

# Keitelman Gallery

## Frank Stella, b. 1936

Frank Stella, in full Frank Philip Stella, American painter who began as a leading figure in the Minimalist art movement and later became known for his irregularly shaped works and large-scale multimedia reliefs.

Stella studied painting at the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and history at Princeton University (B.A., 1958). He originally painted in an Abstract Expressionist style, but, upon moving to New York City in the late 1950s, he began work on a series of innovative paintings marked by an austere and monumental simplicity of design. Those “black paintings,” which established his reputation, incorporated symmetrical series of thin white stripes that replicated the canvas shape when seen against their black backgrounds. He had his first solo exhibition in 1960 at the Leo Castelli Gallery, also in New York City. In the early 1960s Stella painted a series of progressively more complex variations on the theme of the frame-determined design and used both metallic-coloured paints and irregularly shaped canvases to that purpose. In the late 1960s Stella expanded his use of colour in the Protractor series, an influential group of paintings marked by intersecting geometric and curvilinear shapes and plays of vivid and harmonious colours, some of which were fluorescent.

Stella’s next decade opened with a survey of his work at MoMA (1970). In the late 1970s Stella broke with the hard-edged style of his previous work and began to produce sensuously coloured mixed-media reliefs that featured arabesques, French curves, and other organic shapes. His two-dimensional works became increasingly three-dimensional during the late 1970s and early 1980s and began to incorporate architectural forms made from materials such as aluminum and fibreglass. In the mid-1980s he embarked on a major project that took its title from and was based on Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Between 1985 and 1997 Stella created some 260 pieces in the series, including prints, sculptures, and reliefs named after chapters in Melville’s novel. MoMA held another retrospective of his work in 1987.

The 1990s Stella began to create freestanding sculptures—e.g., *Raft of the Medusa (Part I)*, (1990). Some of them—such as *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, Ein Schauspiel, 3X* (1998–2001), a 31-foot (9.4-metre) mixed-media sculpture installed in front of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.—were public art commissions. In 2015 the Whitney Museum of American Art celebrated his long career with a major retrospective covering 60 years of his work.