

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO PRESENT  
33 PRINTS AND DRAWINGS BY FRANK STELLA

Polar Co-ordinates for Ronnie Peterson, an exhibition of 33 prints and drawings completed by Frank Stella in 1979-80, will open at The Museum of Modern Art on November 18, 1982. The exhibition, named after the featured series of eight silkscreen and offset lithograph prints, illuminates the evolution of the series by presenting preparatory drawings, trial proofs, and final prints. Riva Castleman, Director of the Museum's Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, organized the exhibition, which will be on view through January 11, 1983.

Frank Stella's art is characterized by his serial examination of a subject, a method that involves creating several works that all explore the same subject by means of distinct and ordered variation. This approach remains valid for Stella in printmaking, where he often reexamines subjects considered in earlier works. It is the changes resulting from the translation of a subject from one medium to another that renders this printmaking process so fascinating.

In this case, the basic composition for the Polar Co-ordinates prints can be found in two series of paintings created by Stella while in Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1967-70: Flin-Flon and Saskatoon. In 1970, The Museum of Modern Art held a retrospective of Stella's work and reproduced two paintings from the Flin-Flon series on the cover of the catalog accompanying the exhibition. Eight years later, the cover inspired Stella to return to certain compositional elements found in these paintings. He began a new series of drawings, Ponte Vedra I-IV after the Flin-Flon paintings and Ponte Vedra Beach I-IV after Saskatoon.

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These drawings repeat the motifs of the Flin-Flon and Saskatoon paintings, and yet display a fresh sense of vitality produced by freer brushstrokes and less rigidly defined color areas. Eight large drawings inspired by Ponte Vedra and Ponte Vedra Beach then served as the maquettes for Polar Co-ordinates. Unlike the tightly controlled geometric works upon which they are based, Polar Co-ordinates show a looser structure and, according to Riva Castleman, "the tendency in a few of the prints to unbalance or distort the dominant symmetry." Polar Co-ordinates is dedicated to Ronnie Peterson, a race car driver and friend of the artist, who was killed in an accident.

When Polar Co-ordinates for Ronnie Peterson opens at The Museum of Modern Art, it will have already been viewed by thousands of people in the United States and Canada as part of the Museum's program of travelling exhibitions. Last year, the Museum organized and circulated over thirty exhibitions to institutions in America and Europe in this program promoting cultural exchange and cooperation among museums. These exhibitions permit individuals in distant cities and countries to enjoy art works that might otherwise be inaccessible. Polar Co-ordinates for Ronnie Peterson has appeared in five museums since its tour began in 1981: the Museum of Art, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona; the William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut; the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta, Canada; the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; and the Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin.

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