

layer. Likewise in trial proofs for *Flower Piece*, where a roll of toilet paper becomes part of a flower composition reminiscent of seventeenth-century Dutch still lifes, or in the various versions of *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* and *Swinging London*, all show Hamilton's tenacity to explore various permutations within a fixed composition.

As the exhibition progresses, first the camera and then the computer becomes increasingly evident, demonstrating the readiness with which Hamilton seized on the new opportunities offered by digital technology. The cut-and-paste techniques that were such a feature of his early collages gradually give way to sophisticated digital manipulation; the artist was at the vanguard of those realizing that the qualities of inkjet and digital technology could be as rich and subtle as more traditional techniques.

The Tate catalogue contains a selection of essays, each focusing on a particular aspect of Hamilton's work. These include an evaluation of his exhibition designs by Victoria Walsh, Buchloh's contextualisation of Hamilton in relationship to American art and culture and Hal Foster's elegant essay on Hamilton's approach to photography, while Mark Godfrey's essay considers Hamilton in relationship to the media and politics. This range of attitudes serves to highlight the range and scope of Hamilton's work and the impossibility of a single reading.

Throughout Hamilton's career, however, it is the figure of Duchamp that is all-pervading. Few artists have devoted so much time, effort and resources into understanding and promoting another artist's ideas as Hamilton did for Duchamp. Paul Schimmel encapsulates this in the intro-

duction, 'I suspect that Hamilton found his voice through Duchamp, and that this discovery liberated him from being held captive by the style of his considerable achievements as a proto-pop artist.' And later: 'he did not seek to understand Duchamp solely through thinking or writing about him but more directly by (re)making his work.' This can not only be seen in his typographical version of Duchamp's *Green Box* and his reconstruction of *The Large Glass*, but also in such prints as *Five Tyres Remoulded*, of 1971, which read like Hamilton's own essay on transparency, here replacing Duchamp's glass with mylar drafting film. Each work in turn is researched and executed with intense precision.

Perhaps the key to understanding Hamilton's work is this combination of ideas, feelings and a deep commitment to the intelligence of craft skills. One particular print, not shown at the Tate but displayed at Alan Cristea Gallery, *Picasso's Meninas*, made in 1973, seems to exemplify this approach (fig. 92). Given the opportunity to make a print to celebrate Picasso's 90th birthday, Hamilton agreed, conditional upon working with Picasso's printer, Aldo Crommelynck. The resulting homage takes Velazquez's *Las Meninas* as a stage to revisit Picasso's ever-changing styles and in so doing perfectly articulates the manner in which ideas and skills are passed on, both in terms of vision and techniques, from one generation to the next.

Certainly, this retrospective confirms Hamilton's position as one of the great figures of contemporary art and one who has also excelled as a printmaker leaving a legacy of iconic images in a multitude of media.

Ellsworth Kelly

Roni Feinstein

Richard H. Axsom, *The Prints of Ellsworth Kelly: A Catalogue Raisonné*, Portland, OR, Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, distributed by Marquand Books, Seattle, WA, 2012, 2 vols, 867 pp., 335 col. and 1 b. & w. ills., \$150.

Richard H. Axsom, *Letters to Ellsworth*, Portland, OR, Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, distributed by Marquand Books, Seattle, WA, 2011, 152 pp., 150 col. ills., \$45.

Ellsworth Kelly (b. 1923) emerged onto the New York scene in the late 1950s with reductive abstract paintings

and sculptures featuring vigorous colour and emphatic shapes derived from observations of the world around him. In the mid-1960s, Kelly extended his production into printmaking. To the present day, his art has continued to be characterized by an intelligence of conception, clarity of design, precision in execution and elegance in style. So too is the recent two-volume set, *The Prints of Ellsworth Kelly: A Catalogue Raisonné*, prepared by Richard Axsom. Appearing just as this figurehead in American art was approaching his 90th birthday, it is among the most gorgeous monographs ever produced, one that establishes a new

standard for the printed catalogue raisonné.¹

This new edition, which will henceforth be the definitive reference for this prolific printmaker, renders obsolete Axsom's initial publication on the artist's prints, *The Prints of Ellsworth Kelly: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1949–1985*, which appeared in 1987.² The 2012 volume revises Axsom's 1987 essay on Kelly's prints, while updating, correcting and presenting in more streamlined fashion the print documentation, chronology and bibliography.³ A new essay by Axsom, 'Looking Backward: Looking Forward', reflects on the achievements of the 117 print editions that Kelly produced between 1987 and 2008, the date of the final edition presented in the catalogue (no. 330). Since then, Kelly has continued to be supremely active as a printmaker (with eighteen new editions between 2008 and September 2014), making a future addendum necessary.⁴ What will also be needed is an updated version of the appendix devoted to related printmaking activity, consisting of Kelly's designs for exhibition invitations and catalogue covers, posters, wine labels and the like, which appeared in the 1987 catalogue but was eliminated from the new tomes.⁵

Even more than its content, the physical form and production values of the new catalogue raisonné, designed by Zach Hooker of Marquand Books, make it remarkable. Bound in grey linen and enclosed in a grey linen slipcase, each catalogue volume has near-square, generously sized pages of a thick, matt paper stock in a rich white tone. The text is printed in a clean, sans serif typeface (Akagi) and is generally confined to the lower portion of a page, leaving an expanse of white space above. Whereas the images and catalogue entries appeared two to a page in Axsom's earlier catalogue raisonné, here the text for each entry is centred in the middle of the left-hand page, while the image of the print is generously sized and offered in

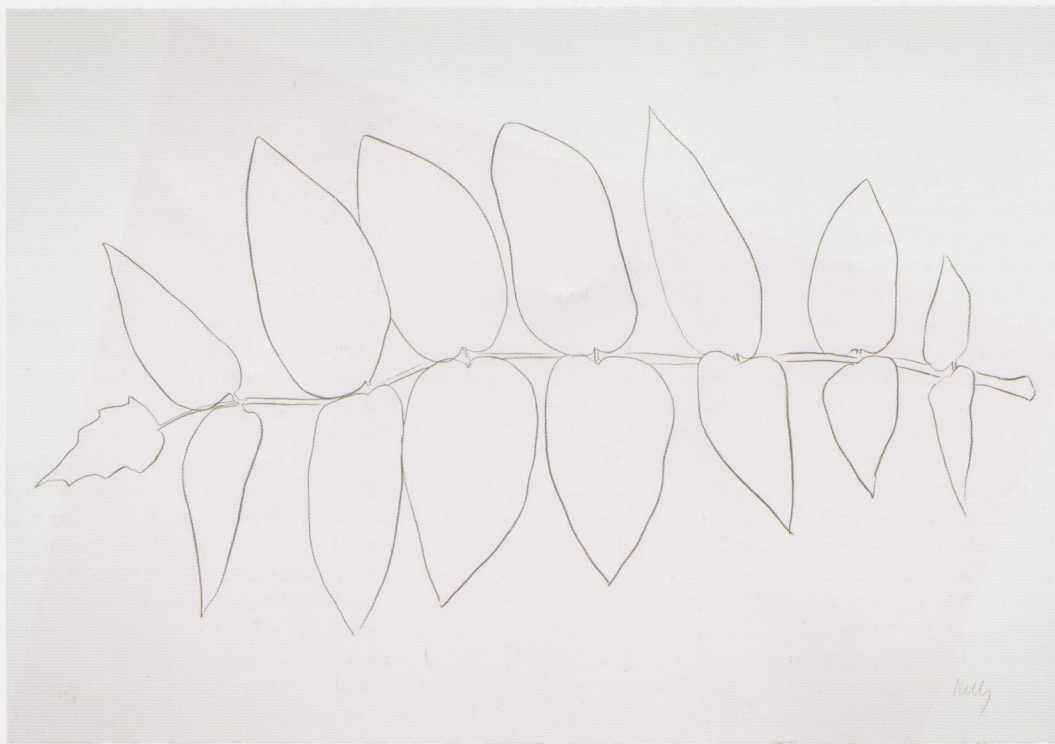
isolation (with no page or catalogue numbers, titles or dates, such as are found in virtually all similar catalogues) on the right-hand page. Further, while the reproductions in Axsom's earlier book tend to be muddy and poor, with dull colours against a grey paper stock, the images here are crisp and the colours of his abstract prints vibrant. The whites of the fine arts papers that Kelly typically used for his prints contrast favourably with the books' more starkly white pages.⁶

Although Kelly is widely known as a finely tuned colourist, over half of his prints are black and white and it is these that fared worst in his previous publication, where they resembled bad photocopies. In the new catalogue, the blacks are inky, rich and vibrant. Moreover, the scale and clarity of the images is such that in Kelly's plant lithographs, for example, in which contour lines describe graceful natural forms, the textured trails left on transfer paper by the greasy lithographic crayons are easily seen (fig. 93). In seemingly impossible to reproduce abstract prints like those of the *Romanesque Series*, 1973–76, in which Kelly used pale grey inks and embossing and debossing to distinguish shapes and edges, the platemarks are visible and the images sing (nos. 116–39). Axsom writes, 'For Kelly, the making of a good print involves a series of intuitive decisions about shape, colour, the relation of colour to shape, and the relationship of coloured shape to the field of paper it rests on. The process requires continuous creative adjustment and calibration.'⁷ While viewing the images in the book by no means replaces seeing the prints in person (particularly because scale, which in recent years has approached the monumental, is so important to Kelly's work), the reproductions in the new publication are of sufficiently high quality as to capture the nuances of his multi-faceted calibrations.⁸

1. The online catalogue raisonné of Ellsworth Kelly prints from 1970 to 2006 *Gemini G.E.L. Online Catalogue Raisonné* is found at www.nga.gov/gemini. The majority of Kelly's prints were made in the workshops of Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles, which in 1981 donated 256 prints by 22 American artists to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, laying the foundation for the Gemini G.E.L. Archive. One example of each of Gemini's subsequent editions has also been donated to the National Gallery. The online catalogue was launched in 1996, with a second edition appearing in 2009. It presents a small-scale image of each print together with information drawn from the documentation sheets for each published edition.
2. R. H. Axsom, with the assistance of P. Floyd, *The Prints of Ellsworth Kelly: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1949–1985*, New York, 1987. The publication coincided with a travelling exhibition organized by the American Federation of the Arts, which opened at the Detroit Institute of Arts.
3. The documentation for each published edition in Axsom's 2012 catalogue raisonné includes information from the publisher's documentation sheets as well as notes on related paintings, sculptures and literature. Additionally, the evolution and significance of each series is described. Each of the prints Kelly made at Gemini G.E.L. is given two catalogue numbers – the one assigned by Axsom and

its Gemini G.E.L. registration number. It may be noted that the *Gemini G.E.L. Online Catalogue Raisonné*, op. cit., does not provide the Axsom number for each print; instead, it offers the Gemini G.E.L. registration number, referred to as the Gemini Publication Sequence Number, as well as its own catalogue number.

4. These eighteen new editions were with Gemini G.E.L. I wish to extend my thanks to Sidney B. Felsen, Co-founder and Co-director of Gemini G.E.L., and Marisa Muller, Assistant to the Director, Gemini G.E.L. for their assistance with this and other information.
5. One would imagine that this publication would be on the order of R. H. Axsom and D. Platner, *Printed Stuff: Prints, Posters and Ephemera by Claes Oldenburg, A Catalogue Raisonné 1958–1996*, New York, 1997.
6. Through the years, Kelly has used several different types of white paper for his prints, which vary in tone. These include Rives BFK white, Arches Cover paper and Arches 88.
7. Axsom, 2012, op. cit., p. 27.
8. Axsom notes that 'panoramic prints' make up nearly one fifth of Kelly's work from 1988–2008; *ibid.*, p. 44. At almost six metres in length, Kelly's *Purple Red Grey Orange*, 1988, is among the largest prints ever attempted at Gemini G.E.L. and among the longest single-sheet fine art lithographs ever made (no. 245).



93. Ellsworth Kelly, *Ailanthus Leaves (Vernis du Japon I)*, 1966, lithograph, 726 x 1,052 mm (© the artist and Editeur Maeght, Paris).

The publication of the updated catalogue raisonné coincided with an exhibition, 'Ellsworth Kelly's Prints', which travelled to three cities, each with special significance for Kelly's printmaking. Organized by Stephanie Barron and Britt Salvesen, the exhibition opened in January 2012 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.⁹ Although Kelly made his first prints in late 1964 with Maeght Editeur in Paris, beginning with 27 colour lithographs of abstract shapes and 28 lithographic drawings of botanical subjects, since 1970 his primary print workshop has been the Los Angeles-based Gemini G.E.L., which has published 271 of his 348 editions over the past 40-plus years. At Gemini, Kelly has collaborated with master printers (initially Ken Tyler, then primarily James Reid) who have worked to satisfy his demand for immaculate surfaces, precisely articulated forms and even densities of colour. Reid has said to new printers coming into

the shop, 'When you have successfully completed your first Ellsworth Kelly colour edition, then you can say you are a lithographic printer.'¹⁰

The exhibition's second stop was the Portland Art Museum, Portland being the home of Jordan D. Schnitzer and his family foundation, the publisher of Kelly's print catalogue raisonné.¹¹ Schnitzer began collecting prints by Kelly in 1993 and the exhibition consisted of more than 100 prints, most of them drawn from his and his family's collection. Richard Axsom is Curator of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, the exhibition's final venue. Between the 1987 and 2012 catalogues raisonnés, Axsom wrote an update of his 1987 catalogue essay for the 1998 exhibition, 'Ellsworth Kelly: Recent Prints', held at the Boston University Art Gallery.¹² In 2005 he curated 'Drawn from Nature: The Plant Lithographs of Ellsworth Kelly' for the Grand Rapids Art Museum and authored

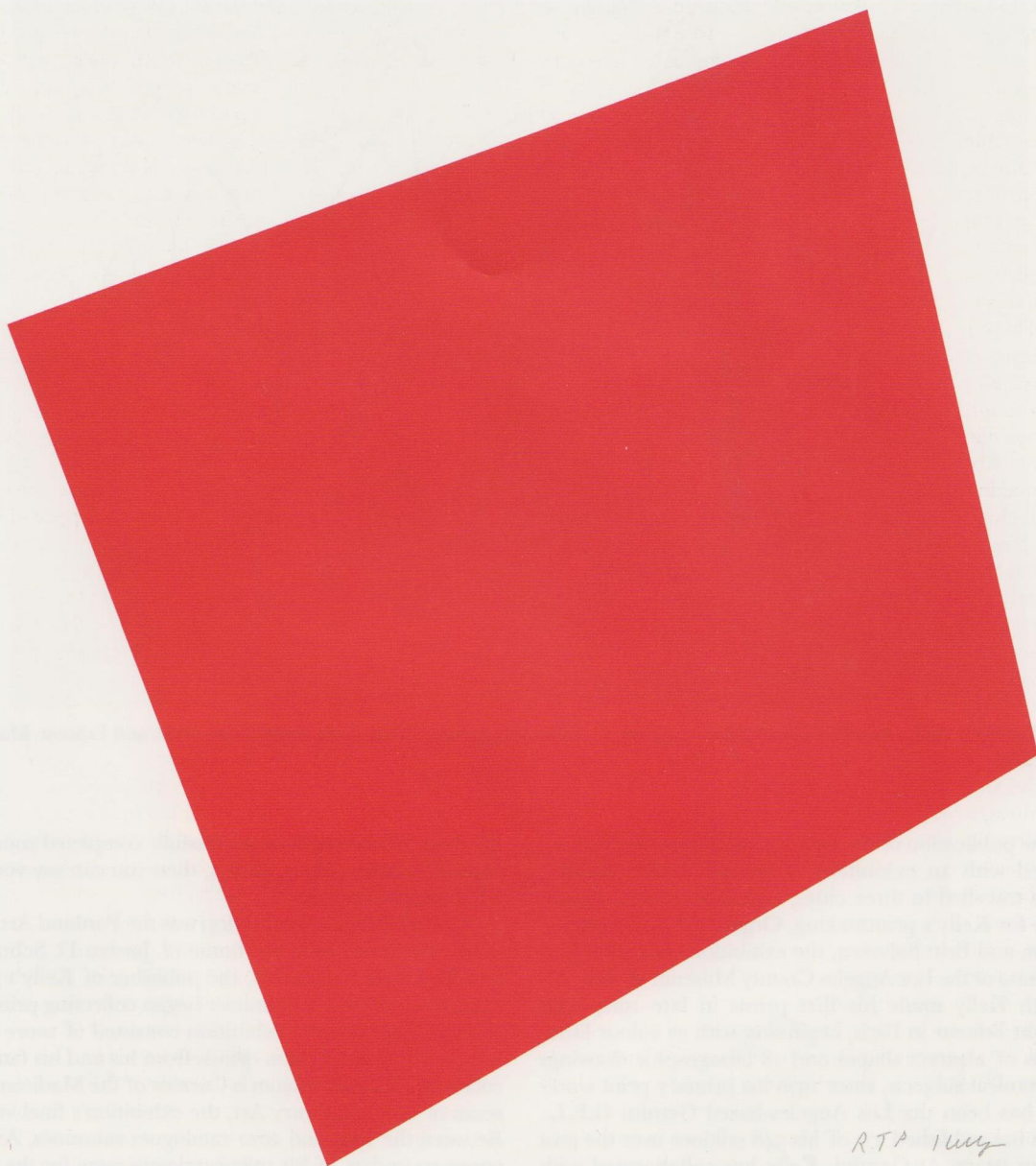
9. At LACMA, the exhibition included five painted works and was entitled 'Ellsworth Kelly: Prints and Paintings'. The exhibition brochure can be accessed online at www.lacma.org/sites/default/files/KellyBrochureFinal.pdf

10. Axsom, 2012, op. cit., p. 40.

11. For the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation see [http://jordan-](http://jordan-schnitzer.org)

schnitzer.org.

12. Axsom's essay, 'In-Between Perceptions: Ellsworth Kelly's Recent Prints', which was further updated for the 2012 catalogue raisonné, appeared in M. Drach McInnes, *Ellsworth Kelly: Recent Prints*, Boston, 1998.



94. Ellsworth Kelly, *Red*, 2005, lithograph, 845 x 762 mm (© the artist and Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles).

the accompanying catalogue.¹³

Given his decades-long involvement with Kelly's graphic output, Axsom is the consummate authority and his catalogue essays demonstrate his profound understanding of the artist and his work. Axsom elucidates in detail the evolution of the prints (which generally proceed

from drawn or collaged preliminary studies to paintings to prints), the use of various printing techniques (such as photo plates to avoid image reversal), Kelly's collaborations with master printers and the extended sequences of serialized prints. Among the greatest strengths of Axsom's writing is his ability to describe Kelly's complex

13. R. H. Axsom, *Drawn from Nature: The Plant Lithographs of Ellsworth*

Kelly, New Haven, 2005.

forms, to clearly articulate subtle but crucial differences among seemingly similar prints and to convey the life force contained within. *Red*, 2005, for example, is 'a sharp-angled trapezium – a quadrilateral with no parallel sides' (fig. 94).¹⁴

Describing the later prints, Axsom points out that a 'premium is placed on energetic movement' in Kelly's abstract prints produced since 1982, with the artist often presenting shapes set on-end and in states of seeming imbalance.¹⁵ Axsom continues: 'The near classical poise of Kelly's earlier abstraction gives way to baroque energies in this later phase.'¹⁶ He adds, however, that in Kelly's art, 'There is no discernible late style – often signaled in Western art by increased painterly qualities, warmer palettes, and heightened subjectivity.'¹⁷

Although it is true that Kelly has remained faithful to his origins in continuing to produce clean, precise prints, whether abstract or botanical in subject and form, his printmaking took any number of unexpected turns, with visible chinks in the armour of his objectivity as he entered his late sixties and the later phases of his career. There is a recurrence in these works not only of increased painterly qualities, gestures and textures, but also of different effects of imagery concerning water (and watery surfaces) that appear to carry a psychological charge. Further, in a number of the late works, the emotional evocations of colour and form seem to be exploited in a manner not previously seen in his art.

Textures or increased painterly qualities, which emulate the surfaces of Kelly's weathering-steel and wood sculptures, were first seen in his prints in the *St Martin Series*, 1983–84 (nos. 202–06). The print entitled *Orient Beach* from this series features not only a mottled surface, but also the artist's shoeprint, by all accounts an autographical gesture and a rare intrusion of the artist's self. Prints with 'gestural' surfaces recur in the *Fans* and *Purple Red Grey Orange Series*, both of 1987–88, and culminate in the majestic black-and-white prints of the *Rivers Series*, 2002–05 (fig. 95, nos. 214–28, 229–45 and 316–26). Named after rivers from five of the seven continents, each of the works in this series features random patterns of horizontal and diagonal striations that suggest light reflecting off the surface of rushing waters and their murky depths. In two of the works, the watery imagery is not only printed to the very edges of the sheet, but the sheets are mounted on aluminium panels and clear-coated so as to circumvent the need for a frame (nos. 316 and 326). The figure–ground relationship that generally characterizes a Kelly print is thereby eliminated and the distinction between the prints and the

artist's work in other media (painting and sculpture) is blurred.¹⁸ The horizontal extension of these works – each measures almost three metres in width – and their use of gestural marks to evoke watery surfaces and effects of light recall Claude Monet's late paintings of water lilies. Unlike Monet's placid surfaces, however, which encourage a meditative gaze, Kelly's intensely black, energized surfaces, depicting fast moving water, provoke thoughts of powerful forces beyond one's control.

Enhanced expressivity, or heightened subjectivity, seems to have been in evidence a decade earlier in Kelly's decision in 1992 to illustrate Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 poem, *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A Throw of the Dice will never Abolish Chance; no. 266), which has been Kelly's singular *livre d'artiste*. One of the French Symbolist poet's final works, *A Throw of the Dice* is permeated by a *fin-de-siècle* malaise, offering a meditation on life and death and the inability to alter one's fate. In Kelly's design, black abstract shapes sit heavily on the right-hand pages, alternating with spreads of Mallarmé's printed text, the whole exuding a sense of melancholy; the rhythm of Kelly's ponderous forms seems to intone the inevitability of death. The related lithographic quartet of the *Mallarmé Suite*, 1992, was produced concurrently and its forms echo those of four of the eleven lithographic plates in the book. The lithographs were printed in black as well as in dark red, dark green and dark blue, a moody and 'warmer palette' with few precedents in Kelly's art (nos. 266.1–4).

Certainly among the most intimate and personal prints Kelly ever produced are the *Portraits*, 1986–90, a lithographic series that features a self-portrait as well as three different images of the photographer Jack Shear, Kelly's companion and lover of the past 30 years, who serves as Director of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation (fig. 96; nos. 246–57). The portraits derive from small Polaroid snapshots that Kelly variously manipulated and distorted on an office photocopier. They are presented in the prints either as large-scale individual images printed in black on white or on single colour grounds, or, in the case of three of the prints, as spectral colour images. The *EK* image offers a bust-length, smiling self-portrait of the artist whose figure is described by wavering vertical striations that run down the surface in a manner that, as Axsom wrote, suggests 'water spilling down a glass pane.'¹⁹ The visage in all three *Jack* images looms large in extreme close-up, the facial features flattened and seeming to extend beyond the prints' borders. In each, Shear's face is rendered in atomized globules that recall oil droplets suspended in water, although the features in *Jack I* are so diffuse as to be un-

14. Axsom, 2012, op. cit., p. 48.

15. Ibid., p. 43.

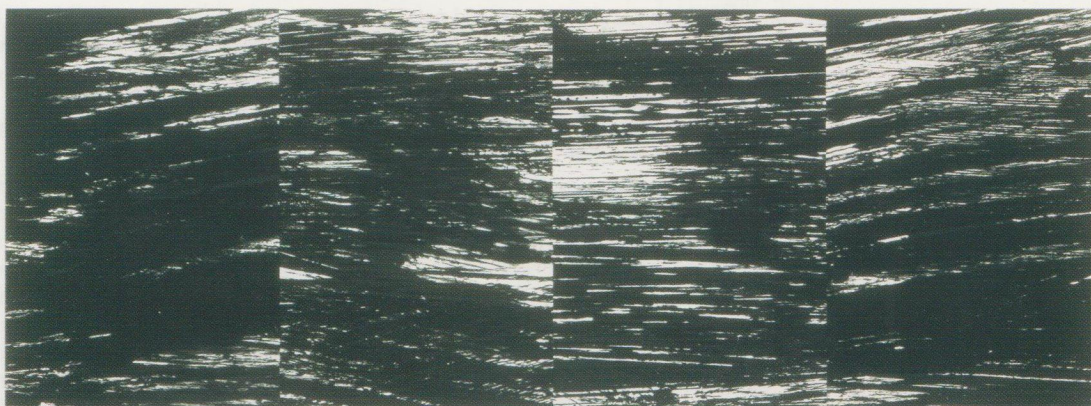
16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. For the *Rivers Series* see D. Hickey, 'The Rivers, the Notepads, and

the Accidental Fifties', in *Letters to Ellsworth*, op. cit., pp. 62–65, a reprint of his essay in the exhibition catalogue, *Ellsworth Kelly: The Rivers*, New York, 2007.

19. Axsom, 2012, op. cit., p. 47.



95. Ellsworth Kelly, *The River*, 2004, lithograph on paper mounted on aluminium, 1,016 x 2,770 mm (© the artist and Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles).

readable. In *Jack II*, however, it is clear that Shear is warmly smiling; in *Jack III*, he is broadly grinning.

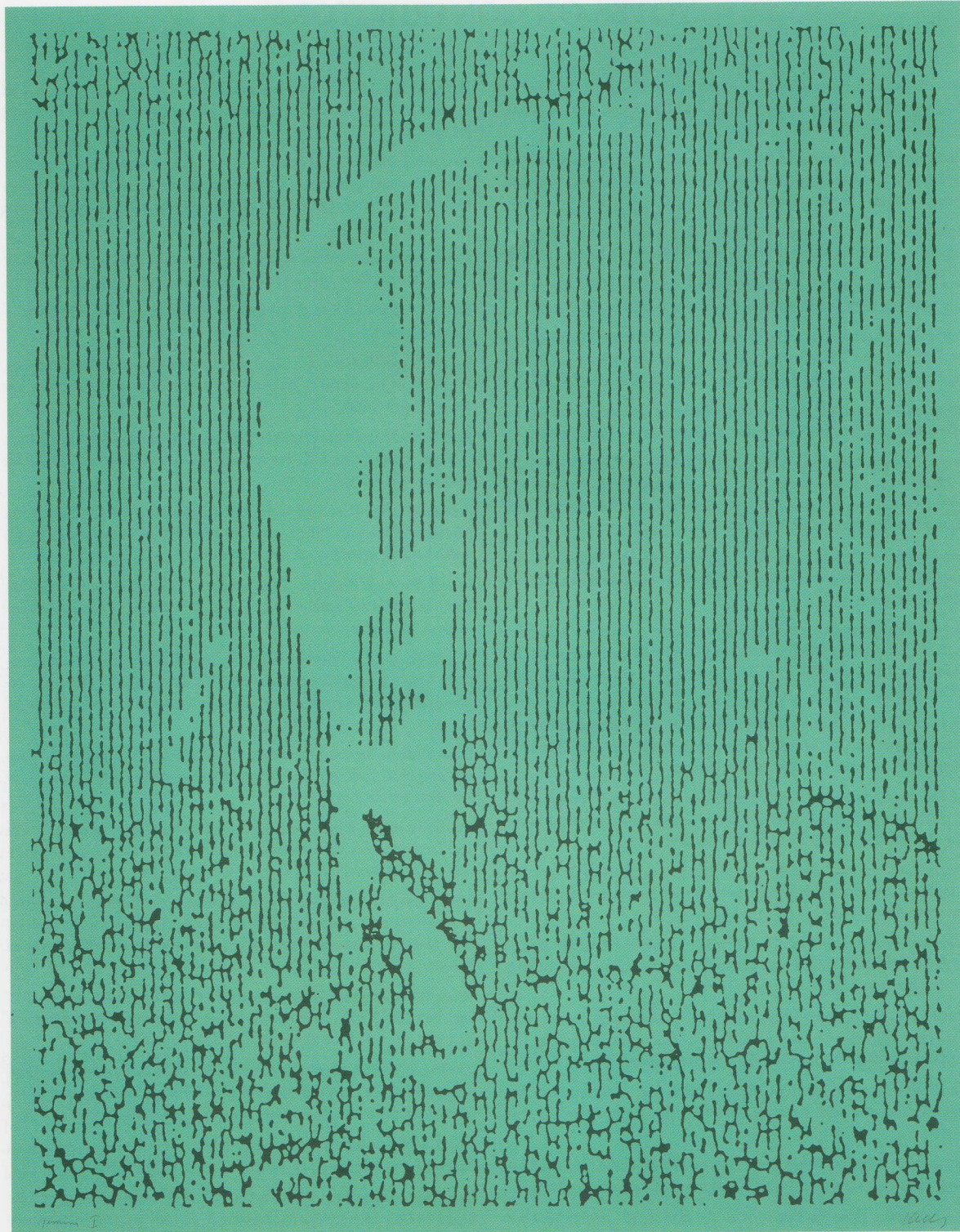
The mood of the series, then, is hardly melancholy. Most of the images radiate a sense of joy through the appearance of happy faces (which are rarely seen in works of fine art). Yet the watery allusions suggested in the images, both of the artist and Shear, once again introduce movement as well as an elusive, evanescent quality. This contemplative note is reinforced in the spectral images in which the artist's and Shear's smiling faces are each repeated six times along a horizontal axis in primary and secondary hues used so sparingly as to appear as extremely delicate, pale pastel tones. There is a sensation in these works of fading away, which suggests an older artist reflecting on love, happiness and loss, on the human condition and the unstoppable passage of time.

While the two-volume catalogue raisonné stands as a testament to the creative genius of Ellsworth Kelly, a companion tome edited by Axsom, *Letters to Ellsworth*, takes the tribute further. Rather than a book of scholarly essays, it is an anthology of personal reflections by 21 of the men and women who have been closest to the artist and his work (particularly his prints) through the years, including curators, art historians, publishers, printers, dealers, collectors and friends. The essays make obvious the fact that Kelly is held in the highest esteem and is much loved. Most of the contributors speak of how his vision of the world and of art transformed their own, as is indicated by

the title of Agnes Gund's essay, 'The Beauty of Seeing through Ellsworth's Eyes.' Bruce Guenther eloquently wrote, 'The perceptual purity of Kelly's art is a gift that enables us to see freshly and neutrally and with the same physical immediacy experienced by an infant, for whom everything seen is virtually new.'²⁰

Letters to Ellsworth, which was designed by Zach Hooker in tandem with Jeff Wincapaw, features a wrap-around paper book jacket printed with a reproduction of Kelly's screenprint *Spectrum*, 1973, over grey linen covers like those of the catalogue raisonné. The book is also of the same generous proportions and fine paper stock, although it is considerably thinner. It is copiously illustrated and includes multiple images of Kelly working and with friends (most of the photographs were taken by Sidney Felsen of Gemini G.E.L. and Jordan Schnitzer). Here, however, rather than the full-page colour plates appearing in the order in which the prints were produced, as was necessary in the catalogue raisonné, the images now appear on facing pages, juxtaposed for their visual impact. For example, two abstract prints, *White Curve*, 1998, and *Two Curves*, 2011, face-off on pages 60 and 61, while *String Bean Leaves III*, 1965–66, and the abstract *Colour Trial Proof of Yellow (Jaune)*, 1964–65, appear together on pages 18 and 19 (respectively, no. 277; uncatalogued; no. 50; and uncatalogued). Each set of juxtaposed images enters into a dialogue, one that is physically present, perceptually rich and reveals the beauty of seeing through Ellsworth Kelly's eyes.

20. B. Guenther, 'An Open Door', in *Letters to Ellsworth*, op. cit., p. 55.



96. Ellsworth Kelly, *EK Green*, 1988, lithograph, 1,194 x 934 mm (© the artist and Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles).