

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

FRANK STELLA'S MUSICAL MIND AT WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Text by Natalia Rachlin | November 14, 2014



Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya: 2. A hungry cat ate up the goat, Frank Stella, 1985; 42½" x 53"; hand-colored and collaged with combinations of lithographic, linoleum-block, silk-screen, and rubber-relief printing (unique).

Photo: © The artist, courtesy of Waddington Custot Galleries, London

One of America's most celebrated living artists, Frank Stella, is the subject of a new exhibition opening tonight at London's Waddington Custot Galleries—a spectacular show bursting with the artist's wild coloring and graphic geometries. On display will be 19 rarely seen color variants from 1985, based on Stella's 1982–84 print series *Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya*. To striking effect, the color variants further explore hand-painted color arrangements and printings using the remaining compositional plates and collage elements from the original print edition.



*Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya: 4. Then came a stick and beat the dog, Frank Stella, 1985; 52¾" x 52¾"; hand-colored and collaged with varying combinations of lithographic, linoleum-block, silk-screen, and rubber-relief printing (unique).
Photo: © The artist, courtesy of Waddington Custot Galleries, London*

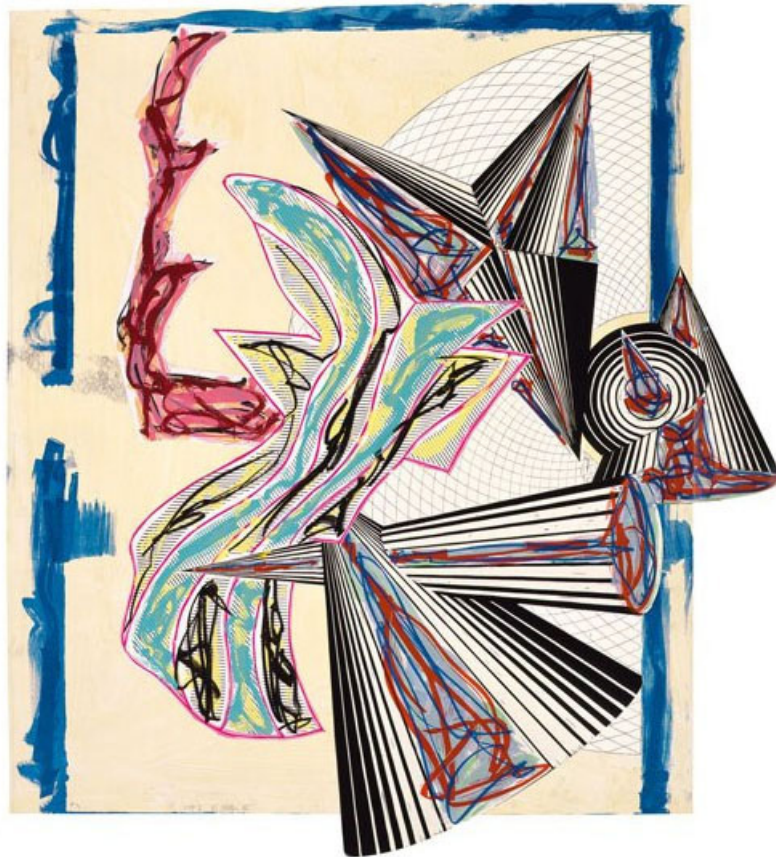
The series was inspired by a visit to the Tel Aviv Museum in 1981, where Stella came across an exhibition of the Russian avant-garde artist El Lissitzky, who in 1919 created a series of gouaches that visually interpreted the Jewish Passover song "Had Gadya (The Only Kid)."



Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya: 7. Then came an ox and drank the water, Frank Stella, 1985; 54½" x 52"; hand-colored and collaged with varying combinations of lithographic, linoleum-block, silk-screen, and rubber-relief printing (unique).

Photo: © The artist, courtesy of Waddington Custot Galleries, London

Upon his return to New York, Stella, too, set about creating his own version of Lissitzky's illustrations based on the song, using multiple printing methods, including lithography, linoleum block, silkscreen, and rubber relief with collage elements and hand-coloring. The resulting series of 12 prints was published by London's Waddington Graphics in 1984, and on completion of the edition, Stella developed between two and nine variants of each of the Had Gadya illustrations. The works in Waddington Custot's exhibition have been selected from these variations, each one an extraordinary, bold view into Stella's endlessly vibrant universe.



Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya: 9. Then came death and took the butcher, Frank Stella, 1985; 59½" x 54½"; hand-colored and collaged with varying combinations of lithographic, linoleum-block, silk-screen, and rubber-relief printing (unique).

Photo: © The artist, courtesy of Waddington Custot Galleries, London

Through December 13 at Waddington Custot Galleries, London; waddingtoncustot.com