Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Frank Stella
Date: June 9, 2006
Location: The Menil Collection
Interviewers: Elizabeth Lunning and Brad Epley
Video/Edit: Laurie McDonald
Total Run Time: 00:53:23

Abstract:
Artist Frank Stella discusses his work with Menil Chief Conservator Elizabeth Lunning and Menil Associate Paintings Conservator Brad Epley. The discussion focuses primarily on the materials and methods that Stella used to create four works owned by the Menil Collection: Avicenna, 1960; Lake City, 1962; Takht-i-Sulayman I, 1967; and Lipsko IV (Polish Village Series), 1972. Throughout the interview, Stella expresses his wishes for the future exhibition and conservation of his work.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):
Corporate Name(s)
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Artists Documentation Program
Harvard Art Museums
Menil Collection (Houston, Tex.)
Whitney Museum of American Art
Genre(s)
Interviews
Oral histories
Personal Name(s)
Epley, Bradford
Lunning, Elizabeth
McDonald, Laurie
Stella, Frank, 1945-
Subject(s)
Art--Conservation and restoration
Art--Technique
Painting, American--20th century
## Exhibitions/Works:
Names of exhibitions and works referenced during this interview appear below in gray cells.

## Controlled Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Subject Keywords</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00:01</td>
<td><strong>Opening Credits</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>00:00:59</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth Lunning</td>
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<td>Brad Epley</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frank Stella</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:01:19</td>
<td><strong>(Exhibition Reference)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Frank Stella 1958” (Traveling Exhibition)</td>
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<td>Organized by Harvard University Art Museums</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Menil Collection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 4–December 31, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:01:50</td>
<td><strong>Process of Creation and Technical Specifications</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stella describes the materials and techniques that he used to create</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>a series of aluminum paintings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:01:53</td>
<td><strong>(Image)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Stella</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Avicenna, 1960</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Menil Collection, Houston</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:04:50</td>
<td><strong>Conservation Issues</strong></td>
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<td>Stella explains a phenomenon that occurred in his metallic paintings, e.g., <em>Avicenna</em>, in which some of the paint bled onto the raw canvas. He also suggests that what people perceive to be color in the intervals of his black paintings may be an optical illusion.</td>
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<td>00:06:09</td>
<td><strong>(Work Reference)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frank Stella</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Morro Castle, 1958</em></td>
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<td>Kunstmuseum Basel</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:06:30</td>
<td><strong>(Work Reference)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frank Stella</td>
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<td><em>Delta, 1958</em></td>
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<td>National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:07:19</td>
<td><strong>Technical Specifications</strong></td>
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<td>Stella discusses the edge treatments that he applied to both his</td>
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<td>aluminum paintings and his black paintings. He demonstrates how he was</td>
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<td>able to stretch canvas across the notched corners of <em>Avicenna</em>.</td>
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<td>00:08:09</td>
<td><strong>Wood低调</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Stella</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Bonetti, Luca</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Mancusi-Ungaro, Carol</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</table>
| 00:07:22 | *Exhibition Reference*  
“Frank Stella”  
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York  
September 27-October 15, 1960 | stretching wood (plant material)            |
| 00:07:39 | *Exhibition References*  
“Frank Stella”  
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York  
September 27-October 15, 1960  
“Frank Stella: Paintings”  
(Retrospective exhibition)  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
March 24-June 2, 1970 |                            |
| 00:09:44 | **Concept/Nature of Work**  
Stella expresses his opinions regarding the edges of his paintings, including how he treated them and how they relate to the overall composition of his works. | adhesive tape edges (object portions)            |
| 00:11:10 | **Process of Creation and Technical Specifications**  
Stella traces the origin of *Lake City* and also describes the materials and processes that he used to create it. | antifouling paint  
Castelli, Leo  
damage edges (object portions)  
glue  
Granek, Rudolph**  
masking tape  
Masonite (TM)  
oxidation |
| 00:11:12 | *Image*  
Frank Stella  
*Lake City*, 1962  
(overview and detail of tape)  
The Menil Collection, Houston |                            |
| 00:12:04 | *Images*  
Frank Stella  
*Lake City*, 1962  
(details of verso)  
The Menil Collection, Houston |                            |
| 00:12:18 | *Images*  
Frank Stella  
*Lake City*, 1962  
(details of printing on copper paint)  
The Menil Collection, Houston |                            |
| 00:13:44 | **Conservation Issues and Technical Specifications**  
Stella describes how the copper antifouling paint that he used in *Lake City* caused canvas to buckle. He also discusses how many coats of paint he applied to his paintings | antifouling paint  
buckling canvas  
paint layers |
| 00:15:07 | **Technical Specifications**  
Blum, Irving, 1930-*  
colorfastness |                            |
Stella describes the brightly colored paints that he used to create *Takht-i-Sulayman I*, 1967. He reflects on the fugitive nature of various pigments that he used over the years, including copper and aluminum paints.

| 00:15:09 | (Image) Frank Stella *Takht-i-Sulayman I*, 1967 The Menil Collection, Houston |
| 00:17:29 | Conservation Issues Stella discusses the importance of achieving a uniformity of surface in his painting. He describes conservation treatments that have been undertaken on *Avicenna*, including a treatment for water damage that occurred during a 1958 fire at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. |
| 00:18:42 | (Image) Frank Stella *Avicenna*, 1960 (detail of water damage/drips) The Menil Collection, Houston |
| 00:19:08 | (Image) Frank Stella *Avicenna*, 1960 (detail of water damage/drips) The Menil Collection, Houston |
| 00:19:47 | Conservation Issues Stella assesses the overall condition of *Avicenna*. He expresses his wishes with regard to its future conservation and suggests possible treatment strategies. |
| 00:21:07 | (Images) Frank Stella *Avicenna*, 1960 (details of verso with backing removed and canvas tacking exposed) The Menil Collection, Houston |
| 00:23:28 | Concept/Nature of Work and Conservation Issues Stella discusses the bleed that appeared in the intervals of *Avicenna*. He considers the possibility of cleaning the painting’s intervals and also highlights other areas of concern. |
| 00:24:58 | (Images) Frank Stella *Avicenna*, 1960 (detail of line from stretcher) The Menil Collection, Houston |
| 00:25:03 | Technical Specifications beam compasses |
Stella explains how he had his stretchers fabricated, including the stretcher for *Takht-i-Sulayman I*, 1967, and others from his *Protractor Series*, 1967-71. He also describes other processes and materials that he used to create *Takht-i-Sulayman I*.

### 00:25:50
(Image)
Frank Stella
*Takht-i-Sulayman I*, 1967 (detail of primer bleed in intervals)
The Menil Collection, Houston

Lebron, James**
masking tape primer (material)
priming (coating process) stretchers (framing and mounting equipment) unprimed canvas

### 00:26:56
Conservation Issues and Technical Specifications
Stella points out an area of damage on *Takht-i-Sulayman I* and expresses his preferences with regard to rolling the painting for shipment. He describes how he applied paint to the work’s surface.

### 00:27:17
(Exhibition Reference)
“La rime et la raison: Du Paléolithique à nos Jours. Deux Générations de Collectionneurs. Les Collections Ménil (Houston - New York)”
Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris
April 17–July 30, 1984

Bocour, Leonard, 1910- *
damage shipping

### 00:27:56
(Images)
Frank Stella
*Takht-i-Sulayman I*, 1967 (details of intervals with priming)
The Menil Collection, Houston

### 00:29:23
Process of Creation
Stella describes how he used a schematic with color codes to map out where he would apply colors to *Takht-i-Sulayman I*.

### 00:30:26
Conservation Issues
Stella expresses his opinions regarding the edge treatment of *Takht-i-Sulayman I*. Lunning describes measures that the Menil must take to move the painting out of storage within the museum. Stella mentions that the painting appeared in a 1968 *Life Magazine* article.

### 00:32:00
Technical Specifications
Stella expresses his opinions regarding the edge treatment of *Takht-i-Sulayman I*.

### 00:33:47
(Images)
Frank Stella
*Takht-i-Sulayman I*, 1967 (details of crevice with cut canvas)
The Menil Collection, Houston

### 00:34:52
Conservation Issues
Stella describes occasions when he felt that conservation is necessary.

### 00:35:32
Conservators
lining (process)
treatments had interfered with his work. He briefly discusses the work of Barnett Newman.

00:37:34 *(Work Reference)*
Barnett Newman
*Be i*, 1949
The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of Annalee Newman

00:38:49 *(Work Reference)*
Barnett Newman
*Cathedra*, 1951
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

00:39:40 **Process of Creation**
Stella describes how he created a large wooden relief sculpture, *Lipsko IV (Polish Village Series)*, 1972. He explains how his wooden relief sculptures relate to a series of collages.

00:41:57 **Conservation Issues**
Stella assesses the current condition of *Lipsko IV* and makes recommendations for its future conservation.

00:44:45 **Process of Creation**
Stella traces the chronology of his *Polish Village Series* reliefs and collages.

00:46:49 **Technical Specifications**
Stella describes the materials that he used to create the collage *Lipsko (Sketch)*, 1973. He also discusses how and where he would obtain his materials.

00:47:18 *(Image)*
Frank Stella
*Lipsko (Sketch)*, 1973
The Menil Collection, Houston

00:48:56 **Conservation Issues**
Stella conducts a visual inspection of *Lipsko IV*. He expresses his opinions regarding areas of damage and restoration on the work.

00:52:11 *(Image)*
Frank Stella
*Lipsko IV (Polish Village Series)*, 1972
The Menil Collection, Houston

00:49:20 Closing Credits