

*For immediate release*

## ***Ellsworth Kelly: Postcards***

Exhibition features 150 of the artist's rarely seen postcard collages

July 10 – November 28, 2021

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY (June 15, 2021) — The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery presents *Ellsworth Kelly: Postcards*, a comprehensive survey of postcard collages by American artist Ellsworth Kelly, on view from July 10 through November 28, 2021.



Ellsworth Kelly, *Giant Artichoke*, 1984, 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches, collection of Ellsworth Kelly Studio and Jack Shear, copyright Ellsworth Kelly Foundation

The exhibition marks the first time Kelly's lifelong practice of collaged postcards will be the focus of a major museum exhibition. Widely regarded as one of the most

important artists of the twentieth century, Kelly (1923–2015) is known for his abstract paintings, sculptures, and prints that are masterworks in the exploration of line, form, and color. Over the course of more than fifty years, the artist made approximately 400 postcard collages, some of which served as exploratory musings and others as studies for larger works in other media. They range from his first monochrome in 1949 through his last collages of crashing ocean waves, made in 2005. Together, these works show an unbounded space of creative freedom and provide an important insight into the way Kelly saw, experienced and translated the world in his art.

*Ellsworth Kelly: Postcards* will include 150 such works, including *Coenties Slip* (1957), in which Kelly superimposes a torn-out magazine image of abundant fruit over a picture postcard of Lower Manhattan that includes Coenties Slip, the neighborhood where he lived and worked in the late 1950s through mid-1960s. Art historian Tricia Paik, a contributor to the forthcoming exhibition catalogue, has written that, while Kelly's postcard collages distance viewers from the mass-produced picture, they also reveal “the artist's lifelong approach to vision and his

experience of the phenomenal world — how he discovers specific shapes in natural and urban environments and translates them in painting, sculpture or relief.”

*Horizontal Nude or St. Martin Landscape* (1974) features a partial female torso torn from a magazine superimposed over the middle of a tourist postcard, obscuring most of the tropical landscape, but revealing a small pond in the foreground, and a background with sharp peaks of hills, deep blue water, and light blue sky. At once, this postcard collage illustrates Kelly’s vision and play with scale shifts, and serves as an artifact of Kelly’s history of visiting St. Martin, where he often stayed with his friend, the artist Jasper Johns, who has had a home on the island since the early 1970s.

Other postcards reference Paris, where Kelly lived in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and where he often returned, or other cities like New York and Los Angeles. *My New Studio* (1970) is a picture postcard of downtown Old Chatham, New York, with a stapled arrow pointing to the second-floor windows of his new studio building, in a town where Kelly relocated and worked for five decades.

These revealing biographical details make the postcard collages unique among Kelly’s works. They overflow with collage and pattern, and a playfulness that is less overt in his formally rigorous paintings and sculpture. For example, in *Colossal Head of Harrison Ford* (1984), Kelly situates the movie star’s head heroically on a beach landscape. Also in 1984, Kelly folded and collaged a torn piece of white and red paper over one side of a postcard reproduction of the early Edgar Degas painting *Young Spartans Exercising* (1860), thus asserting his own place amid important works of art history.

An extensive catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition, featuring 1:1 scale reproductions of 250 works, newly commissioned essays by art historians Tricia Paik, Lynda Klich and Jessica Eisenthal, as well as the artist’s 1990 text “Fragmentation and the Single Form.” In that text, Kelly describes: “In the making of art, fragmentation of forms, whether willfully or by chance, is related to vision. Wherever we look in the world, objects are layered, jumbled together, spread out before us.”

*Ellsworth Kelly: Postcards* is curated by Ian Berry in collaboration with the Ellsworth Kelly Studio with Jessica Eisenthal, independent curator. The exhibition is part of *All Together Now*, a regional collections-sharing project funded by the Henry Luce Foundation to celebrate the Tang Teaching Museum’s twentieth anniversary. The project brings together rarely-seen works from The Tang Teaching Museum collection to the public in collaboration with the Shaker Museum,

Ellsworth Kelly Studio, National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame, Hyde Collection, and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, among others.

The exhibition is supported by The Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts, the Henry Luce Foundation, Jack Shear and Friends of the Tang. The show will travel to The Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas, in 2022.

The opening of the exhibition marks the Tang's official reopening to the public since closing in March 2020. The Museum's Summer hours will be Noon to 5 p.m. Thursday through Sunday through August 29. Fall hours will be announced at a later time. For more information, please call the Visitor Services Desk at 518-580-8080 or visit <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

### **About Ellsworth Kelly**

Ellsworth Kelly is regarded as one of the most important abstract painters, sculptors and printmakers. Spanning seven decades, his career is marked by the independent route his art has taken from any formal school or art movement, and by his innovative contribution to twentieth-century painting and sculpture. Kelly draws on the connection between abstraction and nature from which he extrapolates forms and colors. Since the beginning of his career, Kelly's emphasis on pure form and color, and his impulse to suppress gesture in favor of creating spatial unity have played a pivotal role in the development of abstract art in America.

Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015) was born in Newburgh, New York. In 1948 he moved to France, where he came into contact with a wide range of classical and modern art. He returned to New York in 1954 and two years later had his first exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery. The Museum of Modern Art in New York organized his first retrospective in 1973. Subsequent exhibitions have been held at museums around the world, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Tate Gallery in London, Haus der Kunst in Munich, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

### **About The Henry Luce Foundation**

The Henry Luce Foundation seeks to enrich public discourse by promoting innovative scholarship, cultivating new leaders, and fostering international understanding. Established in 1936 by Henry R. Luce, the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Time, Inc., the Luce Foundation advances its mission through grantmaking and leadership programs in the fields of Asia, higher education, religion and theology, art, and public policy.

A leader in arts funding since 1982, the Luce Foundation's American Art Program supports innovative museum projects nationwide that advance the role of visual arts of the United States

in an open and equitable society, and the potential of museums to serve as forums for art-centered conversations that celebrate creativity, explore difference, and seek common ground. The Foundation aims to empower museums and arts organizations to reconsider accepted histories, foreground the voices and experiences of underrepresented artists and cultures, and welcome diverse collaborators and communities into dialogue.

### **About the Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts**

The Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts is dedicated to fostering knowledge and appreciation of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century American art. Raymond and Margaret Horowitz amassed one of the finest collections of American art during their lifetime, and they were committed to furthering scholarship in the field. Following out of their personal commitment, the Horowitz Foundation was established to support projects seeking to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of American Art, as well as research and scholarship in related disciplines.

### **About the Tang Teaching Museum**

The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is a pioneer of interdisciplinary exploration and learning. A cultural anchor of New York's Capital Region, the Tang's approach has become a model for university art museums across the country—with exhibition programs that bring together visual and performing arts with interdisciplinary ideas from history, economics, biology, dance, and physics, to name just a few. The Tang has one of the most rigorous faculty-engagement initiatives in the nation, and a robust publication and touring exhibition program that extends the museum's reach far beyond its walls. The Tang Teaching Museum's award-winning building, designed by architect Antoine Predock, serves as a visual metaphor for the convergence of art and ideas. The Tang is also a Blue Star Museum, offering active military members and their families free admission through the summer. <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

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