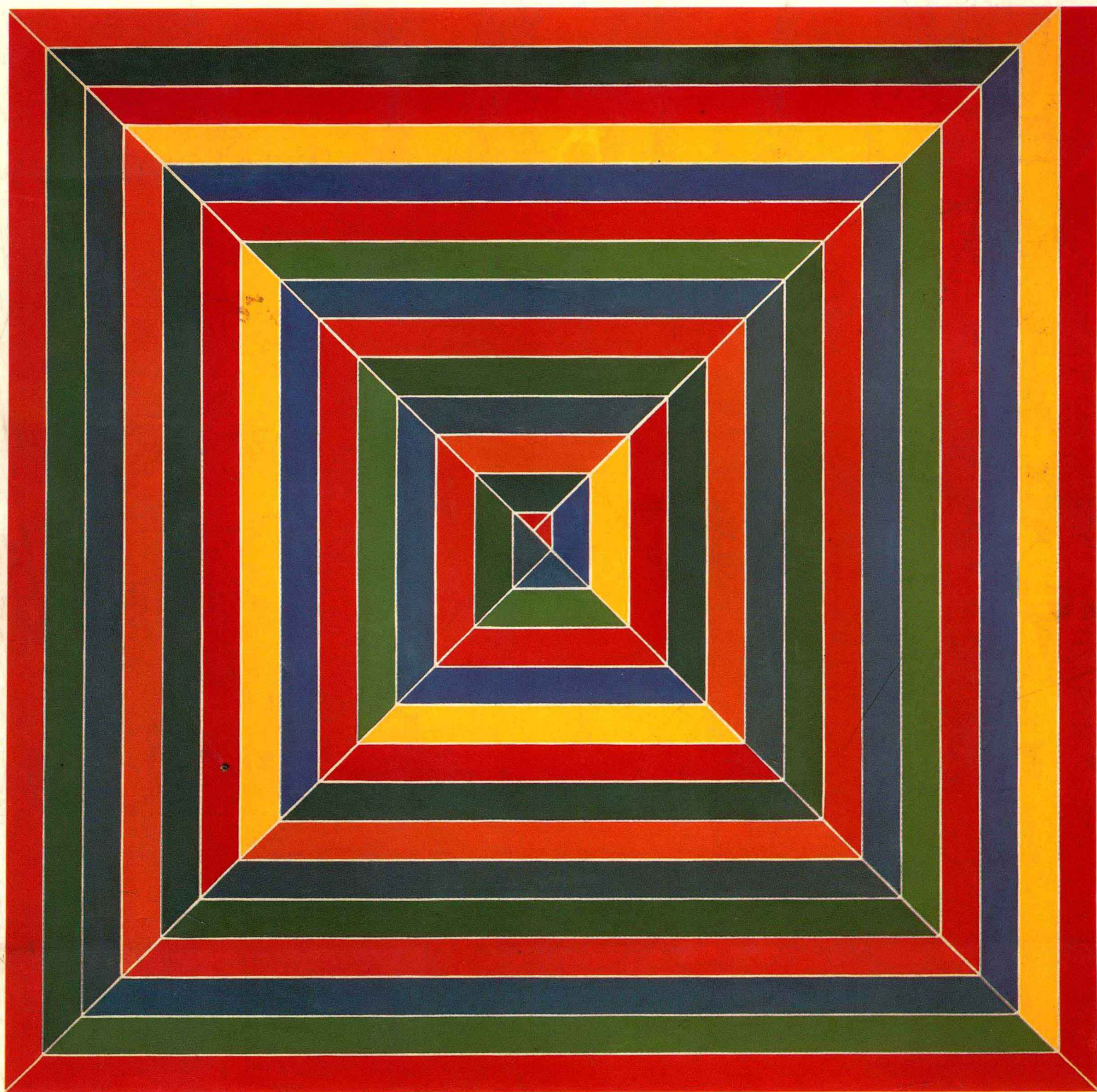


FRANK STELLA



PAINTINGS 1958 to 1965

A catalogue raisonné

Introduction by Robert Rosenblum

FRANK
STELLA
PAINTINGS
1958 to 1965

A catalogue raisonné

by Lawrence Rubin

Introduction by Robert Rosenblum

STEWART, TABORI & CHANG, PUBLISHERS

New York

For Frank

Page 1: The artist's signature as it appeared on the cover of the catalogue to his 1961 show at Galerie Lawrence, Paris, France.

Pages 2–3: detail, *Sidi Ifni I*, 1965.

Frontispiece: *Tampa*, 1963.

Right: *Them Apples*, 1958.

Editor: Maureen Graney.

Design: J. C. Suarès,
Patricia Fabricant.

Copyright © 1986 Lawrence Rubin.

Introduction copyright © 1986 Robert Rosenblum.

Credits for all photographs of Frank Stella and Frank Stella's paintings appear on page 278.

All rights reserved. No part of the contents of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the Publisher.

Library of Congress cataloguing-in-publication data
Rubin, Lawrence.

Frank Stella : paintings 1958 to 1965 : a catalogue raisonné.

Bibliography: v. 1, p. 269.

Includes index.

I. Stella, Frank—Catalogues raisonnés. I. Stella, Frank. II. Title.

ND237.S683A4 1986 759.13 86-5813

ISBN 0-941434-92-3 (v. 1)

Published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang, Inc.

740 Broadway, New York City 10003.

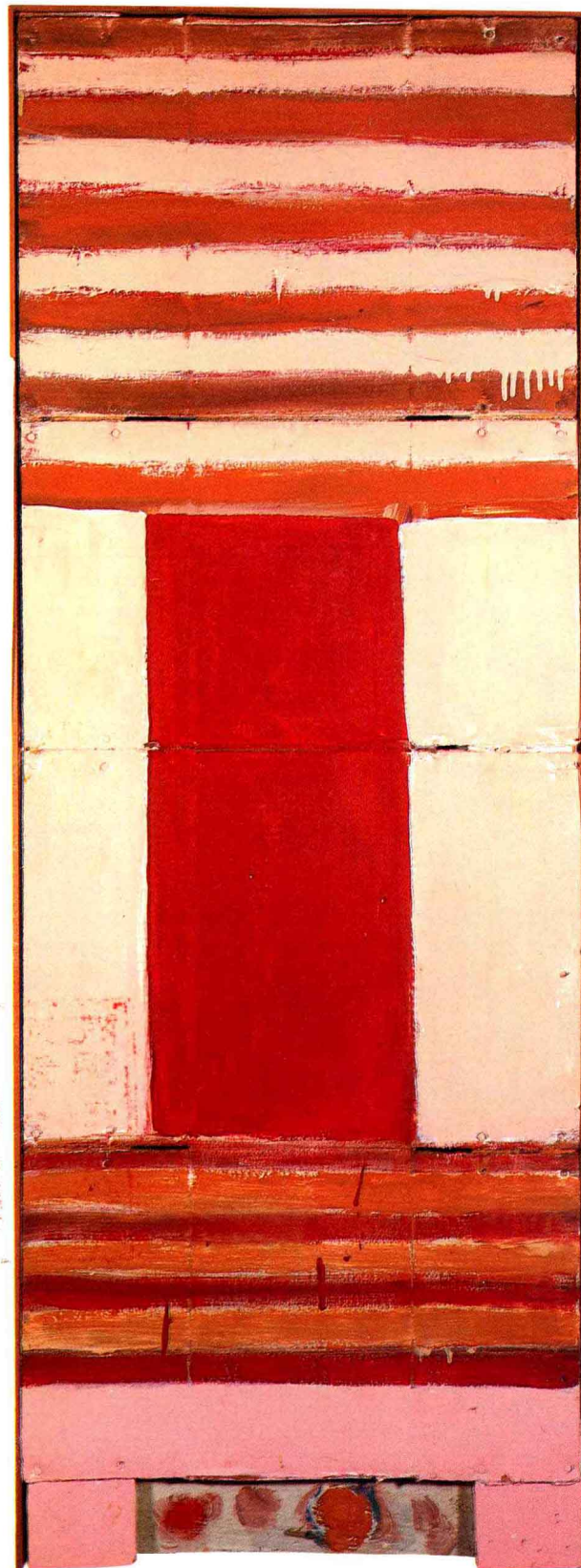
Distributed by Workman Publishing

1 West 39th Street, New York City 10018.

Printed in Japan.

86 87 88 89 90 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

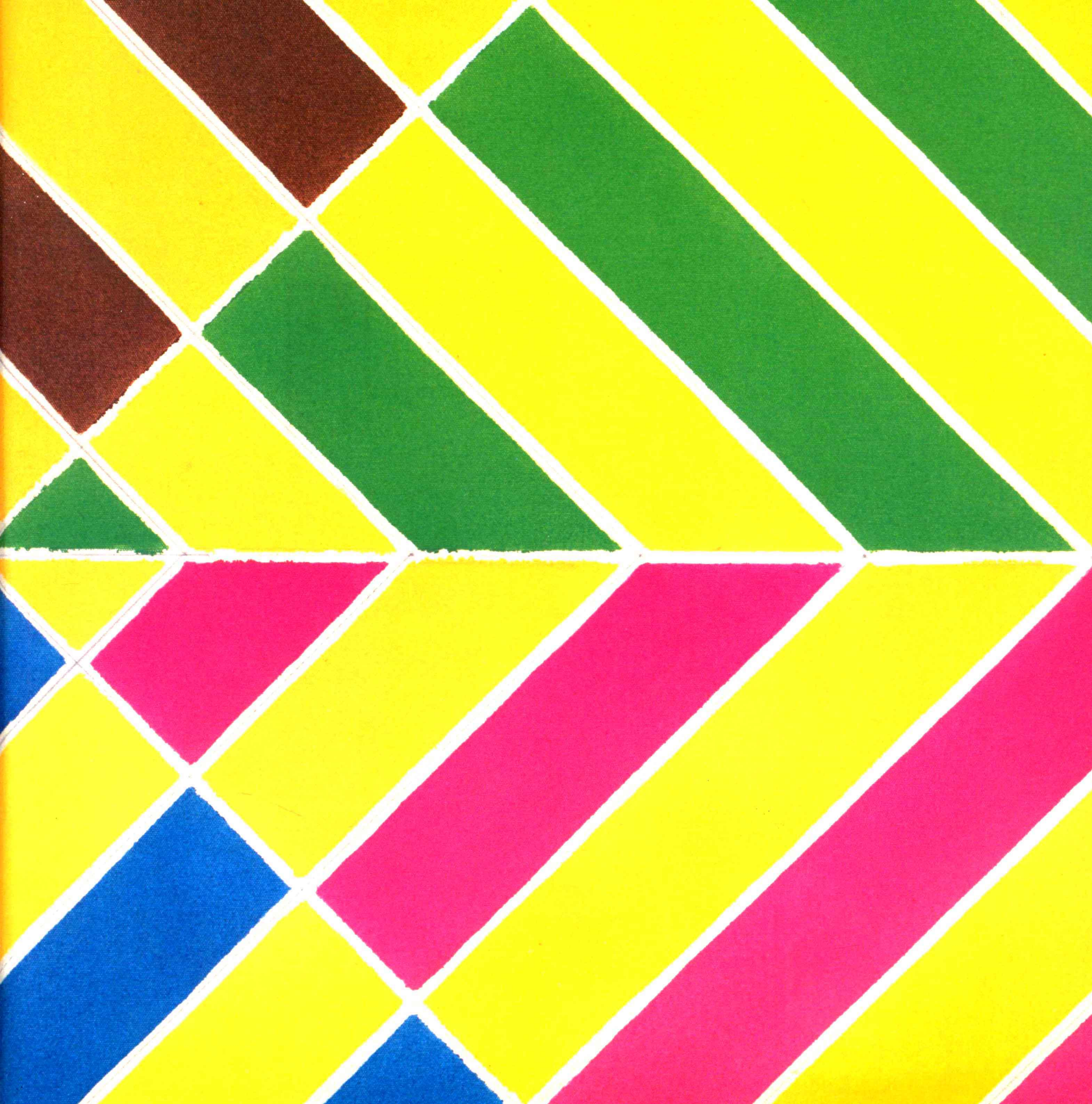
First Edition.



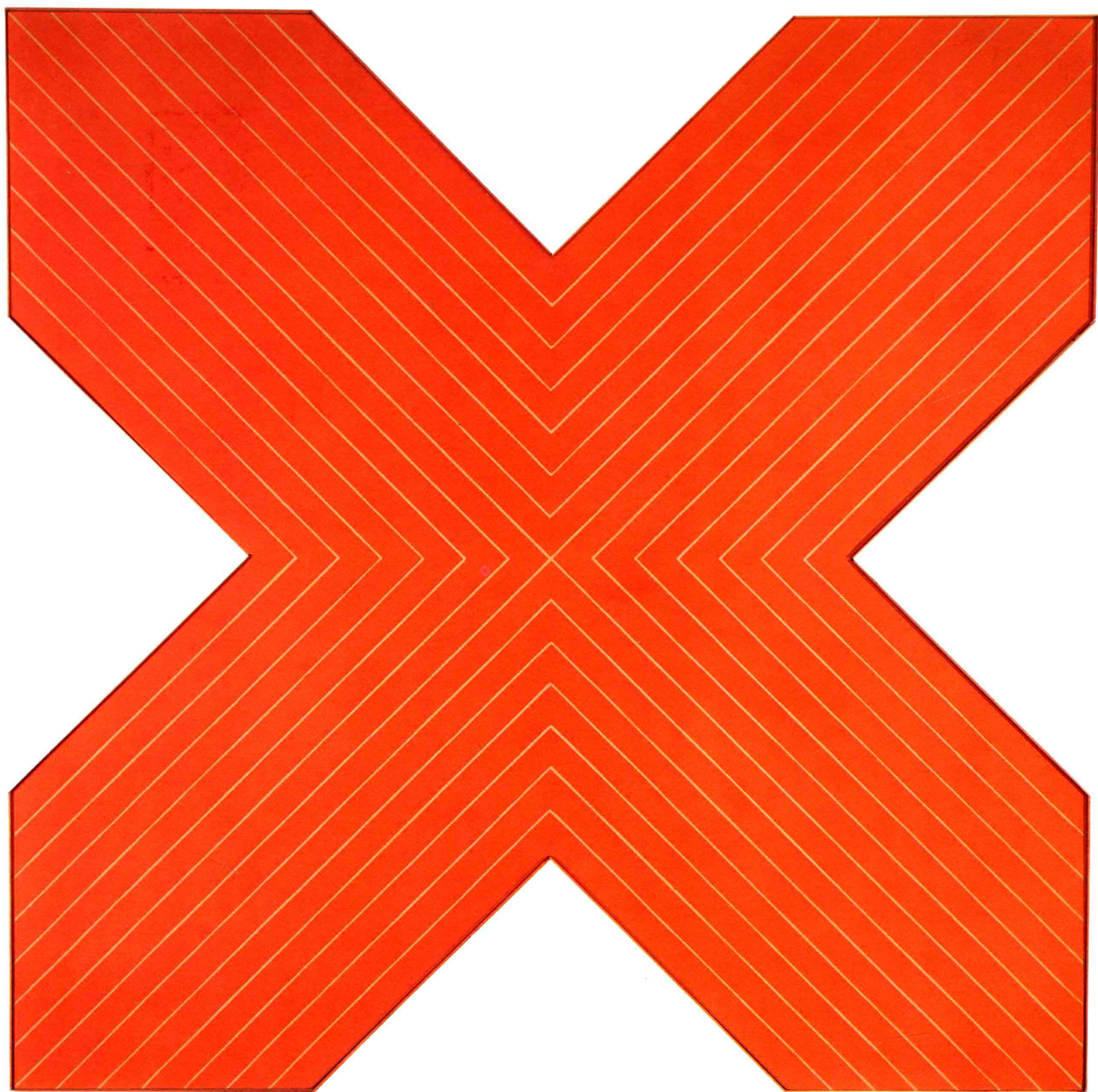
Contents

8	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	153	<i>Concentric Squares and Mitered Mazes</i> , 1962–1963
9	GUIDE TO THE CATALOGUE	185	<i>Purple Paintings</i> , 1963
10	INTRODUCTION by Robert Rosenblum	193	<i>Dartmouth Paintings</i> , 1963
26	STUDENT WORK	209	<i>Notched V Paintings</i> , 1964–1965
31	PAINTINGS 1958 TO 1965	221	<i>Running V Paintings</i> , 1964–1965
33	Pre-black paintings, 1958	233	<i>Moroccan Paintings</i> , 1964–1965
57	<i>Black Paintings</i> , 1958–1960 Transitional Rectilinear pattern Diamond pattern	247	<i>Persian Paintings</i> , 1965
88	Non-black paintings, 1959–1960	254	BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
95	<i>Aluminum Paintings</i> , 1960	255	EXHIBITIONS One-man exhibitions Group exhibitions
115	<i>Copper Paintings</i> , 1960–1961	269	BIBLIOGRAPHY Articles and reviews Books and catalogues Published writings by Frank Stella
130	Untitled paintings, 1960	275	CHECKLIST OF PAINTINGS
135	<i>Benjamin Moore Paintings</i> , 1961	278	PHOTO CREDITS
148	Untitled paintings, 1961		
150	Post Benjamin Moore, 1962–1965		

F. STELLA







FRANK
STELLA
PAINTINGS
1958 to 1965

A catalogue raisonné

by Lawrence Rubin

Introduction by Robert Rosenblum

STEWART, TABORI & CHANG, PUBLISHERS

New York

For Frank

Page 1: The artist's signature as it appeared on the cover of the catalogue to his 1961 show at Galerie Lawrence, Paris, France.

Pages 2-3: detail, *Sidi Ifni I*, 1965.

Frontispiece: *Tampa*, 1963.

Right: *Them Apples*, 1958.

Editor: Maureen Grancy.

Design: J. C. Suarès,

Patricia Fabricant.

Copyright © 1986 Lawrence Rubin.

Introduction copyright © 1986 Robert Rosenblum.

Credits for all photographs of Frank Stella and Frank Stella's paintings appear on page 278.

All rights reserved. No part of the contents of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the Publisher.

Library of Congress cataloguing-in-publication data

Rubin, Lawrence.

Frank Stella : paintings 1958 to 1965 : a catalogue raisonné.

Bibliography: v. 1, p. 269.

Includes index.

I. Stella, Frank—Catalogues raisonnés. I. Stella, Frank. II. Title.

ND237.S683A4 1986 759.13 86-5813

ISBN 0-941434-92-3 (v. 1)

Published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang, Inc.

740 Broadway, New York City 10003.

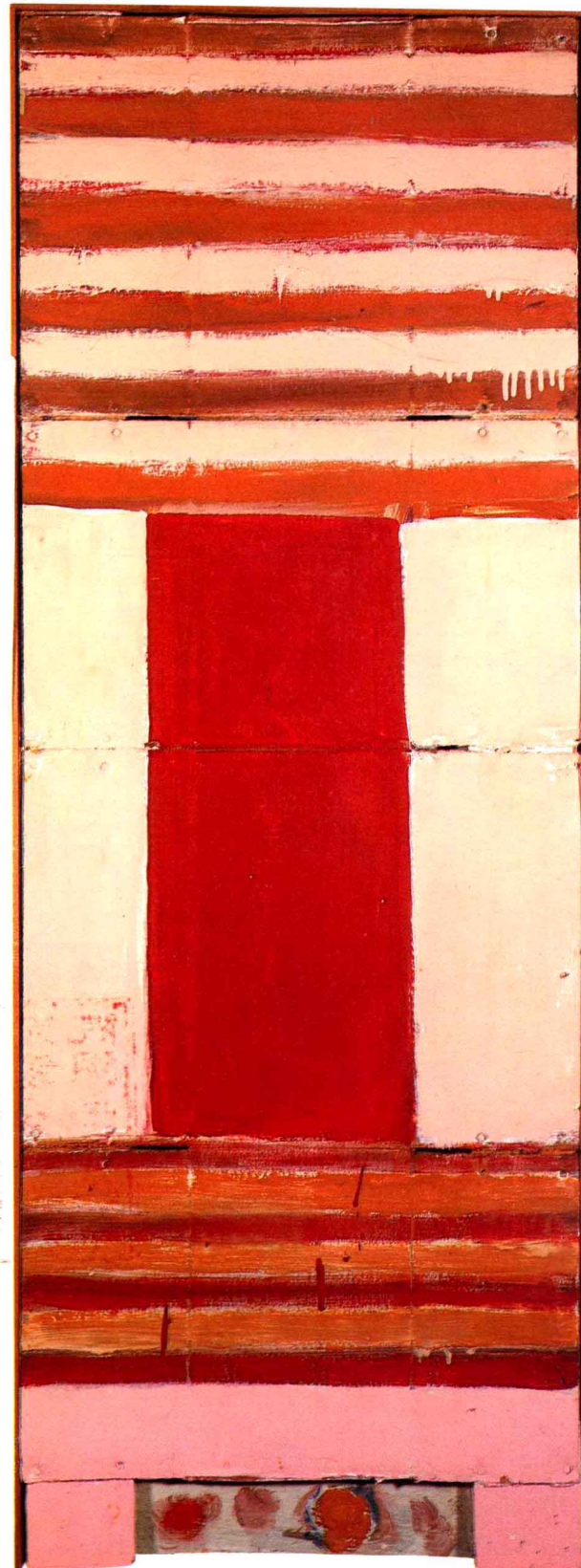
Distributed by Workman Publishing

1 West 39th Street, New York City 10018.

Printed in Japan.

86 87 88 89 90 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition.



Contents

8	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	153	<i>Concentric Squares and Mitered Mazes</i> , 1962–1963
9	GUIDE TO THE CATALOGUE	185	<i>Purple Paintings</i> , 1963
10	INTRODUCTION by Robert Rosenblum	193	<i>Dartmouth Paintings</i> , 1963
26	STUDENT WORK	209	<i>Notched V Paintings</i> , 1964–1965
31	PAINTINGS 1958 TO 1965	221	<i>Running V Paintings</i> , 1964–1965
33	Pre-black paintings, 1958	233	<i>Moroccan Paintings</i> , 1964–1965
57	<i>Black Paintings</i> , 1958–1960 Transitional Rectilinear pattern Diamond pattern	247	<i>Persian Paintings</i> , 1965
88	Non-black paintings, 1959–1960	254	BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
95	<i>Aluminum Paintings</i> , 1960	255	EXHIBITIONS One-man exhibitions Group exhibitions
115	<i>Copper Paintings</i> , 1960–1961	269	BIBLIOGRAPHY Articles and reviews Books and catalogues Published writings by Frank Stella
130	Untitled paintings, 1960	275	CHECKLIST OF PAINTINGS
135	<i>Benjamin Moore Paintings</i> , 1961	278	PHOTO CREDITS
148	Untitled paintings, 1961		
150	Post Benjamin Moore, 1962–1965		

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to Marian Ruggles who undertook the original, formidable task of compiling and organizing this vast amount of information into a clear and understandable form, and who persevered in the research with patience and efficiency.

Carol Corey served ably as the supervisor of this project and as liason between the various branches of research, while Cindy Lachow fielded questions and information with constant good humor.

My thanks and compliments to Elizabeth Seacord who has carried on the research—phoning, checking, gathering photographs, and generally organizing the manuscript and exhibition lists—with diligence and admirable endurance.

Many art dealers were of help in researching provenances and contributing photographs, but I especially thank Leo Castelli and his staff (most notably Susan Brundage) for their extensive help with this project.

The many museums and collectors who so kindly provided detailed information and photographs are gratefully acknowledged. The contemporary departments of both Sotheby's and Christie's have been very helpful in tracing both the histories of the paintings in this volume and contacting the current collectors.

I want to express a very special thank-you to Paula Pelosi, Frank Stella's assistant, who has been an invaluable help throughout this project. She has answered questions, tracked down information and suffered our continual barrage of inquiries with her accustomed humor, intelligence, and enthusiasm.

Finally, the people at Stewart, Tabori & Chang, Inc., have been consistently competent and helpful. Particular thanks are extended to Andrew Stewart, president; Maureen Graney, editor; J. C. Suarès, designer; Patricia Fabricant, graphic artist.

Guide to the Catalogue

The paintings in this volume are ordered according to the category in which they belong; the exact order in which they were completed was never recorded and cannot be reproduced here. These painting categories are arranged chronologically; within each, the larger works precede the smaller studies. Works not belonging to any particular series appear in casual, roughly chronological order.

The small versions of the paintings are noted as such. For the Valparaiso works of the Dartmouth Paintings, however, the term “sketch” is used because the small versions are actually the same height, though only half the width, of the large ones.

CATALOGUE ENTRIES

Catalogue entries are accompanied by a reproduction of the painting if a photograph was available; if one was not, a blank space appears.

Consecutive *catalogue numbers* were assigned specifically for this catalogue. *Painting titles* are the artist’s. The term “untitled” has been assigned to works for which the artist did not specify a title.

Dimensions of paintings larger than thirty-six inches are given in feet and inches. For ones smaller, dimensions are given in inches only. A metric conversion is provided parenthetically. In the case of irregular shaped canvases, the dimensions represent the highest and widest measures of the canvas when hung as the artist intended.

Inscriptions record notations done in the artist’s hand; some, however, were made a time after the painting’s completion. When no inscriptions exist, that fact is stated. A blank entry signifies that the information was unobtainable.

Provenance lists the owners of each painting chronologically. When a gap in this information exists, it is indicated as [. . .]. The last entry in this section is the current owner.

Exhibitions record the group and one-man exhibitions in which each painting has been shown. An exhibition is also listed here if the painting appeared as an illustration to the catalogue even if the painting was not in the show. Detailed information about each exhibition appears at the back of the book.

References to the Museum of Modern Art mean the New York City institution unless another location is specified.

EXHIBITIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Both lists include material concerning the artist’s work up to and beyond the time period of this volume. The exhibition list is divided into lists of one-man and group exhibitions, each of which is subdivided into shows at museums or universities and shows at public spaces and commercial galleries. The bibliography includes three categories of published material: articles and reviews; selected books; and publications by the artist.

Introduction

Works of art are supposed to be timeless and immutable, but as decades pass, they may also change unrecognizably. The *De-moiselles d'Avignon*, for instance, is not the same picture it was back in the 1950s. If it then looked like the first pictorial earthquake to announce the future fracturing of Cubist planes and spaces, these days it seems mainly to be charged with overwhelming emotions about sex, fear, and death, more akin to late nineteenth-century anxieties than to the creation of new twentieth-century formal alphabets. Back in the 1950s too the Jackson Pollock we saw unleashed a torrent of chaos and unbridled passion, whereas these days he has turned into a quite different-looking painter whose tempests have become delicate shimmers and whose wildness has been tamed to the propriety of museums and art history textbooks, fit to stand in the company of late Turner or late Monet. Such changes, often drastic and contradictory ones, especially mark the later experience of works of art which, like those by Picasso or Pollock, may seem to announce, when new-born, a total revolution, wiping earlier slates clean and inaugurating what, at the moment, appears to be a new visual era. But in retrospect, the sands of history have a way of smoothing over the shocks of aggressively unfamiliar art, leaving it in the usual historical position of looking both backwards and forwards, and of having both proper ancestors and progeny.

Such thoughts are prompted by my own task here of introducing the first volume of a multi-volumed catalogue raisonné of the work of Frank Stella, who began his public career in 1959 as an *enfant terrible* (“Is it really important,” asked one hostile critic, “for the public to see the work of a twenty-three-year-old boy who has only been painting for three or four years?”) Today, in the mid-1980s, he has become, where art is spoken of at all, an international household word and even a street-side word (his name, mystifyingly, is inscribed in a pavement block for all the world to see on the southeast corner of Broadway and 10th Street in New York City).

My credentials for doing this are long-term. I was lucky enough to have been teaching at Princeton’s Department of Art and Archaeology in the late 1950s when Stella was a student, and I knew him then and looked hard enough at his paintings to want to go on looking at them after he graduated in 1958 and moved to New York. There, in what seemed an unusually narrow and cramped loft on West Broadway, he quickly produced an almost military lineup of black-stripe paintings that were to rock the art

world when a sample quartet of them was seen at Dorothy Miller’s *Sixteen Americans* show at the Museum of Modern Art during the winter of 1959–1960. I remained a Stella enthusiast in the 1960s, first publishing in 1965 an article that tried to explain to myself and to others what it was he might be doing and then in 1969 preparing a short monograph on him for the Penguin New Art series which was meant to be published just before the major Museum of Modern Art retrospective and catalogue of 1970, but which got delayed in publication until 1971. And I have tried to keep up since, writing more recently, in the 1980s, about the seemingly irreconcilable about-face of his latest work (from monkish austerity to juke-box extravaganza) and hoping to explain it as a consistent development not only within the framework of his own art but within that of his contemporaries.

With this background of Stella-gazing for almost three decades, I am now happily obliged to look backward, and from the vantage-point of now, the mid-1980s, to think about the way the first lap of his Olympic career may have changed in our eyes. The period covered in this volume begins with his student years at Princeton (1954–1958) and ends in 1965, by which time he had become an establishment figure, albeit a controversial one, in the New York art scene. One constant, at least, of this decade is the importance of the *Black Paintings* as epochal art history; for now, like then, they retain the watershed quality so apparent when they were first seen in 1959. Today too they have the character of a willful and, one might add, successful manifesto that would wipe out the past of art and that would establish the foundation stones for a new kind of art that, as it turned out, was not only Stella’s own but the core of a group style of the early 1960s to be labeled Minimalism.

But if our awareness of the pivotal nature of the *Black Paintings* as a point of no return in the evolution of American art has been sustained in the last decades, our actual experience of them has not. Back in 1959, the newness of these works was so conspicuous that they seemed, whether one was pro or con, to be characterized only by negatives, by a list of rejections of the immediate past. Within this aggressively nay-saying regiment of black stripes, an iron fist annihilated any glimmer of pleasure, impulse, mystery. A new regime of the most predetermined systems, the most impersonal brushstrokes, the most neutral emotions, had been proclaimed. Indeed, Stella’s Young Turk mentality in 1959, his eagerness to destroy an old order and to build a new one from

scratch, is even apparent in the titles of a pair of small works of that year listed in this catalogue—*The First Post-Cubist Collage* and *The Last Cubist Collage*—titles that reflect his preoccupation with wiping out the long and increasingly moribund tradition of Cubism, whose vestigial illusions of luminous, layered spaces he hoped to replace with another, fresher kind of spatial construction.

In the *Black Paintings*, Stella clearly, almost programmatically, achieved this, forcing, as he was to put it in a lecture given at the Pratt Institute in early 1960, the “illusionistic space out of the painting at a constant rate by using a regulated pattern.” Yet gradually, our perception of these pivotal paintings, which to many looked like unfeeling geometric diagrams, began to change, supported by the insights of art historians who would explore the nuances, whether historical, visual, or emotional, of these poker-faced works. Already in 1968 John Coplans included Stella in his historic survey *Serial Imagery*, which, from this new perspective, located him not so much at the beginning of a tradition, but rather at the end of one that had its most illustrious forefather in Claude Monet, passing through masters as unlike as Jawlensky and Mondrian, Albers and Morris Louis. At least for me, it was the paternity of Monet that began to loom larger and larger for the early paintings as they receded from the vantage-point of the 1970s into the historical past. This pedigree was strengthened at William Rubin’s major ten-year retrospective of Stella’s work at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970, where one series after another was reassembled in separate bays or rooms; but it was distilled six years later to a magical intensity in what turned out to be one of the greatest exhibitions in my memory and one that was surprisingly unvisited and uncommented on.

In the winter of 1976–1977 at the Baltimore Museum of Art, Brenda Richardson rounded up for view sixteen of the twenty-three *Black Paintings* (or twenty-four, if the transitional *Delta* is included). In the magisterial catalogue that accompanied the show, she documented the entire series with a prodigious bounty of scholarship, entailing scrupulous discussions of bibliography, chronology, provenance, and, particularly important, the references and meanings of these paintings’ often cryptic titles. At the exhibition itself, the full force of the *Black Paintings* began, as never before, to be disclosed. Preconceptions about the mechanical, impersonal, quasi-mathematical quality of these works (Stella, after all, had worked as a house painter in New York in

1958) vanished swiftly as one was faced with an environment of the kind of sanctified mystery associated with a shrine or a private revelation.

The blackness of these surfaces, which once appeared cold and impenetrable, looked dense and lugubrious, and the rivulets of white canvas that showed between the insistently repetitive black stripes began to quiver and twinkle. As in Monet’s series paintings, one sensed the search for the most finely calibrated nuance of vision and feelings, and as in the case of the cathedral and poplar series in particular, a rectilinear skeleton seemed immersed, like a subliminal presence, beneath a veiled and shimmering surface. Perhaps most overwhelming was the literal and figurative darkness of these paintings, which created a relentless ambiance of sensuous denial, of funereal melancholy, oddly akin to the pervasive blue of Picasso’s early work with its comparable tone of a young man’s, indeed an adolescent’s, world-weary despair. And as Richardson indicated, the titles of these paintings generally alluded to a wide spectrum of human sorrows, from New York tenements (*Arundel Castle*) and a Chicago cemetery (*Getty Tomb*) to a London insane asylum (*Bethlehem’s Hospital*) and the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz (*Arbeit Macht Frei*). Such elucidations helped to deny the usual early response to these paintings—that they were thoroughly hermetic and cerebral—and to confirm the growing revelation that they reflect an awareness of such universal gloom that they may even end up as younger-generation counterparts to the somber, life-denying mood of many of Rothko’s own late series paintings.

Thinking about Stella and Rothko together is also to be reminded of the way recent winds are blowing. When Stella became news in 1959, the usual reflex in the New York art scene was to look only forward, signaling with trumpet blasts the mature signature works that marked the entry of an artist into the public arena and sweeping under the carpet the more tentative, nominally immature works that preceded them. Nobody much cared what most of the Abstract Expressionists had painted before they hit their stride in the late 1940s and announced what then seemed a totally new world. But by the late 1970s, as exemplified by the exhibition, *Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years*,¹ curiosity about what had happened, so to speak, before the curtain went up had accelerated, and a new audience was eager to see what Still or Pollock or Rothko might have looked like in the years before they at last achieved those Big Bang images, which



