our Teachers' Notes and would appreciate your feedback.

Please complete the following questionnaire and send it to Rachel Moss, Education Coordinator, Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, London W2 3XA or rachelm@serpentinegallery.org

- Is the information about contacting and getting to the gallery clear?
- How useful is the information about the artist, including the key themes? Is it easy to understand and to use directly with your students?
- Are the links to other artists informative?
- Are the keywords and discussion topics useful?
- Are the activities that have been devised for use in the classroom and in the gallery appropriate and easy to follow, including the worksheets?
- Which part of the notes have you found most useful?
- Which part of the notes have you found least useful?
- What would you change about the notes?
- Any other comments

The *Ellsworth Kelly* Teachers' Notes have been written by Imogen Luddy, with thanks to Mike Fletcher (Maria Fidelis School, Camden), Kate Keogh (Pimlico School, Westminster) and Sophie Rodger (Hampstead School, Camden), who took part in the engage *Watch this Space Teacher Placement Programme* during autumn term 2005.