

Gift from Ellsworth Kelly to the Academy

A new lithograph by the U.S. preeminent painter and sculptor Ellsworth Kelly now hangs in the atrium of the House of the Academy. In celebration of the Academy's 225th anniversary, Kelly donated 25 signed prints of his "Sunflower II" from a limited edition of 60 lithographs. The remaining prints have been designated by Kelly to be used as gifts of appreciation to donors who make lead contributions to the Academy's endowment and capital funds during the 225th anniversary period.

It is fitting that Ellsworth Kelly has chosen the sunflower as the subject of his gift to the Academy. As President Patricia Meyer Spacks observed, "In one of their first pronouncements, the Academy's founders set forth 'the several subjects that should engage the attention of the Academy,' including the study of 'the various soils of the country, various methods of cultivation, and the growth of vegetables.' The image of the sunflower reminds us of such subjects. Native to America, it has come to symbolize nourishment, strength, longevity, and constancy – characteristics of the Academy's enduring commitment to serve society through creative thinking and action."

According to James Cuno, President and Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, "Ellsworth's generosity is matched only by the appropriateness of his gift. The elegance of his lithograph betrays the working of a clear, analytical mind; keen, observant eye; and refined good taste – all qualities shared with the founders of the Academy."

Although known for his colorful large-scale abstract paintings and sculptures, Kelly has consis-

tently returned to nature as the inspiration for his work. He spent forty years creating a rich variety of line drawings of plants, fruits, and flowers, marked by exceptional simplicity and beauty. Last spring, the first exhibition of his complete plant lithographs was held at the Grand Rapids Art Museum; next year, the exhibit will be on tour at the Tate Gallery, St. Ives in Cornwall (January 27-May 7, 2006), the AXA Gallery in New York City (June 7-August 13, 2006), and the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo in Seville (September 21, 2006-January 1, 2007).

Kelly's works are in major public and private collections worldwide and have been exhibited extensively in the United States. His sculpture exhibit was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1982, and a career retrospective exhibit was held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1996 and traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Tate Gallery, and the Haus der Kunst in Munich.

He has been commissioned to create many art displays, including a mural for UNESCO in Paris in 1969, a sculpture for the city of Barcelona in 1978, and a memorial for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in 1993. Ellsworth Kelly was elected to the American Academy in 1996.

On behalf of the Officers and Council of the Academy, Executive Officer Leslie Berlowitz expressed her deep appreciation to Kelly, noting "we hope this gift will inspire others to contribute art to the Academy. Ellsworth Kelly has established a new tradition that will enrich our surroundings and our imagination." ■



Ellsworth Kelly
Sunflower II, 2004
One color lithograph
37 x 29 inches (94 x 73.7 cm)
Edition of 60
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