

**FIRST EXHIBITION EXPLORING FRANK STELLA'S 1958 WORKS
CREATED DURING ARTIST'S FIRST YEAR AFTER COLLEGE
TO PREMIERE AT HARVARD FEBRUARY 4, 2006**

*Experimental, Rarely-Seen, and Rediscovered Works
Provide New Insight into Artist's Development*

*Exhibition Travels to The Menil Collection, Houston, TX
and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH through 2006*



Them Apples. Oil on cardboard and wood, 139.7 x 51.4 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Lawrence Rubin, 1990.132.1. Photo by Philip A. Charles © 2005 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (October 14, 2005)—The first exhibition to examine the seminal work Frank Stella created in 1958, the year he graduated from Princeton University, will be presented by the Harvard University Art Museums at its Arthur M. Sackler Museum from February 4 to May 7, 2006. *Frank Stella 1958* brings together more than 20 works from this period of tremendous experimentation and productivity, and provides new insight into Stella's career and his development as an artist. A number of the works have only recently been rediscovered as part of the research for this exhibition and many of the others have rarely been on public display.

After its premiere at the Harvard University Art Museums the exhibition will travel to The Menil Collection in Houston, TX (May 25–August 20, 2006) and the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, OH (September 9–December 31, 2006). A symposium on the artist will be presented at Harvard on April 8, 2006. The exhibition is curated by Harry Cooper, Curator of Modern Art, Fogg Art Museum, and Megan R. Luke, Ph.D. candidate, Department of History of Art & Architecture, Harvard University.

In developing the exhibition, curators Cooper and Luke conducted interviews with Stella himself as well as several of his closest friends and early colleagues—including artist Darby Bannard and art historians Michael Fried and Robert Rosenblum—to gain new insight into the genesis of the works and the debates roiling the art world in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

At that time, a tension was emerging between the advocates of abstract painting (like Fried) and those artists (like Carl Andre) who were already making raw, minimal sculptures—the two artistic visions that would dominate the 1960s. Stella’s work from this year reveals the influence of both of these artistic directions. His 1958 paintings are distinguished by their repetitive compositional elements, thick stretchers, and workmanlike paint application, all of which were crucial for Stella's emergent minimalism. At the same time, their radiant fields and stripes of color are closely related to the work of other painters at the time, both the abstract expressionists and the younger generation of color-field painters. But Stella’s work of this year is already very much his own: its large scale, optical impact, dazzling pattern, brilliant, sometimes garish color, and serial permutations set the course for much of what followed in his illustrious career.

"This exhibition offers new insight into the creative process of one of the most influential postwar American artists," said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. "Presenting collaborative research by a graduate student and a curator, *Frank Stella 1958* exemplifies our teaching and research mission. Shedding new light on Stella's body of work, the exhibition may be especially resonant for a student audience at the same stage of life as Stella was when he created these dramatic works."

“The works created by Stella in this year are almost 50 years old, but they still feel as if they are fresh from the studio. These pieces were created not for the halls of a museum but rather at a moment of exuberant experimentation. The fact that they are full of obvious, undisguised revision and overpainting distinguishes them from the methodical canvases that Stella painted from then on and makes them especially interesting as both aesthetic and material objects,” noted Cooper.

“There is no substitute for experiencing these paintings directly, let alone a significant number of them together,” Luke said. “While these works provide the earliest examples of the striped patterning made famous with Stella’s subsequent Black paintings of late 1958 and 1959, half their story is to be found in their materiality and manufacture. I think viewers will be surprised by how tactile these paintings are, by how Stella could radically alter his touch in works of almost the same composition. This exhibition will change our understanding of Stella while offering a new perspective on minimalism, a movement that is just now in the throes of serious reevaluation.”

Notable works in the exhibition include:

- *Cricket/Kit Construction*, an early sculptural assemblage that has never before been seen publicly
- *Morro Castle*, one of the first Black paintings, which has not been viewed in the United States since the 1960s
- *Them Apples*, a painted construction of cardboard and wood that highlights the influence of Jasper Johns on Stella’s practice
- *Astoria*, a yellow monochrome from the Museum of Modern Art, and *Blue Horizon*, a blue monochrome from Brown University, a stunning pair of paintings never before exhibited together

To provide a view of Stella's later works in context with the pieces in the exhibition, two later paintings from the Harvard University Art Museums permanent collections, *Hiraqla II* (1970) and *Bechofen II* (1972), as well as rarely seen drawings, will be on view in the Fogg Art Museum galleries during the run of the exhibition.

Catalogue

Frank Stella 1958 will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue by Cooper and Luke, which examines the 1958 works within the broader context of the New York art scene at the time. Catalogue essays will discuss Stella's artistic collaborators in 1958—including those with artists Carl Andre, Darby Bannard, and Hollis Frampton; his early friendship with art historian Michael Fried; and his interest in artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Motherwell, and Josef Albers. Luke's essay traces Stella's early history in detail and considers his ambivalence about the materiality of Johns's assemblages; Cooper's essay looks closely at both Stella's statements

and the works in the exhibition in relation to contemporary discussions of opticality and perceptual psychology.

The catalogue will also contain reproductions of all 37 known Stella works from 1958 as well as examples of works by his collaborators and major influences. The catalogue is co-published by the Harvard University Art Museums and Yale University Press.

Event:

M. Victor Leventritt Symposium:

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, lecture hall
485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA
Free admission.

April 8, 2006, 10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Stella from the Start

Speakers will include (in alphabetical order):

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of Modern Art, Harvard University: *Stella's "Flags": From Jasper Johns to Diagrammatic Abstraction*

Maria Gough, Associate Professor of Art History, Stanford University:
"Frank Stella is a Constructivist"

Sarah K. Rich, Associate Professor of Art History, Pennsylvania State University:
Stella's Sense of Place

Joshua A. Shannon, Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Maryland:
The Materiality of American Abstraction, 1958

Jeffrey Weiss, Curator and Head of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Art: *Radiator*

Respondents:

Carrie Lambert-Beatty, Assistant Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies and of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University

Helen Molesworth, Chief Curator of Exhibitions, Wexner Center for the Arts

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, with the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg art museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the HUAM Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, in Turkey.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museums are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. The Arthur M. Sackler Museum is located next door at 485 Broadway. Each museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.; closed on national holidays. Admission is \$7.50; \$6 for seniors; \$6 for students; and free for those under 18 years of age. The Art Museums are free to everyone on Saturday mornings, 10:00 a.m.–noon. The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

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For more information on this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

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