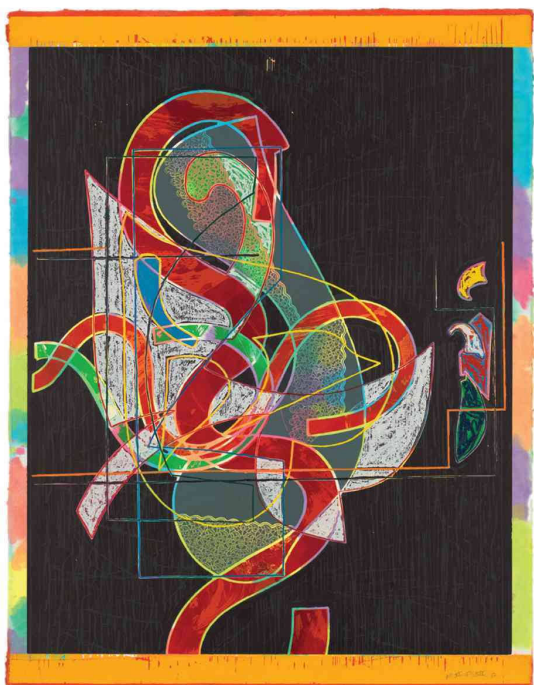


Frank Stella: Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné

by Richard H. Axsom. Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, dist. by D.A.P., April 2016. 432 p. Ill. ISBN 9780692587072 (cl.), \$75.00.

Reviewed January 2017 Rosemary K. J. Davis, Accessioning Archivist, Manuscript Unit, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, rosemary@warmsilence.org



A catalogue raisonné is always a massive undertaking. The resulting volume is often heavy, imposing, and manages to be both joyfully overwhelming (in terms of the sheer number of works documented) and sigh-inducingly limited (in terms of space afforded to each work). Richard H. Axsom's meticulous and enlightening catalogue collects almost forty years' worth of Frank Stella's printmaking work into a book that encompasses all of these characteristics; it clocks in at over 400 glossy pages and strives to let each print have its moment in the spotlight visually and historically.

Axsom's scholarly front matter functions as crucial context for these artworks, wisely identifying master printer Kenneth Tyler--who established Gemini LTD/Gemini G.E.L. and later ran a print shop in New York state--as a driving collaborative force in the technical and artistic

progression that Stella made over the years. Tracing the connection between Stella's prints and his other artistic output is also incredibly important and Axsom does it well, drawing out the ways in which Stella's artistry evolved across media. Prefatory material for each print series builds on the front matter, giving succinct contextual information and creating straightforward, specific historical documentation that researchers will find invaluable. The fact that Axsom helmed this book's 1983 edition is evident and welcome, particularly in regard to the inclusion of a detailed history provided for each print, an illustrated chronology of Stella's life and work, a glossary tailored to illuminate Stella's work processes, and a voluminous bibliography.

A yearning for even more full-page illustrations and foldouts hinges primarily on information

that Axsom wisely highlights; Stella had a knack for using the shape and size of the paper to bring attention to the material nature of what the viewer is seeing. Somehow, when a catalogue raisonné documents paintings and sculptures, there is a gentler acknowledgement of illustrative constraints. One cannot see the huge canvas or the texture of the brushstrokes at real scale. But with these prints, even the inclusion of just a few more large-scale images would feel thrilling. However, Axsom's imminently intelligent decision to include images of Stella creations in other media--paintings, metal reliefs, maquettes and sculpture--provides readers with a more crucially important sense of how all of Stella's artworks were related, how they were all part of a creative continuum. This volume is thorough, vivid, and revealing, everything a catalogue raisonné should be, even if it leaves the reader wanting more.