



## FRANK STELLA

### ILLUSTRATIONS AFTER EL LISSITZKY'S 'HAD GADYA' THE UNIQUE COLOUR VARIANTS

13 NOVEMBER – 13 DECEMBER 2014

Waddington Custot Galleries is pleased to present nineteen of Frank Stella's rarely-seen, unique colour variants based on his 1982–1984 print series *Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya*. Created in 1985, these colour variants explore further hand-painted colour arrangements and printings using the remaining compositional plates and collage elements from the print edition. The selected works in this exhibition will show a complete group of Stella's *Illustrations after El Lissitzky's Had Gadya* alongside variations from within the series.

In 1919, Russian avant-garde artist El Lissitzky (1890–1941) created a series of gouaches illustrating the traditional Jewish Passover song, *Had Gadya* (The Only Kid). Having seen these gouaches in the Tel Aviv Museum in 1981, Stella was fascinated by the movement and vibrancy El Lissitzky had created whilst using simplified, graphic forms. On his return to New York, Stella produced his print series illustrating, as Lissitzky had done, each line of the song. Over the course of two years, Stella utilised multiple printing methods including lithography, linoleum block, silkscreen, and rubber relief with collage elements and hand-colouring to create a series of twelve prints which were published by Waddington Graphics, London, at the end of 1984.

After completing the edition, Stella created between two and nine variants of each of the twelve *Had Gadya* illustrations and the works in this exhibition are selected from these. Each continues the technically complex composition but is unique in the different combinations of vibrant colours and printings. The *Had Gadya* series is pivotal in Stella's work with the introduction of both the 'wave' motif, which inspired the seminal *Moby-Dick* series and his *Cones and Pillars* iconography

This exhibition offers an alternate view of the entire *Had Gadya* series and, viewed side by side, it is possible to see Stella's varying levels of printing and experimentation with colour; tracking his thought processes and innovative, ambitious use of colour and form.

## About the artist

American artist Frank Stella was born in Malden, Massachusetts, in 1936. From 1950-54 he attended Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, enrolling in an art appreciation course. He studied history at Princeton University from 1954-58, where he attended painting courses under William Seitz and Stephen Greene. Following his graduation, Stella moved to New York where he continues to live and work.

Stella's minimal art and post-painterly abstraction has had a profound influence on visual art since the 1960s. His geometric paintings are objects which refer to nothing outside themselves: in Stella's own words "what you see is what you see". Working in sequential series, Stella elaborated his formal developments starting with *Black Paintings*, followed by *Aluminium Paintings*, *Copper Paintings*, *Concentric Squares*, *Mitered Mazes*, *Irregular Polygons* among others. He has extended his series to prints, sculpture and, most recently, architecture. He is the only living artist to be given two retrospective exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. In 2009 he received the National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama at The White House.

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