

Topic Page: [Kelly, Ellsworth \(1923 - 2015\)](#)

Summary Article: **Kelly, Ellsworth**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1923–2015, American painter, b. Newburgh, N.Y. He moved to New York City in 1941, studying at Pratt Institute, and later attended the Boston Museum Arts School. In Paris during the late 1940s and early 50s, he studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts and met many giants of modern art. He also began to create relief sculptures and abstract multipanel paintings, formats that remained features of his work. Returning (1954) to the United States, he became known for his hard-edge paintings, formal, impersonal compositions painted in flat areas of color, usually with sharp contours and geometric shapes. Increasingly large, some were conventional rectangular canvases; some, several single-color panels joined to make triangles, trapezoids, and other shapes; others overlapping canvases. *Atlantic* (1956) and *Green Blue Red* (1964) are in the Whitney Museum, New York City, and *Blue Red Green* (1962) in the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. A sculptor as well, Kelly made large geometric sheet-metal works, e.g., *Sculpture for a Large Wall* (1957, commissioned for Philadelphia's now-demolished Transportation Building) and other wall panels in various shapes as well as free-standing sculptures. Kelly also was a collagist, printmaker, and photographer.

See studies and catalogs by J. Coplans (1972), E. C. Goossen (1973), R. H. Axsom and P. Floyd (1987), D. Upright (1987), Y.-A. Bois (1992 and 1999), and Diane Waldman et al. (1996).

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