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Art in Review

■ An Ellsworth Kelly opening ■

Ellsworth Kelly

Matthew Marks
522 West 22d Street
Chelsea
Through Jan. 29

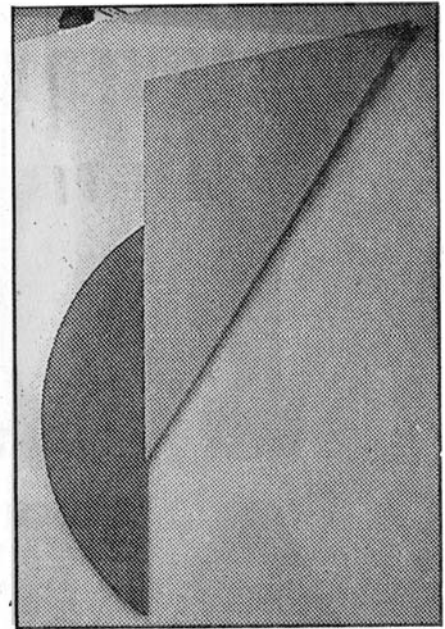
The tall, wide windows of Matthew Marks's new Chelsea gallery make an ideal frame for Ellsworth Kelly's paintings in an impressive inaugural show. Mr. Kelly's gift for both simplifying and complicating abstracted forms is justly renowned, and such transformations are the essence of the three series here.

Much of the work is monumental in scale and formed from pairs of overlapping shaped canvases, a configuration with distinct sculptural implications. In "Yellow Relief With Blue" (1991), a thin vertical emerges from behind a large semi-circle like a handle from a folded fan. In "Green Relief With Blue" (1993), one monochromatic panel appears to be slipping aside to reveal another in a gracefully supportive

pas de deux.

Part of the appeal of Mr. Kelly's painting has always been the way it accommodates without confirming real-world associations, although they are of only incidental interest here. What this work is memorably about is a pitch-perfect orchestration of shape, line and color. Everywhere, one senses, angles are poised just so; colors are rich, though astringently ungorgeous; edges have been painstakingly honed.

In other hands, such formal calibration could become inflexible, but Mr. Kelly's work, after an astonishingly productive career of nearly 50 years, remains supple and fresh. The paintings at Marks are notable not only for a kind of levitated, hypnotic beauty, but also for the atmosphere of quiet suspense they generate. Something, one senses, is always happening or about to happen — a subliminal lift, or a settling down — and certainly such expectation is high on the list of things art should be about. **HOLLAND COTTER**



Matthew Marks Gallery

Inaugural show: Ellsworth Kelly
at Matthew Marks in Chelsea.