

Frank Stella's whirlwind Los Angeles visit rekindles memories



On a whirlwind two-night return visit to L.A. recently, artist Frank Stella managed to cram in some art viewing. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

By **DEBORAH VANKIN**

JULY 6, 2014, 7:30 PM

Los Angeles holds a special place for Frank Stella. As a young artist in the '60s and '70s, the longtime New Yorker spent time on and off working at Gemini Graphic Editions Limited in L.A., making prints.

"It was the first time I went outside of New York to someplace that was interested in art — and the first time I'd ever seen a palm tree, that was pretty jolting!" he said. "Irving Blum, Walter Hopps, they were like a dynamic duo, the Blues Brothers made large. They were the whole scene back then, they were modern art."

On a whirlwind two-night return visit to L.A. recently, Stella managed to cram in some art viewing. He stopped by Bergamot Station to see the work of old friends Ed Moses and Larry Poons at the William Turner Gallery. ("I have to come all the way out here to see Larry's work!" Stella jokes of the New York artist.) His good friend, Larry Bell, took him to see another studio in Venice. "This young French couple," Stella said, "painter Marc Fichou and photographer Lauren Marsolier. It was quite good."

He also swung by Honor Fraser Gallery in Culver City, which is showing one of Stella's paintings from 1968, "Ctesiphon I," as part of the group exhibition "Openness and Clarity: Color Field Works From the 1960s and 1970s."

The Museum of Contemporary Art, which owns the painting, loaned it to Honor Fraser for the show, prompting L.A. Times art critic Christopher Knight to raise questions about a nonprofit museum's loan to a commercial gallery.

"On rare occasions a museum might lend to a nonmuseum entity in order to advance new scholarship, especially through a publication; such a show is often tied to a charitable undertaking, given museums' nonprofit status," Knight wrote. "'Openness and Clarity,' for which no publication or charitable event is planned, does not meet those standards."

Stella, however, was not perturbed.

"It's quite a nice show," Stella said. "Museums are always saying, 'We're gonna waste more of everybody's money building more space because we don't have enough space for our collection.' What's wrong with using commercial galleries as satellite exhibition spaces? Get the collection out there, use them!"

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