

DOMINIQUE LÉVY



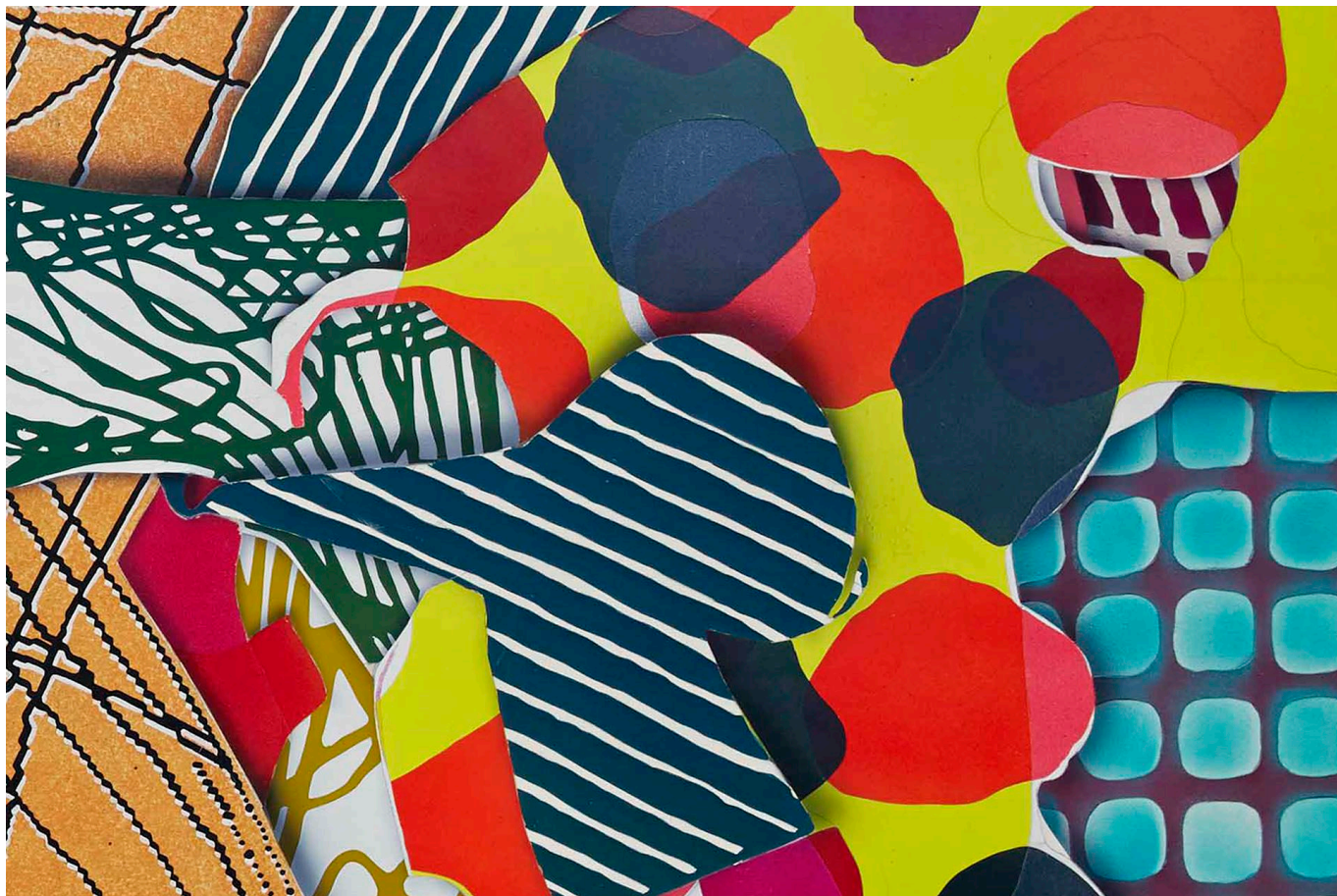
FRANK STELLA

Study for Princess of Wales Theater, Toronto, III
1992

Mixed media on canvas
137 x 60 x 2 1/2 inches (348 x 152.4 x 6.4 cm)



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Study for Princess of Wales Theater, Toronto, III, 1992 (detail)

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PROVENANCE:

The Artist

NOTE:

Commissioned by David Mirvish for the new, state-of-the-art facility he and his brother had built for the staging of large-scale theatrical productions—particularly the musical variety—Frank Stella created multiple 10,000 square-foot paintings to cover the auditorium ceiling dome, the proscenium arch, the walls of the lobbies and lounges, and an exterior wall of the fly tower. Christened the Princess of Wales Theater after both the first legitimate playhouse in the city (the “Princess”) and Diana, Princess of Wales (who consented to the theater’s naming), the theater, built in 1993, incorporates traditional and contemporary elements of architectural design, and is used even today as a case study for students of engineering and architecture. Collectively, Stella’s paintings are believed to comprise one of the largest permanent art installations of the past century.

As a freestanding work, *Study for Princess of Wales Theater, Toronto III* embodies a graffiti-like sensibility and intensely stratified, processes-revealing composition to emphasize the already intense ambiguity between spatial illusionism and dimensional reality. The artwork manifests these qualities via the juxtaposition between the flatness of its components and their raised or built-up positioning. When considering the work as a component of the larger theater project, another layer of theoretical considerations comes into play, as the design was ultimately intended to be an augmentative, two-dimensional component of a three-dimensional, architectural space. Printer Ken Tyler, a longtime friend and collaborator whose own creative process involves a range of media and multiple printing matrices, produced much of the printed material incorporated into the collage. Other aspects of the work were computer generated, often rendered from the digitization of organic or concrete forms such as the smoke rings produced via the artist’s cigar habit, or soap bubbles. This result was achieved through a device that was able to photographically capture the smoke in various configurations that were then topographically rendered in 3-D computer graphics, resulting in a structure of banded filaments.



Stella's pit lounge murals in the Princess of Wales Theater, Toronto

Both *Study for Princess of Wales Theater III* and the final theater installation embody the problems of spatial presence and structural abstraction the artist had been working through since the late 1980s. Further, the work's formal components and its relationship to a musical theme foreshadow Stella's current project, begun in 2006, the *Scarlatti Kirkpatrick* series, situating it at the center of the artist late oeuvre. Indeed, *Study for Princess of Wales* elicits an impression of infinite flexibility while maintaining an air of monumentality and planarity, as the excessiveness of its composition and palette suggest an infinitude rarely seen on such a monumental scale, as the highly graphic quality of the component materials coheres into an altogether new mode of abstraction, simultaneously evoking a sense of the schematic and chaotic.



Additional Stella murals in the Princess of Wales Theater;
 Above: theater lobby; Right: dome and proscenium;
 Below: fly tower

