

# bernard jacobson gallery

## Frank Stella

17<sup>th</sup> September – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2015

Bernard Jacobson Gallery is proud to announce its forthcoming exhibition of works by Frank Stella (born 1936 in Malden, Massachusetts). Stella is one of the most prominent and influential living American artists; he is known to constantly evolve his practice with every new series of works and push the boundaries of what is considered art. The exhibition coincides with the artist's retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, which will open to the public on 30th October.

The exhibition at Bernard Jacobson Gallery will feature paintings and sculpture from several important series from the 1990s and 2000s, which demonstrate Stella's unique sense of space, scale and composition.

For the first time we will show the seven panel, 13 metre painting "Die Marquise von O..." (1999) as well as a panel from the "Michael Kohlhaas" (2000) series. Both titles refer to the writings of Heinrich von Kleist, a pre-eminent 19th century German playwright and writer of short stories. Von Kleist was a solitary genius and visionary writer who committed suicide at the age of 34 in 1811.

Frank Stella considers Kleist's writings a source of inspiration for his abstract sculpture and paintings. According to the artist, Kleist's dramatic and theatrical writing style is "as close as we get to writing that seems ready for cinema – direct and forceful." He intends for his work to have the same visual impact as cinematic performance. Like the stories, Stella's works are unpredictable – full of surprising twists and turns.

The centrepiece of the show is the monumental "Die Marquise von O..." (1999) referring to Kleist's protagonist, a young widow, who mysteriously finds herself pregnant and is thus plunged into states of extreme uncertainty. The seven large canvases differ in size with the largest at the centre, flanked on each side by three canvases that gradually diminish in size. A cacophony of swirling shapes overlap each other and continue from one panel to the next in a seemingly ceaseless movement as if the tension and lines of force had exploded the piece into multiple fragments - this time laterally. What Stella had previously done in three dimensions he continues in this work across the two dimensional surface. He has constructed the work, element-by-element, and form-by-form, the same way sculpture and buildings are made. Frank Stella stated, "When it's successful the result creates a visual experience, but it does

# bernard jacobson gallery

something more. It makes available to you both a kind of experience and information that you couldn't have gotten any other way".

The large "Michael Kohlhaas" (2000) panel belongs to a group of nine paintings, each measuring astounding 4.25 x 4.25 metres. A related piece will be included in the Whitney Museum retrospective. Michael Kohlhaas is the main character of one of von Kleist's best-known stories based on the hair-raising tale of an honest 16th-century horse trader whose rage against injustice suffered at the hands of a local baron blossoms into a mass peasant revolt. Based on historical facts, Kleist fashioned a novella that dramatized a personal quest for justice in defiance of the claims of the general law and the community.

The exhibition also comprises six sculptures from several bodies of works, including two wall-mounted sculptures from the artist's Scarlatti K series such as the elegant "K.109". The title refers to both the Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757), known for his many harpsichord sonatas, and to the musicologist Ralph Kirkpatrick (1911–84) who produced the definitive catalogue of the sonatas in 1953. Stella's constructions, like the sonatas, are each assigned a "K" number; their relationship to Scarlatti's music, however, is one of visual rhythm and abstraction, rather than a literal correspondence. "If you were to be able to follow an edge" of a given work visually, says Stella, "and follow it through quickly, you'd get that sense of rhythm and movement that you get in music."

Another remarkable group are "Tell Shimshara" (2002) and "Giyán V(e)" (2002), named after key archeological sites in ancient Anatolia, the seat of Neolithic civilisation from 7000-6000 BC. Although works in this series are named after specific sites, they are not representations of them; the techniques and materials Stella is using though - sand casting and found object - are suggestive of the archeological process. Extraordinary conglomerations of found rusted metal and cast aluminium up to 2.5 meters across, these wall sculptures are mounted on a ring, which allows them to be rotated and displayed at any angle.

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

[mail@jacobsongallery.com](mailto:mail@jacobsongallery.com) | +44(0)207 734 3431