

Early **Later**

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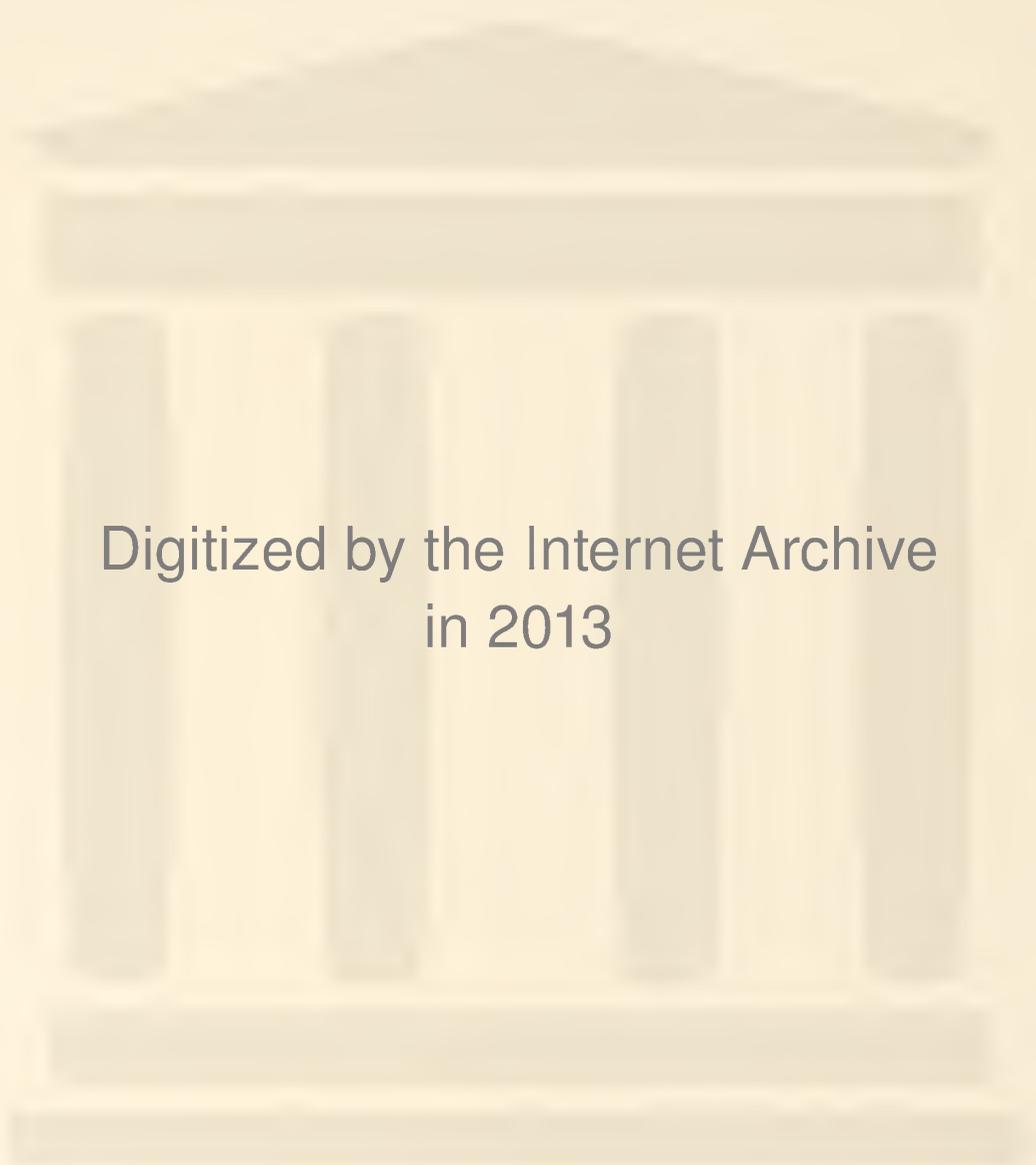
This exhibition was organized by Roni Feinstein, branch director, Whitney Museum of American Art at Champion, with the assistance of Holly Manley, gallery coordinator. The exhibition is a sequel to that organized for the Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center, March 1990–March 1991, by Adam D. Weinberg and Ani Boyajian, who wrote the introduction to this brochure. All entries are by Roni Feinstein, except those on Arthur G. Dove and Frank Stella, written by Adam D. Weinberg.

Early **Later**

SELECTED WORKS FROM THE
PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE
WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Whitney Museum of American Art at Champion

June 14 – August 24, 1991



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Introduction

Museum exhibitions tend to be structured according to certain standard, predictable, and often artificial formats that mold our experience of an artist's work. Among the most commonly used formats are the group exhibition, which enables us to see relationships among the works of several artists; the one-person exhibition that features the work of a particular period, typically delimited by theme or style; and the retrospective, which presents the development of an artist's entire career. Of these, only the retrospective offers the viewer an opportunity to see early and late works together. But the developmental nature of a retrospective rarely allows one to view an early and later work side by side.

"Early/Later" takes the rather unconventional approach of juxtaposing pairs of early and later paintings or sculptures by the same artist, selected from the Permanent Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. The intent is to suggest the types and variety of changes that may take place in an artist's work over time. This is not, strictly speaking, a historical survey, but rather one that reveals the nature and significance of stylistic change itself.

"Early/Later" will no doubt raise more questions than it will answer, but they are important questions: Does an artist's early work necessarily foreshadow the subject or style of later work? How does stylistic development vary from artist to artist? To what extent is our appreciation of an early work determined by a later work or vice versa? Is change in the work of an artist always progressive? Is, or perhaps should, stylistic change necessarily be an artist's goal? Are stylistic change and artistic growth one and the same? And, are radical and frequent shifts in style indicative of greatness or of indecision? Although there are no simple answers to these questions, the process of inquiry helps us reexamine our preconceptions about stylistic development. This reexamination, in turn, sheds light on an even larger picture, that of the structure and conditions of art history itself.

Of the nineteen pairs of works in the exhibition, six are addressed in this brochure. They were chosen for the various ways in which they reveal artistic change. The kinds of shifts observable range from an ostensibly logical development from one work to another, to an apparently dramatic rupture in style, to a subtle, less perceptible transformation in which the artist's work seems not to have changed at all.

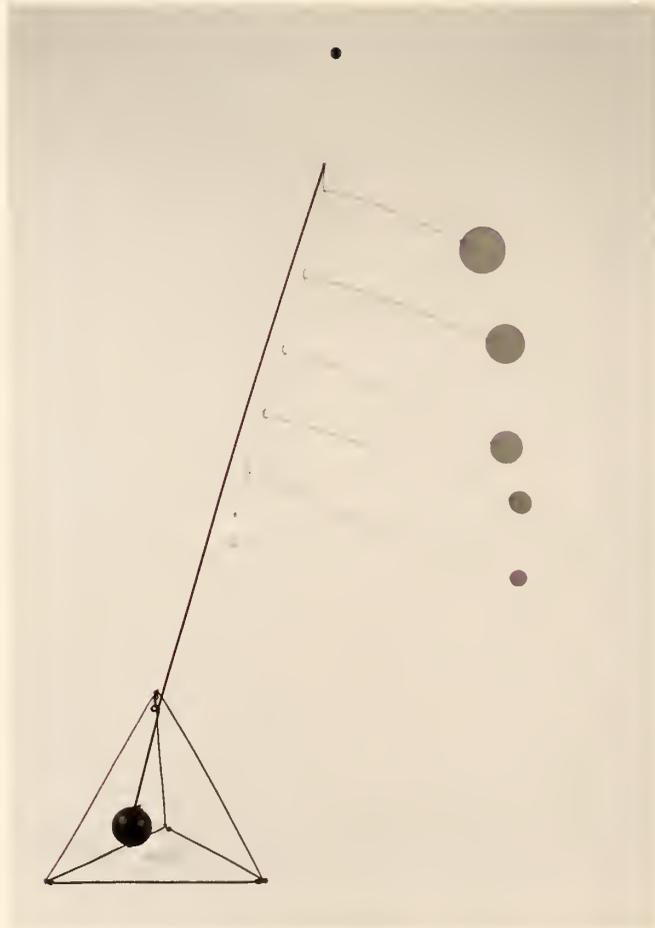
Ultimately, what such diverse pairings demonstrate are the limitations of any categorical system of defining artistic evolution. We do artists a disservice by forcing their art into a preexisting critical mold—and we deny ourselves the opportunity to experience that art anew.

Alexander Calder

1898–1976

Between 1926 and 1934, Alexander Calder lived in both Paris and New York, and was among the first American artists of the twentieth century to achieve international stature. His fame as an important sculptor came in the 1930s when he introduced a new art form into the modernist vocabulary—the mobile. In these works Calder, who had a degree in mechanical engineering, conceived the idea of setting forms in motion.

Calderberry Bush (1932) is one of the largest and most complex of Calder's early air-driven mobiles; previous works had been motorized, hand-cranked, or had balancing components. The work consists of a 6-foot metal rod with a black, weighty wooden ball at its lower end, cantilevered from a triangular wire support. Five thin and seemingly weightless aluminum disks, which decrease in size from top to bottom, project at right angles from thin wires connected to one another as well



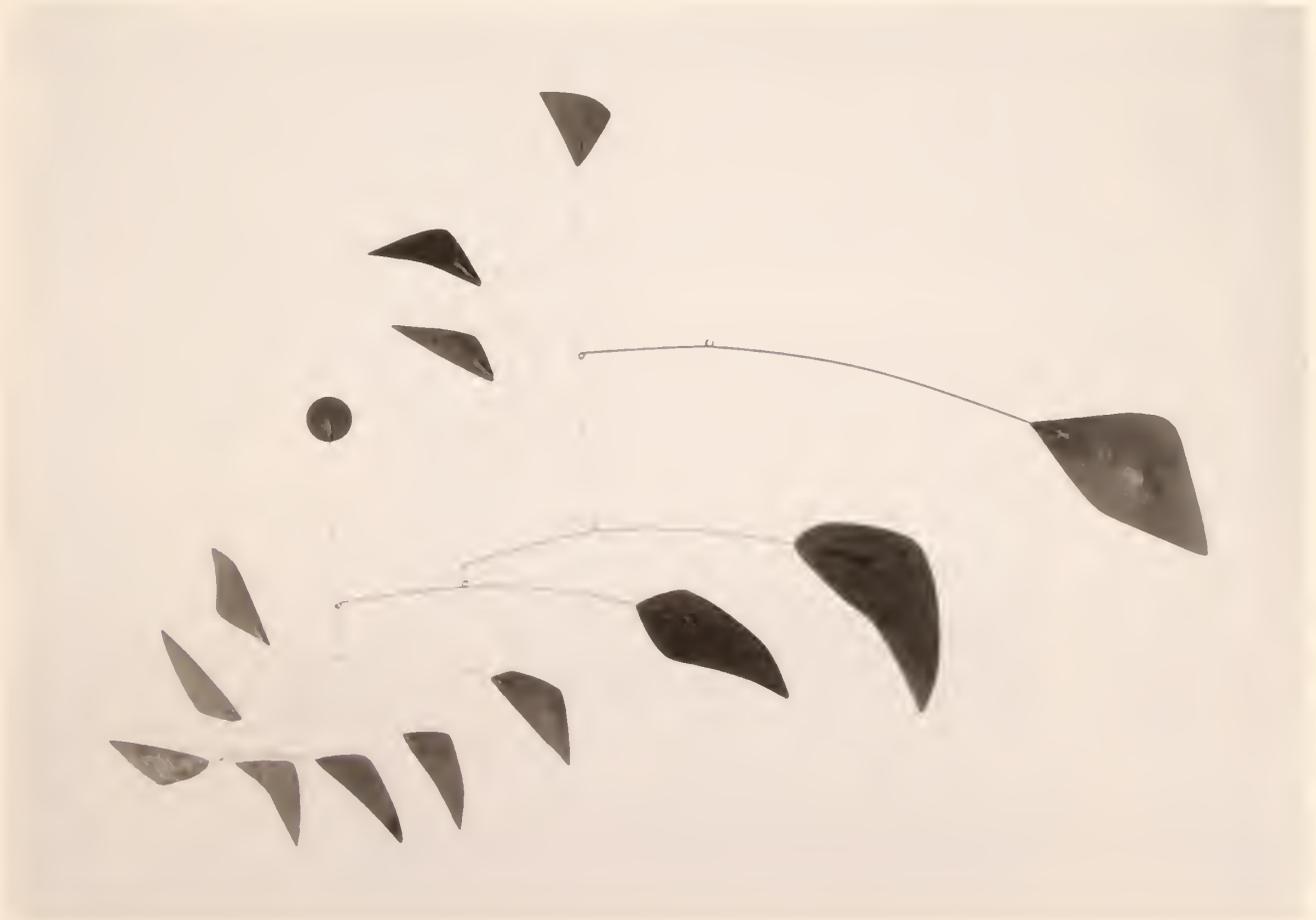
Calderberry Bush (Object with Red Disks), 1932

as to a small black wooden ball at the top and a larger white one below; these serve as counterweights. Although whimsical and graceful in movement, a bold, sophisticated non-objectivity is communicated by the shifts in the color and scale of the elements, the interacting triangles, lines, circles, and spheres, and the knowing asymmetrical balance. The original title of the work, *Object with Red Disks*, reveals Calder's preoccupation in the early 1930s with geometric abstraction. He renamed it a few years later in response to his engagement with Surrealism and Biomorphism, which encourage associative imagery and humor.

Big Red of 1959 features such biomorphic imagery; its red-painted, irregular sheet-metal elements suggest leaves, fish, feathers, and other organic forms. In this later mobile, the spherical counterweights and skeletal wire base of *Calderberry Bush* have been replaced by a

seemingly weightless structure. The flat, cutout metal sections are joined together by thin wires and the whole is suspended from the ceiling. The shapes float in and punctuate space, the air-directed motion adding the third-dimension and compositional variability as well as the concepts of time and chance.

Though Calder's first ceiling-hung mobile dates from 1934, he did not use the form regularly until the late 1940s, in part because of the shortage of metal during the war years. By the end of the decade, quantities of sheet metal were again available and the scale of the mobiles grew. In such large-scale works as *Big Red*, the asymmetry tends to be complex and varied, the color monochromatic, and the movements slow and stately. But Calder preserved the economy of line and form, directness of presentation, feeling for motion, and wit and grace first seen in *Calderberry Bush*.



Big Red, 1959

Stuart Davis

1892–1964

When Stuart Davis set sail for Paris in May 1928, he was thirty-five and already recognized as an accomplished Cubist painter. His trip was financed by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, whose Whitney Studio Club (forerunner of the Whitney Museum) frequently exhibited his work. In return for this stipend, Mrs. Whitney received three of his paintings, including *Place Padeloup*.

In this streetscape, the facades of a depopulated Right Bank square in Paris are rendered in a series of solid color bands. Forms are simplified and flattened, described by thin, black lines that establish sophisticated rhythms. Imposed on the painting's thickly painted crust, the lines conjure up a café at right specializing in oysters and snails, another café in the left background with a statuette decorating its entryway, a table with chairs, and a streetlamp.



Place Padeloup, 1928

By 1959, the year in which Davis executed *The Paris Bit*, Paris was a distant, yet poignant memory. This painting is a reworking, in Davis' mature, late-fifties manner, of a 1928 Paris picture entitled *Rue Lipp*, which is stylistically related to *Place Pasdeloup*. Unlike either *Rue Lipp* or *Place Pasdeloup*, the later work is jazzy and abstracted and the forms on the foreground table are difficult, although not impossible, to read. Rather than the straight-edged color planes of the 1920s, Davis overlays jigsawed contours that further flatten the space. The light, airy hues of the early paintings are replaced by red, white, and blue—probably a reference to the French flag—as well as black.

Written words liberally scattered across the picture—among others EAU, BELLE FRANCE, HOTEL, PAD, and '28 (the date of his trip to Paris)—contribute to the

flatness and animation of the surface. We also find the artist's stylized signature, which appears upside down at lower center. Painted at the top on a red band that enframes the work is the phrase **LINES THICKEN**, which almost seems to function as an alternative title. Perhaps Davis was here reflecting on his own stylistic development from the late twenties to the late fifties, a course which led him from modestly scaled pictures with wiry drawn lines based on found motifs to large scale, assertively drawn, conceptual abstractions.



The Paris Bit, 1959

Arthur G. Dove

1880–1946

The two exhibited works by Arthur G. Dove suggest a teleological development from a more representational to a more abstract mode of painting. But in fact Dove's work fluctuated between these two modes throughout his career; evidently, he did not regard them as mutually exclusive.

Plant Forms (1915) is a pastel composition probably based on the abstracted shapes of amaryllis plants, a spiny and succulent species cultivated for ornamental purposes. Through contrasts of radiant light tones and menacing shadows, Dove reveals the spirit as much as the substance of the plants. The pasty coarseness of the medium itself, the crowded arrangement of interlocking shapes, and the compressed earth-colored palette reduce the illusionistic qualities of the subject, but the modeled forms have a persistent three-dimensionality.



Plant Forms, 1915

Dove's later work *Land and Seascape* (1942), an oil, is also based on nature, but here the visual connection to the source has all but disappeared. The whitish-gray form could indicate a cloud, the midnight-blue ground the sea or sky, and the other elements waves or landscape, but the connections remain uncertain. The radiating brushstrokes at the top synthesize the effect of the sun obscured by a cloud formation, so that the subdued light appears to emit from a source within the painting. As Dove said, "I should like to . . . give in form and color the reaction that plastic objects and sensations of light from within and without have reflected from my inner consciousness." And in *Land and Seascape* the elements are reduced to metaphor, and personal poetry is emphasized at the expense of objective fact.

Land and Seascape reveals both continuity with and change from Dove's earlier *Plant Forms*. Clearly related are the rounded forms with sharp edges, the loose rhythms of a vaguely centrifugal composition, and the flat chalkiness of the surface—this despite the difference in the media. The flatness of the forms in *Land and Seascape* does represent a shift in Dove's work; the lighter, softer colors, however, do not, for Dove explored color throughout his career as idiosyncratically as he did abstraction. In the final analysis, the apparent inconsistencies in Dove's art—its lack of a linear development—can be explained as intuitive responses to a particular situation. "Theories have been outgrown," Dove said, "the means is disappearing, the reality of sensation alone remains."



Land and Seascape, 1942

Arshile Gorky

1904–1948

During the first fifteen years of his career, Arshile Gorky sought to master European modernism, particularly Synthetic Cubism and abstract Surrealism, which he merged in the mid-1930s. In *Painting* (1936–37), a collection of discrete but interlocked forms is compressed into a shallow space; strong horizontal and vertical lines seem to define a background plane. While this compositional structure is reminiscent of those found in many Synthetic Cubist still lifes, the biomorphic, equivocal nature of the shapes suggests the influence of Surrealism. A white personage with an eye and mouth inhabits the center, a red birdlike form is to its right, and a leaf shape is at lower left, together with a host of other, seemingly animate, enigmatic shapes.



Painting, 1936–37

During the last six years of Gorky's life—he committed suicide in 1948 at the age of forty-four—he arrived at a wholly unique and personal artistic vision, which anticipated the work of his Abstract Expressionist contemporaries. In strong contrast to the thickly encrusted surface, vivid colors, and sharp value contrasts of *Painting* is the stained, thinly painted, and nuanced surface of *The Betrothal, II* (1947). As in all of Gorky's mature works of the 1940s, drawing is now divorced from color: thin, energetic black lines move over the surface to define organic forms filled with muted or, occasionally, jewel-like colors. Although the lines appear to have been spontaneously drawn, they are extremely studied and controlled, their appearance

and configurations having been determined in numerous preliminary drawings and sketches.

The biomorphic forms in this later work have discernible narrative allusions. Although different interpretations of *The Betrothal, II* have been proposed, the most convincing suggests that it does indeed represent a marriage ceremony, with the bride's father to the left, the bride in the center, and the kneeling groom to the lower right. The painting represents another sort of marriage as well—a most lyrical and poignant union of abstraction and representation.



The Betrothal, II, 1947

Cindy Sherman

b. 1954

Although Cindy Sherman has used her own image in most of her photographs since 1977, her subject is not Cindy Sherman. It is instead our culture's characterizations of women. By exploiting media-generated stereotypes, Sherman exposes the power they hold over our lives and our conceptions of ourselves. Her work in this vein began in the late seventies with an extended series of 8 x 10-inch, black-and-white "film stills," photographs of Sherman in a wide variety of female roles inspired by Hollywood B movies of the fifties and sixties. Most of these photographs were shot "on location"—in actual places, by family or friends, with Sherman "directing."

Untitled #70 (1980) belongs to Sherman's first group of color photographs, which she took herself, in her studio. In this series, whose prints measure about



Untitled #70, 1980

20 x 24 inches, Sherman produced close-up shots of the heads or heads and upper bodies of young women (again, always herself) set against a variety of backdrops produced by rear-screen slide projection. The inspiration for the characters, costumes, and settings is both movies and TV, although the viewer supplies the narrative context. This context is for the most part mundane. In *Untitled #70*, a young woman is caught in mid-action raising a glass to her lips. Outside it is daylight, but the inside of the bar is suffused in artificial red light. As in so many of Sherman's photographs, the woman's expression is vacant, abstracted, impossible to read.

With *Untitled #146* (1985), we enter a different world—the realm of horror, fantasy, and fairy tales. The series to which this work belongs was initially motivated by a never-realized magazine commission to illustrate

children's fairy stories. The 6-foot-high photograph is overtly theatrical and staged, and its artifice, including false breasts, is clearly revealed. Sherman again explores the role of women, here the wicked witches and evil stepmothers who populate fairytales. The overturned bottle by Sherman's foot suggests a sorceress, a possessor of magic potions and powers. The over-life-size figure is at once menacing and seductive: menacing in the bestial eyes and bared teeth of the head lost in shadows; seductive in the rounded shoulders and gracefully curving form, seen as if by firelight, and in the variety of textures and vivid colors made possible by the Cibachrome process. In this later work, Sherman has moved away from an intellectual investigation of cultural stereotypes to a psychological inquiry into myths, the unconscious, and the sources of primitive feeling.



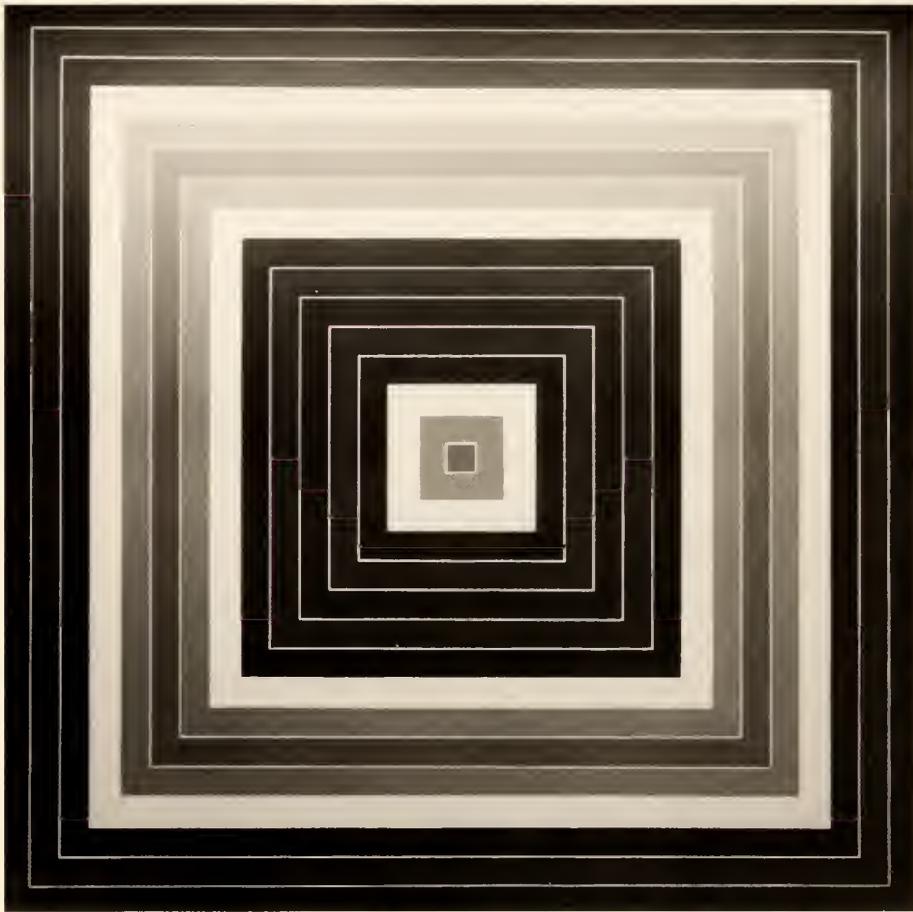
Untitled #146, 1985

Frank Stella

b. 1936

Since the completion in the late 1950s of his first series of Black paintings, a group of works that anticipated Minimalism, Frank Stella has continued to explore artistic issues in a tightly structured serial fashion. For him, the series is a tool for examining specific pictorial problems and a means of extending the range of his work. The numerous series Stella has executed over the last thirty years also fall into distinct groups. In the first, produced roughly until the early 1970s, his approach was largely a reductivist one, in which he attempted to define the essential flatness of painting by paring down the elements. In the second, Stella examined the converse issue: how much, in abstract pictorial terms, can one load into a painting?

The two works on view, *Gran Cairo* (1962) and *Silverstone* (1981), exemplify the aesthetic strategies of Stella's "first" and "second" careers, respectively. It was in *Gran Cairo* and other concentric square works that



Gran Cairo, 1962

Stella first introduced a broad, colorful palette. *Gran Cairo* affirms his preoccupation with flatness and his desire to make the external structure of the painting conform to its internal one. A series of equal-width bands is separated by a thin band of unpainted canvas. The bands, of commercially made house paint, are arranged in a pattern of warmer and cooler colors which advance and recede in such a way that each band has equal integrity in reinforcing the square format of the painting. This has the effect of affirming two-dimensionality despite the shifting depth of the bands.

It may at first be difficult to believe that *Silverstone* was produced by the same artist as *Gran Cairo*. This work is one of the Circuit series, named for the wild serpentine motifs that evoke automobile racetracks. Constructed from aluminum and fiberglass, *Silverstone* offers nearly 2 feet of actual depth, which is further enriched by the active all-over webs of applied color. Shadows

abound here, and the voids play as active a role as the solids. Although *Silverstone* is physically a relief sculpture, for Stella such works "are in fact, paintings." They are about pictorial illusionism and figure-ground relationships and are essentially planar and frontal in orientation. Despite obvious visual differences, *Gran Cairo* and *Silverstone* have much in common in terms of their large scale, their reliance on predetermined forms—the Circuits are based on standard draftsman forms such as the French curve and the flexicurve—and the use of agitated, high-key colors. Furthermore, in both works, despite their dramatically varied appearance, Stella investigates the epistemological conditions of painting. They represent his refusal to acknowledge the end of abstract painting as a vital art form. And together they demonstrate how Stella uses a serial strategy to circumvent aesthetic dead ends and break new ground.



Silverstone, 1981

Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width precedes depth. Sight refers to measurements taken within the frame or not opening.

Alexander Calder (1898–1976)

Colderberry Bush (Object with Red Disks), 1932

Painted steel rod, wire, wood, and sheet aluminum, $88\frac{1}{2} \times 33 \times 47\frac{1}{2}$, with base, dimensions variable

Purchase, with funds from the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund 86.49

Big Red, 1959

Sheet metal and steel wire, 74×114
Purchase, with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and exchange 61.46

Ralston Crawford (1906–1978)

Groin Elevators from the Bridge, 1942

Oil on canvas, 50×40

Purchase, with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art 63.22

Lobster Pots #3, 1960–63

Oil on canvas, $45\frac{1}{8} \times 60\frac{1}{4}$

Gift of the artist's son, Neelon Crawford, and purchase, with funds from the Mr. and Mrs. Arthur G. Altschul Purchase Fund, the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund, and the Painting and Sculpture Committee 87.46

Stuart Davis (1892–1964)

Ploce Pasdeloup, 1928

Oil on canvas, $36\frac{1}{4} \times 28\frac{3}{4}$

Gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney 31.170

The Paris Bit, 1959

Oil on canvas, 46×60

Purchase, with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art 59.38

Arthur G. Dove (1880–1946)

Plont Forms, 1915

Pastel on canvas, $17\frac{1}{4} \times 23\frac{7}{8}$ (sight)

Purchase, with funds from Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger 51.20

Lond on Seoscope, 1942

Oil on canvas, $25 \times 34\frac{3}{4}$

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. N.E. Waldman 68.79

Arshile Gorky (1904–1948)

Painting, 1936–37
Oil on canvas, 38 x 48
Purchase 37.39

The Betrothal, II, 1947
Oil on canvas, 50 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 38
Purchase 50.3

Marsden Hartley (1877–1943)

Painting, Number 5, 1914–15
Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 31 $\frac{3}{4}$
Gift of an anonymous donor 58.65

Sundown by the Ruins, 1942
Oil on masonite, 22 x 28
Gift of Charles Simon 80.51

Lee Krasner (1908–1984)

White Squares, c. 1948
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. B.H. Friedman 75.1

The Guardian, 1960
Oil on canvas, 53 x 58
Purchase, with funds from the
Uris Brothers Foundation, Inc. 60.61

Gaston Lachaise (1882–1935)

Standing Woman, 1912–27
Bronze, 70 x 28 x 16
Purchase 36.91

Torso with Arms Raised, 1935
Bronze, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$
50th Anniversary Gift of
The Lachaise Foundation 80.8

Roy Lichtenstein (b. 1923)

Little Big Painting, 1965
Oil on canvas, 68 x 80
Purchase, with funds from the Friends of
the Whitney Museum of American Art
66.2

Study for Figures in Landscape, 1977
Graphite and colored pencil with
collage on paper, 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 27 $\frac{3}{4}$
Purchase, with funds from the
Drawing Committee 84.4

Agnes Martin (b. 1916)

Untitled, 1960
Ink on paper, 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ irregular
Purchase, with funds from the
M. Anthony Fisher Purchase Fund and
the National Endowment for the Arts
81.30

Untitled #11, 1977
Graphite and gesso on canvas, 72 x 72
Gift of The American Art Foundation
77.44

Alice Neel (1900–1984)

Pat Whalen, 1935
Oil on canvas, 27 x 23
Gift of Dr. Hartley Neel 81.12

John Perreault, 1972
Oil on canvas, 38 x 63 $\frac{1}{2}$
Gift of anonymous donors 76.26

Louise Nevelson (1899–1988)

Black Majesty, 1955
Wood, 27 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 32 x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Mildwoff
through the Federation of Modern
Painters and Sculptors, Inc. 56.11

Dawn's Wedding Chapel II, 1959
Painted wood, 115 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$,
with base
Purchase, with funds from the Howard
and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 70.68

Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988)

The Queen, 1931
Terra-cotta, 45 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 x 16
Gift of the artist 69.107

The Gunas, 1946
Marble, 73 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{2}$
Purchase, with funds from the Howard
and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 75.18

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)

Black and White, 1930
Oil on canvas, 36 x 24
50th Anniversary Gift of Mr. and
Mrs. R. Crosby Kemper 81.9

It Was Blue and Green, 1960
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40
Lawrence H. Bloedel Bequest 77.1.37

Man Ray (1890–1976)

Five Figures, 1914
Oil on canvas, 36 x 22
Gift of Katharine Kuh 56.36

La Fortune, 1938
Oil on canvas, 24 x 29
Purchase, with funds from the
Simon Foundation, Inc. 72.129

Mark Rothko (1903–1970)

Agitation of the Archaic, 1944
Oil on canvas, $35\frac{3}{8} \times 54\frac{1}{4}$
Gift of The Mark Rothko
Foundation, Inc. 85.43.1

Untitled, 1953
Mixed media on canvas, $106 \times 50\frac{7}{8}$
irregular
Gift of The Mark Rothko
Foundation, Inc. 85.43.2

Cindy Sherman (b. 1954)

Untitled #66, 1980
Color photograph, $19\frac{5}{8} \times 23\frac{1}{8}$
Gift of Barbara and Eugene Schwartz
88.50.1

Untitled #70, 1980
Color photograph, $19\frac{1}{8} \times 24$
Gift of Barbara and Eugene Schwartz
88.50.2

Untitled #76, 1980
Color photograph, $19\frac{1}{8} \times 23\frac{1}{8}$
Gift of Barbara and Eugene Schwartz
88.50.3

Untitled #146, 1985
Color photograph, $71\frac{9}{16} \times 48\frac{1}{8}$
Purchase, with funds from
Eli and Edythe L. Broad 87.49

Frank Stella (b. 1936)

Gran Caira, 1962
Synthetic polymer on canvas, $85\frac{1}{2} \times 85\frac{1}{2}$
Purchase, with funds from the Friends of
the Whitney Museum of American Art
63.34

Silverstone, 1981
Mixed media on aluminum and fiberglass,
 $105\frac{1}{2} \times 122 \times 22$
Purchase, with funds from the Louis and
Bessie Adler Foundation, Inc., Seymour M.
Klein, President, the Sondra and Charles
Gilman, Jr. Foundation, Inc., Mr. and Mrs.
Robert M. Meltzer, and the Painting
and Sculpture Committee 81.26

Joseph Stella (1877–1946)

Luna Park, c. 1913
Oil on composition board, $17\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{3}{8}$
Gift of Mrs. Charles A. Goldberg
72.147

Tropical Sonata, 1920–21
Oil on canvas, 48×29
Purchase 63.63

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**Whitney Museum of American Art
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