

Frank Stella

MEDIUM Painting, sculpture

NATIONALITY American

LIFE DATES Malden, Massachusetts 1936 -

Born in 1936 in Malden, Massachusetts, Stella was the eldest son of first generation Italian-Americans. He attended the Phillips Academy in Andover, studying painting with Patrick Morgan, and graduated from Princeton University in 1958 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. Although Princeton did not offer a degree in studio art, Stella found guidance with painter Stephen Greene and the art historian William Seitz.

Stella moved to New York in the late 1950s. He rented a former jeweler's shop in the Lower East Side on Eldridge Street and found employment as a house painter. Influenced by the paintings of post-war Abstract Expressionists such as Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning, and Franz Kline, he began using ordinary house paint on canvas to create symmetrical black shapes delineated by pinstripes. These paintings, known as the *Black Paintings*, are often credited with paving the way for the minimal art movement of the 1960s.

Art Dealer Leo Castelli invited 23-year-old Stella to join his gallery's roster of cutting-edge artists, which included Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. By the fall of 1959, Stella participated in his first important group show, *Sixteen Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art. From 1960, Stella created paintings in aluminum and copper paint and began using shaped canvases, often in L, N, U, or T shapes. These later developed into more elaborate designs, as seen in the *Irregular Polygon* series of the mid-1960s. Stella also employed a wider range of colors, typically arranged in straight or curved lines (exemplified in his *Protractor Series* of 1967).

In the 1970s Stella's style underwent a dramatic change, as the carefully constructed geometric designs executed in flat planes of color were replaced by a looser style. The shaped canvases took on even less regular forms in the *Eccentric Polygon* series, and elements of collage were introduced with pieces of canvas pasted onto plywood. His work also became more three-dimensional, in large, freestanding metal pieces functioning between sculpture and painting.

Stella has gone on to produce a number of large works for public spaces and architectural commissions. He lives and works in New York City.

