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Left: Ellsworth Kelly, *Shadows on Stairs, Villa La Combe, Meschers*, 1950. Right: Ellsworth Kelly, *Leaves, Meschers*, 1950. Both: Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Ellsworth Kelly Studio and Jack Shear. © Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

**Santa Barbara Museum of Art Presents Landmark Exhibition**  
***Shape, Ground, Shadow:***  
***The Photographs of Ellsworth Kelly***

First museum exhibition devoted solely to Kelly's photographs

**On View October 15, 2023 – January 14, 2024**

October 13, 2023—Organized by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, *Shape, Ground, Shadow: The Photographs of Ellsworth Kelly* is a landmark presentation of 60 images by the renowned American artist, Ellsworth Kelly, dating from 1950 to 2002. This is the first museum exhibition devoted solely to Kelly's photographs, all of which are being lent by the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation in Spencertown, New York.

Installed in the Museum's McCormick and Gail Wasserman and Family special exhibition galleries, this unprecedented and extensive overview of Kelly's photographs allows viewers to see the kinds of forms and phenomena that resonated back-and-forth across his art in all media over seven decades. From the late 1940s into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Kelly forged an era-defining body of abstract art based on his visual experiences of the everyday visible world. Kelly succinctly explained his practice this way: "I realized I didn't want to compose pictures...I wanted to find them." Images such as the sharply graphic *Shadows on Stairs, Villa La Combe, Meschers*, of 1950 introduce Kelly's unique way of singling out and registering specific motifs that he located in nature, landscape, and architecture.

Importantly, Kelly did not use photographs as source material for his art in other media. From the start, the camera for Kelly was one more artistic tool to brilliantly translate his singular visual experiences of the world around him into art. As Kelly himself stated, “My paintings never develop from photographs directly. When I tried once, the form that I had been interested in didn’t exist outside of the photograph. The magic was in the photograph and it stayed there.” Extraordinary works of art in their own right and made largely for himself alone, Kelly’s photographs offer viewers a uniquely direct way to see the artist’s eye and mind at work unlike any other genre of art he ever created.



Ellsworth Kelly, *Barn, Southampton*, 1968. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Ellsworth Kelly Studio and Jack Shear. © Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is the only West Coast museum participating in *EK100*, the 2023 centennial celebration of Kelly’s birth with exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Glenstone Museum, Potomac, MD; Philadelphia Museum of Art; La Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, Rome; Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin, and further US and international venues in 2024.

The exhibition has been curated by Charles Wylie, SBMA’s Curator of Photography and New Media with the full participation of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation. The exhibition and its catalogue are being coordinated by Fabián Leyva-Barragán, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Photography and New Media.

A forthcoming fully-illustrated ca. 160-page catalogue is being produced by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. It will feature all 60 photographs in the exhibition; an essay by exhibition curator, Charles Wylie; and photographic documentation of the installation. The publication is being organized and distributed by Delmonico Books, New York.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is one of the finest museums on the West coast and is celebrated for the superb quality of its permanent collection. Its mission is to integrate art into the lives of people through internationally recognized exhibitions and special programs, as well as the thoughtful presentation of its permanent collection.

**Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.**  
**Open Tuesday – Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, Free Thursday Evenings 5 to 8 pm**  
**805.963.4364 [www.sbma.net](http://www.sbma.net)**

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