

Janice Mason Art Museum
LESSON PLANS FOR WIER EXHIBIT
Background Information

ARTIST NAME : Frank Stella

ART PIECE(S) ON DISPLAY: “York Factory I”, “York Factory II”, “Double Gray Scramble”, and “Imola Three”

About the Artist

Frank Stella was born May 12, 1936 in Malden, Massachusetts. While a student at Phillips Academy, he enrolled in an art appreciation course with a studio component. He began to immerse himself in the studio program and became friends with the instructor, abstract painter Patrick Morgan. He attended Princeton University from 1950-54, majoring in history but continued to paint in a non-credit open studio. When he graduated from Princeton, he moved to New York City, rented a storefront on the Lower East Side to use as a studio, and worked part-time as a house painter. He became a regular in the New York art scene and became friends with other artists, including Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Stella’s auspicious start in New York, only a year after his graduation from Princeton, was a group exhibit that included his Black Paintings of 1959-60. In 1961, Stella had his first one-man show in Paris. In 1963 he was an [artist in residence](#) at Dartmouth College. During the next two years he traveled to Brazil and to Iran. In 1966 he performed in “Open Score,” a [performance piece](#) by Robert Rauschenberg in which during a game of tennis, the racquets transmitted sound and light.

Stella was influenced and fascinated by the racing world, and for several years he created the design for cars in races at LeMans. Stella has been arrested a number of times for speeding in his sports car in New York and New Jersey. In 1980, he survived a serious car accident en route to a race at LeMans.

Throughout his career, Stella has traveled worldwide, and his works are included in museums and corporate collections throughout the world. He has been awarded numerous honorary degrees from some of America’s most prestigious colleges and universities. He has been sought after as a speaker, teacher, visiting critic and [artist in residence](#). Confirming his abiding interest in architecture, he has created many commissioned works including a footbridge over the Seine River, several outdoor sculptures, the decorative [relief frieze](#) and interior dome for the Princess of Wales Theater in Toronto, and The Bandshell for the City of Miami.

Stella continues to live and produce works in New York.

About the Art

Stella is an artist who has never drawn or painted a figure or recognizable object. His work has been totally [abstract](#). He began his career painting [geometric designs](#) using paint and brushes from Sears. In his early work Stella exhibits the precision and rationality that characterized [minimalism](#). He used parallel angular stripes to emphasize the large shape of his [canvases](#), and in 1960 his innovative use of irregularly shaped (often being in L, N, U, and T shape) canvas first appeared in his metallic series. A major shift in his work began to develop in 1966 with his Irregular Polygons, [canvases](#) in the shapes of irregular [geometric forms](#) and characterized by large, unbroken areas of [color](#). He also produced paintings in which arcs, sometimes

overlapping, within square borders are arranged side-by-side to produce full and half circles painted in rings of concentric color. These paintings are named after circular cities he had visited while traveling in the Middle East. In the 70's, Stella's work moved toward **three-dimensional** paintings on shaped **canvases**, and elements of **collage** were introduced, pieces of **canvas** being pasted into plywood, for example. He started producing large, free-standing metal pieces, which, although they were painted upon, might well be considered **sculptures**. In the 80's he created large, jutting, multi-part, **three-dimensional** paintings-constructions that often incorporate bright colors, enlarged versions of French curves, and lively brushstroke patterns. Stella's work became fully **three-dimensional** in the early 90's in a series of dense, **abstract sculptures** composed of **found** and **cast** elements in stainless steel and bronze.

There are four Frank Stella pieces in this exhibit. "York Factory I" is a **silkscreen** completed in 1971. This piece is part of a series of works that are called "Protracted Series". The interconnection of the protractors, imply dept, but the image remains flat. Framed, this art work measures h 20" X w 47". "York Factory II" is also a part of the "Protracted Series" and was completed in 1974. Where the first work is made of **pastel colors**, the second is of bright colors, which are muted by the use of black paper as a background. This piece is also a **silkscreen** and framed it measures h 20" X w 47". Both of the York Factory works are based on a large painting by Stella that hangs in the Main Terminal of the SEA-TAC airport in Seattle, Washington. "Double Gray Scramble" is a **silkscreen print** that required a large number of **screens**...150 total. It uses an **optical illusion** as the squares seem to recede into the work, forming a tube. Yet, upon another look, the squares seem to extend toward the viewer, forming a pyramid. This piece was completed in 1973 and framed it measures h 30" X w 52". "Imola Three IV," completed in 1984, and uses multiple techniques. This work has handmade paper that was colored with dyes. Then magnesium plates and **silkscreens** were used to print on the dried paper. This print is part of the "Circuit" Series. Stella is a big fan of auto racing, and the "Circuit" is a series of works named after automobile racetracks. Imola is the name of a racetrack in Italy. The "Circuit" series marked the point where Stella's work became less **geometric** and became more expressive, using gestural curves and lines. This work measures h 65 ½" X w 51 ½".

Related terms

abstract	minimalism
abstract art	minimalist
abstract artist	modern art
abstract sculpture	optical illusion
architecture	painting
artist in residence	pastel
canvas	performance piece
cast	relief frieze
collage	sculpture
color	silk screen
contemporary	silk screen print
elements of design	three-dimensional
found	two-dimensional
geometric design	traditional art
medium	

Specific Lesson Plans

Grades K-5

Kentucky Core Content

AH-E-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate art terminology (subject matter, ideas, elements of art, principles of design).

AH-E4.1.34 Describe a variety of media and processes used to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.1.35 Media-crayon, pencil, paint, fabric, yarn, clay, paper, paper-mâché (Used to produce artworks).

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.1.42 Use a variety of media and art processes to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.1.32 Art elements- line, shape, form, texture, and color (primary and secondary hues) and color groups (warm, cool, neutral).

Objectives

- To learn that Frank Stella is a very important artist who lives in New York and is friends with other [contemporary](#) artists.
- To find out that Frank Stella was influenced and fascinated by the racing world.
- To learn that Frank Stella is an [abstract artist](#) and he has never drawn or painted a figure or recognizable object.
- To understand that Frank Stella produced art in many different ways throughout his career such as flat [paintings](#), [architecture](#), [three dimensional paintings](#), [collage](#), [sculptures](#), and in the 90's fully [three-dimensional abstract sculptures](#).
- To learn that [abstract](#) and [modern art](#) look different than [traditional art](#).
- To learn to appreciate [modern art](#).

Suggested Questions

1. How do you know that Frank Stella is a very important artist?
2. Who are some of Frank Stella's artist friends that lived and worked in New York as he does?
3. Explain how Frank Stella's love for the racing world was reflected in his life?
4. What kind of items might we see in Frank Stella's art works?
5. What is a [silk screen](#), or [silk screen print](#)?
6. How does the use of [color](#) make a difference in "York Factory I" and "York Factory II"? These are both [silk screen prints](#).

Related Activities

1. Show the students traditional pictures and then pictures by Frank Stella and other contemporary **abstract** artists. These may be found on the web address at the first of this article in the archives sections or from the library. Have the students discuss the difference in the works of art using correct terminology.
2. Give the students an opportunity to draw/paint an **abstract** picture. Have them critique their own work using correct terminology.
3. Give students two identical color sheets and have them color them differently. This will show how color can make a difference in the art work.
4. Have students write a paragraph discussing the different kinds of art Frank Stella produced?

Grades 6-8

Kentucky Core Content

AH-M-4.1.31 Principles of Design: repetition, pattern, balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal point), contrast (light and dark), rhythm, proportion, and movement.

AH-M-4.1.32 Art Elements: line, shape, color (tints and shades) and color groups (monochromatic), form, texture, space (positive/negative and perspective), and value (light and shadow).

AH-M-4.1.34 Identify and describe a variety of art media, art processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and stories.

AH-M-4.1.35 Media: two dimensional-crayon, pencil, fabric, yarn, paint (tempera, watercolor), ink and pastels.

AH-M-4.1.36 Media: three-dimensional-clay, paper-mache', found objects (used to produce artwork), wood, glass, metal, stone (Properties of media need to be known in order to respond to artworks).

AH-M-4.1.39 Subject Matter: landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective.

AH-M-4.1.42 Effectively use a variety of art media, processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences.

AH-M-4.1.37 Art Processes: two-dimensional-painting, fabric design, printmaking, and mosaics.

AH-M-4.2.31 Describe and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods, artists, and/or styles.

Objectives

- To learn that Frank Stella is a very important person in the art world and that his work is very highly prized by many people.
- To realize the value of [abstract art](#) even though it is very different than [traditional art](#).
- To understand that at different points in Frank Stella's career, he produced several different kinds of art.
- To learn that Frank Stella was a [minimalist](#) in his early career and how he portrayed this.
- To take note of the impact the racing world had on Frank Stella and his work.
- To find out that Frank Stella had a great interest in [architecture](#). That he did projects reflecting this interest?
- To be able to compare and contrast his works "York Factory I" and "Double Gray Scramble" using correct terminology.
- To learn how [silk screen prints](#) are made.

Suggested Questions

1. What indicators are there that Frank Stella is a very important person in the art world?
2. What indicators are there that Frank Stella's work is very highly prized by many people?
3. Why would some people appreciate and prefer [abstract art](#) rather than [traditional art](#)?
4. Name and describe the different types of art Frank Stella has done during his lifetime.
5. Why was Frank Stella called a [minimalist](#)?
6. How was Frank Stella's interest in the racing world reflected in his personal life and career?

7. Tell some of the architectural projects that Frank Stella produced.
8. Write a page comparing and contrasting the “York Factory I” and “Double Gray Scramble” both of which are Stella’s work.
9. How are [silk screen prints](#) made?

Related Activities

1. Have students get on the internet/ or go to the library and look at different art works of Frank Stella. Divide the class into two teams. One team is to explain why they appreciate Frank Stella’s art, the other is to refute this and explain why they do not appreciate Frank Stella’s art.
2. See which team can come up with the most convincing arguments.
3. Lead students to create a [three-dimensional abstract sculpture](#) made from [found](#) items. Show students pictures of some of Stella’s [abstract sculptures](#) created in the 1990’s. Have them to write a comparison of theirs and Stella’s work using correct art terminology.
4. Have students produce a piece of art that reflects some important aspect in their lives, such as Stella’s love of racing. You could use colors, pencils, clay, or any other [medium](#) you desire.

Grades 9-12

Kentucky Core Content

AH-H-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate terminology.

AH-H-4.1.32 Art Elements: color and color theory: primary and secondary hues, values (tints and shades), intensity (brightness and dullness); color relationship: triadic, complementary, and analogous.

AH-H-4.1.33 Principles of Design: Balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal pattern), pattern, repetition, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, transition/gradation, and unity.

AH-h-4.1.34 Defend personal interpretations of works of art and architecture by using arguments.

AH-H-4.1.35 Identify skills and training necessary for a variety of careers in visual arts.

AH-H-4.2.36 Subject Matter: portrait, landscape, still-life, abstract, non-objective.

AH-H-4.2.31 Know how media, art processes, subject matter, symbols, ideas, and themes communicate cultural and aesthetic values.

AH-H-4.2.33 Media: three-dimensional-clay, wood (constructive), glass, metal, stone, and plaster.

AH-H-4.2.35 Art processes: three-dimensional-textiles, ceramics, sculpture, architecture.

AH-H-4.2.36 Subject Matter: portrait, landscape, still-life, abstract, non-objective

Objectives

- To understand that Stella is a highly acclaimed **abstract** artist who never painted a recognizable figure or object in his work.
- To learn the skills and training Frank Stella has/had which enabled him to become a great artist.
- To understand and be able to explain the different stages and different types of art work Frank Stella has produced at different times in his career.
- To realize that Frank Stella incorporated different **elements of design** and techniques in producing his works “York Factory I” and “Imola Three IV”.
- To demonstrate a knowledge of the process of **silk screen printing**.
- To learn to appreciate the work of Frank Stella and other **abstract** artists.

Suggested Questions

1. Explain what indicators there are that Frank Stella is a great **abstract** artist that is highly acclaimed and appreciated by many people.
2. Explain the different phases of Frank Stella’s career by delineating the different art forms he produced.
3. What similar and different skills has Stella needed as he has moved from phase to phase in his creative career?
4. Explain the process used in **silk screen printing**.
5. What area(s) of interest in Stella’s personal life have influenced his art work and how has it done so?
6. What is there about Stella’s **abstract** art that you really enjoy? How does his work compare to other **abstract** painters/artists?

Related Activities

1. Design a timeline indicating the different phases of Stella's career.
2. Create an abstract piece of art which may be a picture, sculpture, collage, or some other method Stella used.
3. Give a demonstration of how silk screen printing is done.
4. Design a poster showing the linkages between Stella's interest in racing, personal life, and his art.
5. Critique "York Factory I" and "York Factory II" denoting their similarities and differences.
6. Use the [Four Step Method of Art Criticism](#) that is found on this website.