

Sarah Crowner: Around Orange

Bold abstraction, intense color, and a handmade sensibility are signatures of New York-based artist Sarah Crowner (b. 1974). Her vivid installations often respond to particular sites, inviting us to take a closer look at our surroundings. Crowner produces paintings as well as ceramics, textiles, and performances. She has created work for museums and galleries, as well as for the stage in collaboration with dancers and choreographers. Crowner finds inspiration in a global range of sources including Mexican craft and design, twentieth-century modernism, and the natural world, often developing work in relation to the artists that have informed her practice.

In three new site-specific installations created for the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, Crowner foregrounds the museum's building, designed by architect Tadao Ando (b. 1941). The first of his freestanding public commissions in the United States, the Pulitzer's building embodies Ando's interest in minimalist forms and the integration of natural and built environments. Crowner responds to the museum's architecture while introducing new ways to inhabit its spaces.

Around Orange also pays homage to the vision of artist Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015), whose work has been an important influence for Crowner. Kelly's site-specific work *Blue Black* is a cornerstone of the museum's collection and is on permanent view in the main gallery.

1. ***Wall (Hot red terracotta)***, 2023

Glazed terracotta tiles


Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

The first of Crowner's three installations is *Wall (Hot red terracotta)*, a seventeen-foot-long mosaic that greets visitors as they approach the museum's entrance. With this work Crowner opens a dialogue with the building that she continues throughout the exhibition. Bold red- and orange-glazed terracotta tiles punctuate a wall of cool-toned concrete—the material of choice for Pulitzer architect Tadao Ando. The undulating rhythm of the curved tiles contrasts with the building's angular forms while drawing the eye along the length of the wall.

This exhibition is curated by Stephanie Weissberg, Curator, Pulitzer Arts Foundation.

***Sarah Crowner: Around Orange* is on view
from Sep 8, 2023 to Feb 4, 2024.**



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Entrance Gallery

You are invited to walk onto the curved wooden platform in this gallery as if it were a stage. With this platform Crowner transforms the way we relate to the space's architecture and the two artworks by Ellsworth Kelly (#s 2-3), which Crowner selected to include in *Around Orange*.

Kelly has long been a touchstone for Crowner. She admires his ability to transform everyday objects and views, such as the fold of a cigarette packet, the outline of a leaf, or the slope of a snow-covered hill, into abstract artworks. Like Kelly, Crowner often combines color and shape to surprising and elegant effect.

The largest of the two works in this gallery by Kelly is *White Plaque* (#2). As with many of his works, Kelly distilled these semicircular forms from a keen observation of his surrounding environment. In this case, his inspiration was the curved stone arches of Pont Neuf, the oldest standing bridge in Paris, and their reflections in the water below. On view nearby is a small collage by Kelly that also features two white partial curves (#3).

Responding to the rounded forms of Kelly's work, Crowner's platform represents a part of a larger imagined circle that intersects with the surrounding architecture and extends beyond the museum's walls. The light birch wood and its white finish were selected to play off of the white forms in Kelly's work while leaving the wood grain visible. Unlike Kelly, who left very little evidence of his own hand, Crowner's platform draws attention to its own making.

- 2. Ellsworth Kelly (1923-2015)**
White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection, 1955
Oil on wood, two panels separated by a wood strip. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Emily Rauh Pulitzer; Vincent D'Aquila and Harry Soviak Bequest Fund, and Enid A. Haupt Fund, 1996
- 3. Ellsworth Kelly (1923-2015)**
White Curve on White, 1950
Collage
Private collection

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Main Gallery

This installation features paintings with abstract forms drawn from Crowner's interest in nature. The seventy-seven-foot-long work, created for the Pulitzer's main gallery, is composed of ten separate canvases. Crowner begins each composition by cutting strips of painted and unprimed canvas. She then machine-stitches the fragments together, combining them into arrangements that explore relationships between positive and negative space, warm and cool hues, and geometric and organic forms, rooted in her observations of nature. As with her platform on view nearby, Crowner has drawn on her interest in choreography to create this installation. By scaling her work slightly taller than human height and spacing the canvases at irregular intervals, she invites an awareness of our bodies and the rhythm of their movement through space.

With *Untitled (Around Orange)*, Crowner continues her engagement with Ellsworth Kelly's work and the Pulitzer's architecture. She conceived the installation in relation to Kelly's monumental wall sculpture *Blue Black*, on permanent view nearby. Like much of Kelly's work, *Blue Black* features vibrant fields of color and minimal geometric forms that the artist selected specifically for the Pulitzer's building and its tallest wall, which is illuminated by a narrow skylight. Crowner uses the seventy-inch width of *Blue Black* as a guide for the height of her own paintings. Spanning the gallery's east wall, *Untitled (Around Orange)* calls attention to the expansive and elongated dimensions of the space. The installation is complemented by a glazed terracotta mural of the same height installed in the museum's entrance courtyard (#1).

4. ***Untitled (Around Orange)***, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, sewn
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring
Augustine, New York