

January 2010

Media Contact:

Leslie Denk, Director of Marketing and Communications
 (626) 844-6941; ldenk@nortonsimon.org

Plants, Flowers and Fruits: Ellsworth Kelly Lithographs

April 23–August 23, 2010

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents an exhibition of twenty lithographs of botanical subjects by American artist Ellsworth Kelly (b. 1923). Though Kelly is best known for his large-scale, color field paintings, *Plants, Flowers and Fruits* showcases his equally compelling efforts in the print medium. Executed on paper like a drawing and then transferred to a lithography stone, these prints present simple black lines that delineate pears, cyclamen and magnolia petals, among other subjects. All of the specimens have been enlarged to allow for close scrutiny, but the artist has depicted them without any distracting scientific details. Part botanical renderings, part abstract drawings, Kelly’s simplified, confident depictions of plants reflect how strongly the artist’s minimalism is rooted in the natural world.



Kelly’s first forays into abstraction stemmed from a deeply considered examination of the natural and built environments in which he lived. Architectural features such as doorways and windowpanes were simplified by the artist into a minimal number of lines, squares and arches. Likewise, leaves, stems and petals provided inspiration, and alongside his early trials in abstraction, Kelly continued to make drawings from nature. While growing up in New Jersey, he focused on the flora that proliferated not far from the metropolis in which his abstract works would one day change the course of art. The endless array of curls, curves and angles he found in foliate forms spurred this lifelong interest.

Kelly's earliest drawings on the subject date to his high school years. He later recalled of them, "The drawings from plant life seem to be the bridge to the way of seeing that brought about the paintings in 1949 that are the basis for all of my later work." Kelly's initial series of 28 transfer lithographs, entitled "Suite of Plant Lithographs" (1964–66), marked the beginning of a corpus that would grow to 72 prints and countless drawings of foliage. Paradoxically, these works also fueled his most minimal artistic experiments. At the time that he executed this first series of prints, for example, he was working on his first series of abstract prints, employing the vibrant colors and geometric shapes that would eventually define his career.

Plants, Flowers and Fruits: Ellsworth Kelly Lithographs is organized by Leah Lehmbek, Assistant Curator at the Norton Simon Museum.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, 20th-century industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Three temporary exhibition galleries feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 West Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Blvd. in Pasadena, California, at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. Hours: The Museum is open every day except Tuesday, from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday. Admission: General admission is \$8.00 for adults and \$4.00 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. Parking: Parking is free and no reservations are necessary. Public Transportation: The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 East Holly Street at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.