

Great Jones Street, 1958

Enamel on canvas

Collection of Irma and Norman Braman

Yugatan, 1958

Oil and enamel on canvas

Private collection

Delta, 1958

Enamel on canvas

Private collection

Jill, 1959

Enamel on canvas

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1962

Die Fahne hoch!, 1959

Enamel on canvas

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene M. Schwartz and purchase with funds from the John I. H. Baur Purchase Fund, the Charles and Anita Blatt Fund, Peter M. Brant, B. H. Friedman, the Gilman Foundation, Inc., Susan Morse Hilles, The Lauder Foundation, Frances and Sydney Lewis, the Albert A. List Fund, Philip Morris Incorporated, Sandra Payson, Mr. and Mrs. Albrecht Saalfeld, Mrs. Percy Uris, Warner Communications Inc., and the National Endowment for the Arts 75.22

Avicenna, 1960

Aluminum oil paint on canvas

The Menil Collection, Houston

Marquis de Portago (first version), 1960

Aluminum oil paint on canvas

Collection of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff

Creede I, 1961

Copper oil paint on canvas

Collection of Martin Z. Margulies

Creede II, 1961

Copper oil paint on canvas

Private collection

Plant City, 1963

Zinc chromate on canvas

Philadelphia Museum of Art; gift of Agnes Gund in memory of Anne d'Harnoncourt, 2008

Gran Cairo, 1962

Alkyd on canvas

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art 63.34

Miniature Benjamin Moore series (New Madrid, Sabine Pass, Delaware Crossing, Palmito Ranch, Island No. 10, Hampton Roads), 1962

Alkyd on canvas (Benjamin Moore flat wall paint); six paintings

Brooklyn Museum; gift of Andy Warhol 72.167.1–6

Marrakech, 1964

Fluorescent alkyd on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull, 1971 1971.5

Palmito Ranch, 1961

Alkyd on canvas

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; museum purchase with funds provided by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund and the artist in memory of Peter C. Marzio

Chocorua IV, 1966

Fluorescent alkyd and epoxy paint on canvas

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; purchased through the Miriam and Sidney Stoneman Acquisition Fund; a gift from Judson and Carol Bemis, Class of 1976; and gifts from the Lathrop Fellows, in honor of Brian P. Kennedy, Director of the Hood Museum of Art, 2005–2010

This is going in the Ladder gallery, so may need a gray label.

Moultonville II, 1966

Fluorescent alkyd and epoxy paint on canvas

Collection of Audrey and David Mirvish

Effingham II, 1966

Fluorescent alkyd and epoxy paint on canvas

The Glass House, A Site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, New Canaan, Connecticut

This is going in the Ladder gallery, so may need a gray label.

Lac Laronge III, 1969

Acrylic on canvas

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1970

Bechhofen, 1972

Wood

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Robinson, Jr.

Kamionka Strumilowa IV, 1972

Mixed media collage

Private collection

Grajau II, 1975

Paint and lacquer on aluminum

Collection of Gail and Tony Ganz

Eskimo Curlew, 1976

Litho crayon, etching, lacquer, ink, glass, acrylic paint, and oilstick on aluminum

Portland Art Museum; purchased with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Howard Vollum 79.36

Grajau I, 1975

Paint and lacquer on aluminum

The Glass House, A Site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, New Canaan, Connecticut

K.144, 2013

ABS RPT with stainless steel

Collection of Martin Z. Margulies

K.459, 2012

Tusk SolidGrey 3000, Plexiglas, and steel pipe

Collection of Audrey and David Mirvish

Untitled smoke ring photographs, late 1980s

Gelatin silver prints

Private collection

These are going in the ellipse, so may need a gray label.

Khar-pidda 5.5x, 1978

Mixed media on aluminum, metal tubing, and wire mesh

The Glass House, A Site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, New Canaan, Connecticut

Jarmolince III, 1973

Mixed media on board

Private collection

Talladega, 1980

Alkyd and Magna on etched magnesium

Private collection

Clinton Plaza, 1959

Enamel on canvas
Collection of the Stenn Family

Nunca pasa nada, 1964
Metallic powder in polymer emulsion on canvas
Glenstone

Indian Bird maquettes, 1977
Mixed media on printed tin
Private collection

Gur I, 1968
Polymer and fluorescent polymer paint on canvas
Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Museum purchase, The Benjamin J. Tillar
Memorial Trust
Acquired in 1987

K.81 combo (K.37 and K.43) large size, 2009
Protogen RPT with stainless steel tubing
Private collection

Modernist abstract painting in the early twentieth century arguably began with the desire to make painting communicate as viscerally as music. Wassily Kandinsky, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Arthur Dove, among others, all drew inspiration from imagining the ways that visual form might mimic wordless musical compositions. Stella does the same in his works titled after the compositions of the Baroque-era harpsichordist Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757). But he takes the relationship between sound and vision a step further than traditional painting could: just as music unfolds in real time, the Scarlatti Sonata Kirkpatrick works reveal themselves only as we move around them, creating new configurations and spatial relationships between the lines and shadows.

Raft of the Medusa (Part I), 1990
Aluminum and steel
The Glass House, A Site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, New Canaan, Connecticut

Stella has frequently spoken of his desire to create forms of abstraction that can address larger themes. This sculpture draws its name and its general structure from Théodore Géricault’s painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818–19, which depicts the desperate aftermath of a shipwreck. With its upright, quasi-architectural armature supporting ragged debris, Stella’s version is almost post-apocalyptic, suggesting wreckage on an environmental scale. To make the work, Stella attached found objects to the armature and then poured molten aluminum over them.

This is going in pavilion 2, so may need a gray label.

St. Michael’s Counterguard, 1984
Mixed media on aluminum and fiberglass honeycomb
Los Angeles County Museum of Art; gift of Anna Bing Arnold M.84.150

Stella titled this work after a massive stone fortification on the Mediterranean island of Malta, a site he later described in almost magical terms: “There’s something very particular about the making—the building up—of the harbor at Malta. . . . For a time, some special power radiated out from that island. It was as if some sort of uranium was there, as if they possessed the power of the pyramids.”

The Baroque artist Caravaggio lived for a time in Malta, and Stella visited the island to see *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*, 1608, one of the Italian artist’s masterpieces. *St.*

Michael's Counterguard takes broad inspiration from Caravaggio's painting and from the island itself. With its bold, interlocking circles; ambiguous, reflective surfaces; and dazzlingly smooth volumes, this piece is a powerful example of how Stella has drawn on art-historical, architectural, and natural sources to fuel his own work.

Damascus Gate (Stretch Variation III), 1970

Alkyd on canvas

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; museum purchase funded by Alice Pratt Brown

In 1969, a year before he made *Damascus Gate (Stretch Variation III)*—one of several Protractor Paintings named after gates to ancient cities—Stella explained that he wanted “to make what is popularly called decorative painting truly viable in unequivocal abstract terms.” This ambition was, for most of his contemporaries, unfathomable, it was commonly agreed that paintings could not be visually seductive and avant-garde at the same time. For Stella, however, it was increasingly important that beauty, visual energy, and unalloyed pleasure should no longer be considered out of bounds for abstract painting. The sheer energetic force of works like *Damascus Gate* testifies to that commitment.

Gobba, zoppa e collotorto, 1985

Oil, urethane enamel, fluorescent alkyd, acrylic, and printing ink on etched magnesium and aluminum

Art Institute of Chicago; Mr. and Mrs. Frank G. Logan Purchase Prize Fund, Ada Turnbull Hertle Endowment 1986.93

Gobba, zoppa e collotorto is part of Stella's Cones and Pillars series, in which the artist worked with the geometries underlying Baroque paintings, projecting them out of the picture plane and reimagining the work of Caravaggio and his contemporaries for the later twentieth century. This painting, like the others in the series, is named after a story from the Italian writer Italo Calvino's 1956 book *Italian Folktales*, reflecting Stella's realization that he could create a sense of narrative using the interactions of shapes and colors. “The Cones and Pillars,” he explained, “have a blunt, primitive quality to them as paintings. They have very much the spirit of the well-told folktale. They are very active, they're very fantasy-like, and they're simple—even brutal—in the way that fairy tales are. . . . I had the feeling that with a little bit of mental jockeying their forms could represent things.”

Chodorow II, 1971

Felt, paper, and canvas collage on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection 1992.28.5

Chodorow II belongs to a series inspired by a book of photographs of wooden synagogues in Poland that had been destroyed during World War II. Stella began these works during a period of

self-assessment following his 1970 retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art, when he was only thirty-six years old. Giving new direction to his career, he started to project his paintings into three dimensions—subtly, in early Polish Village paintings like this one, and then more and more assertively. He did not copy the buildings, but rather evoked their tongue-in-groove construction with the interlocking of his jigsaw-like forms. The resulting play between real and illusionistic space heightens the works' complexity, enriching the perceptual experience.

Inaccessible Island rail, 5.5x, 1976

Mixed media on aluminum

Grinstein Family Collection; partial and promised gift to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

In the mid-1970s Stella began going birdwatching with his future wife, Harriet McGurk. He especially enjoyed the way that brightly colored tropical birds flickered in and out of visibility in their equally vibrant surroundings. Any avian quality in his Exotic Birds series—including *Inaccessible Island rail, 5.5x*, named after a rare bird from the South Atlantic—is similarly fleeting, a bare suggestion arising from plume-like curves or the result of feathery, improvisational paint handling.

Stella based the arching forms in these works on commercial templates for technical and mechanical drawing. He cut the shapes out of aluminum and affixed them to metal armatures that mimicked the rectangular form of a canvas. Then he covered the surface of each with a variety of painted and etched abstract marks and forms—some evoking graffiti, others earlier twentieth-century abstraction, and all working together to create a complex relationship between the illusionistic painted space and the real projection of the armature.

redjang, 2009

Fiberglass with stainless steel tubing

Private collection

The red fiberglass forms stretching across the tubular support of *redjang* ripple and glide like sails, which Stella has described as “the first unstretched canvases.” But if these forms are a kind of canvas here, their traditional role has been inverted: they serve as abstract images or focal points rather than acting as the ground of the work. Stella has, in fact, done away with the idea of the neutral support; the calligraphic structures projecting off the wall are integral parts of the work. Stella drew the title of this work from Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead’s 1942 study *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*; however, it is ambiguous, perhaps making reference to a dance of offering.

Circus of Pure Feeling for Malevich, 4 Square Circus, 16 parts, 2009

Stainless steel tubing, wire, and Protogen RPT

Collection of Audrey and David Mirvish

This work pays homage to two great, but very different, pioneers of abstraction—Alexander Calder and Kasimir Malevich. Malevich was one of abstraction’s most extreme practitioners, known especially for monochromatic square paintings, which Stella evokes here with the square tabletops that support the diminutive sculptures. Stella views Malevich’s art of “pure feeling” with both skepticism and affection, which prompts him to handle this material playfully. The sculptures themselves, which seem almost like sketches, share the amiable kineticism and tinkering spirit of the small-scale circus performers in the tableaux *Calder’s Circus*, 1926–31.

Commented [LM1]: Date?

East Broadway, 1958

Oil on canvas

Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts; gift of the artist (PA 1954) 1980.14

From his very first New York paintings, Stella worked to develop a rhythmic geometric structure that could command the entire canvas. He created arrangements of boxes and stripes, moving forms around the composition until he was satisfied, and he often allowed over-painted shapes to show through in the final work, standing as records of his process.

East Broadway takes its title from the main thoroughfare of New York’s Chinatown, just a few blocks from Stella’s first studio, on Eldridge Street. Stella has often named his works after personal associations. Such titles are not illustration, however; rather, they announce the paintings’ connections to the world. For example, Stella has associated the geometries of his early abstractions with the cityscape that surrounded him and noted that the gritty palette of works like *East Broadway* hints at the semi-industrial atmosphere and drab color of downtown Manhattan during the late 1950s.

Union Pacific, 1960

Aluminum oil paint on canvas

Des Moines Art Center; purchased with funds from the Coffin Fine Arts Trust; Nathan Emory Coffin Collection of the Des Moines Art Center 1976.62

With their metallic, machine-like surfaces and rational construction, Stella’s Aluminum Paintings, such as *Union Pacific*, were important precedents for the sculpture of Minimalists, including Carl Andre and Donald Judd. These artists also shared Stella’s predilection for industrial materials—the aluminum paint used for this work was sold in hardware rather than art-supply stores.

This resolute materialism, however, represents only one side of the Aluminum Paintings. Marked by a subtle illusionism, these works convey a sense of movement that ripples along the turns of the painted bands. Stella emphasized this effect by changing the angle of his brush as he turned the corners, so that light was reflected differently in these passages and created what he called “something like a ‘force field.’”

The Whiteness of the Whale (IRS-1, 2X), 1987

Paint on aluminum
Private collection

Although Stella called this work from the Moby-Dick series *The Whiteness of the Whale (IRS-1, 2X)* and a white plane dominates the foreground, it does not mimic the form of a whale. Rather, the whipping, curling planes suggest turbulence and chaos in more abstract terms.

At the time he made this work, Stella was very interested in chaos theory—the mathematical study of the unexpected and inconsistent behaviors that arise when competing natural systems interact. Such forces run through the novel *Moby-Dick* metaphorically, particularly through the perilous confusion that the whale leaves in its wake. In this composition, the interaction of different forms and movements is created from discrete aluminum planes—some of which flow together while others crash into each other.

Jasper's Dilemma, 1962

Alkyd on canvas
Collection of Irma and Norman Braman

The title of this work refers to the artist Jasper Johns and his “dilemma”: the more he worked in color, the more he saw gray. Johns would often produce different versions of the same composition in both bold color and sensuous, moody shades of gray—an approach Stella mirrored in this painting, though with a very different visual effect.

Stella’s approach to this work was very systematic. In the left half of the composition, he began with red at the center of the spiraling maze and worked his way through the color spectrum, repeating the pattern until he filled in the entire field. He did the same with the gray scale on the right, moving from dark to light tones and then repeating. The end result is an illusion of scintillating movement that simultaneously dazzles and confuses the eye.

Conway I, 1966

Fluorescent alkyd and epoxy paint on canvas
Toledo Museum of Art; purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment; gift of Edward Drummond Libbey; gift of Arthur J. Secor; and gift of Felix Wildenstein, by exchange 2012.99

In his Irregular Polygons, including *Conway I*, Stella continued his exploration of the shaped canvas but began to relax the logic governing the compositions. He built thick stretcher bars that lifted the works away from the wall, utilized irregular shapes, and chose the colors improvisationally. He made four identical canvases for each of the eleven Irregular Polygons, which allowed him to use different color combinations in each one.

In each of the works in this series, Stella left thin lines of raw canvas between the large color fields to allow the compositions to breathe. When masking the edges of each field, he chose cheap tape that would allow a bit of bleed because he did not want the interlocking forms to appear mechanical. In fact, Stella named these works after towns in New Hampshire where he used to fish with his father, and he has suggested that they reference the natural landscape.

This is going in the Ladder gallery, so may need a gray label.

Harran II, 1967

Polymer and fluorescent polymer paint on canvas

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; gift, Mr. Irving Blum, 1982 82.2976

In 1967, Stella began a series of paintings based on the protractor, the drafting tool used to draw and measure curves, and titled them after ancient cities with circular plans. Oversized and composed of eight-inch bands that arc like rainbows, this work has an elegant flow and an almost architectural stability. At the same time, Stella's color arrangements—which interrupt and overlap each other and are shot through with dazzling fluorescents—create a sense of dynamism.

Das Erdbeben in Chili [N#3], 1999

Acrylic on canvas

Private collection

Stella has often described works from the later decades of his career as “maximalist,” and the monumental *Das Erdbeben in Chili [N#3]* (The Earthquake in Chile) exemplifies this well. The painting has an all-over composition that communicates the immediacy and massive brutality of a catastrophe. The title comes from a story by Heinrich von Kleist, a German writer who was torn between the highly rationalist Enlightenment and an emotionally turbulent Romantic age. In this piece, Stella, who has taken a very methodical approach at times, allows baroque forms and irrational gestures to dominate.

Selection of untitled drawings, 1958–68

Graphite, colored pencil, ballpoint pen, ink, chalk, and marker on paper

Kunstmuseum Basel, Kuperstichkabinett; gifts of the artist 1980.316–8, 1980.333–5, 1980.343–4, 1980.347, 1980.349–51, 1980.520–1, 1980.530–5, 1981.326–7, 1981.391–4, 1981.430–2, and 1981.449

Photography of these works is not permitted.

These are going in the ellipse, so may need a gray label.

Left to right:

The Whiteness of the Whale (IRS-1, 2X), 1987

Paint on aluminum

Private collection

Fedallah (IRS-4, 1.875X), 1988

Mixed media on aluminum

The Baltimore Museum of Art; anonymous gift in honor of the Museum's 75th anniversary and purchase with exchange funds from Bequest of Saidie A. May BMA 1989.69

The Blanket (IRS-8, 1.875X), 1988

Mixed media on cast magnesium and aluminum

UBS Art Collection

The Grand Armada (IRS-6, 1X), 1989

Painted aluminum

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel; Beyeler collection

Loomings (S-7, 3X—1st version), 1986

Ink and oil paint on etched magnesium and aluminum

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; gift of Joan and Gary Capen, 1987