

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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**Ellsworth Kelly:  
Reliefs 2009-2010  
Black and White Drawings**

■ **Mathew Marks Gallery**

"Reliefs" at 522 W. 22nd St. & 523 W. 24th St.

"Black and White" at 526 W. 22nd (212) 243-0200

Through April 16

Few artists—Piet Mondrian and Henri Matisse among them—can do enough with only two shapes and two colors to warrant pilgrimages to three separate galleries. Another is Ellsworth Kelly, who works masterfully here with only two forms (usually one black and one white) in three concurrent venues.

These shows are spacious, immaculate and spare; rhythmic, elegant and dynamic. Mr. Kelly's muscular geometric shapes, balletic and spry, suggest tumbling acrobats and the long reach of ocean horizons. Forms swell like sails; cut like Samurai swords; swoop like birds. Each relief painting comprises a single black, white, gray or red shaped flat panel affixed directly to the face of a black or white rectangle. Their yin-yang forms hug their supports' edges and corners, and convey a sense of tension between gravity and ascension; moving and stopping; pulling left and right. In the acrylic on paper "Two Black Forms" (1962), heavy black arcs leap across the page like piggybacking humpback whales. The tumescent bellies of "Black Curve Relief" and "White Curve Relief" rise and descend, respectively, like mammoth moons. "Black Curve Diagonal," climbing and falling—as clean as a whistle; as weighted as a death rattle—extends elastically, laterally. Here, opposition, like water, seeks its own level.

| By Lance Esplund