

ART CHATS



SCOTT PAVILION

Twentieth-Century Art:
Gallery S4

Image: Stephen Mueller (American, 1947–2011), *Director's Conundrum*, 1982, acrylic and raw pigment on canvas, 8 ft 4 in. × 80 in. (254 × 203.2 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Gift of Terri and Phil Schrager, 2003.8, © Stephen Mueller

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Look closely at the variety of colors throughout the painting. What colors jump out to you first?

What shapes, figures, or emotions do you notice as you spend more time with the work?

Study the areas of the canvas that you think Stephen Mueller spent the most time working. Why did you pick that part of the composition?

Step back a few feet, then look closely again. Notice how your view changes.

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

Share the title you would give the artwork. Discuss what you think it represents.

Stephen Mueller called it *Director's Conundrum*. What do you think that alludes to? How does knowing a work's title affect your interpretation of it?

Share your observations with a partner. What did they notice that you missed? One of the exciting things about abstract art is that everyone can see and interpret it differently!

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Stephen Mueller was an American painter and teacher whose vibrant abstract works drew on art, nature, and travel. While his later work became increasingly meditative, his paintings from the 1980s were characterized by dramatic compositions and energetic brushwork. This “all-over” approach to painting reflects the influence of Abstract Expressionism and artists such as Jackson Pollock. Mueller drew on a wide range of artistic traditions from Tantric paintings and Mexican ceramics to Islamic art and Japanese Kabuki theater—as well as color theory, fragrances, natural phenomena, and his travels in Greece, India, and Mexico. Through vibrant color and gestural marks, he sought to create abstract paintings that engaged both the senses and the intellect.

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Twentieth-Century Art:
Gallery S5

Image: JoAnne Carson (American, b. 1953), *Night Watch*, 1983, canvas, wood, oil, and fabric, 78 × 115 × 23 in. (198.1 × 292.1 × 58.4 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Purchased in memory of Robert J. Kutak with funds given by his friends, 1986.11.a-j, © JoAnne Carson

Study the artwork.

LOOK

What details jump out first? Note the parts that literally extend into your space.

Follow the diagonal lines and rotating shapes. Notice the layered fragments, folded planes, and shadowed compartments.

What recognizable objects can you find among the collage-like textures?

Look closely at how the artist uses color and depth. Is there a color that draws your eye into the composition?

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

What mood does this work evoke for you and why?

Would you describe it as chaotic, playful, mysterious, mechanical, or something else? Explain your thought process.

How would your experience of this work change if this were a flat painting instead of a three-dimensional object?

The title is *Night Watch*. What ideas or stories does this title suggest?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

JoAnne Carson is an American painter and sculptor known for creating imaginative works that blur the boundaries between painting and sculpture. Her work explores perception, illusion, and the ways we interpret space, texture, and everyday objects, often encouraging viewers to question what is real and what is painted. The artist's work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Through technical precision and inventive compositions, Carson challenges viewers to reconsider the relationship between two- and three-dimensional art.

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SCOTT PAVILION

Twentieth-Century Art:
Gallery S5

Image: Frank Stella (American, 1936–2024), *Nogaro*, 1982, mixed media on aluminum, 115 × 120 × 24 in. (292.1 × 304.8 × 61 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Gift of the Phillip Schrager Collection of Contemporary Art from Terri, Harley and Beth Schrager, 2014.2, © Frank Stella, Photograph courtesy Bill Ganzel, Ganzel Group Communications, Inc.

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Look at the painting (or is it a sculpture?) and imagine the movements performed by the artist in its creation.

Let your eyes play with the painting, slipping around corners, following the twirls, twists and turns, dipping in and out of the surface. Let your eyes dance around the piece.

There is so much rhythm in this work, if you were asked to find just the right music for this painting, what music would you choose?

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

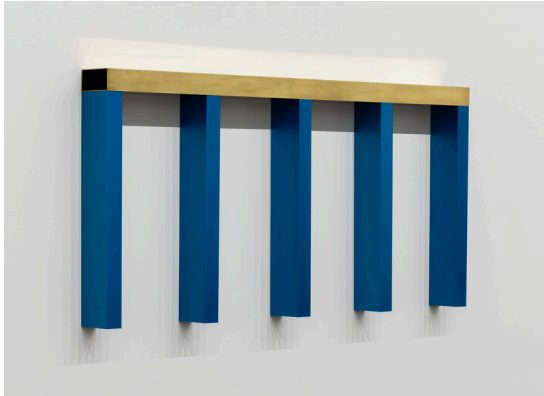
Together with those around you, make a list of four or five adjectives that best describe this work.

Now read the title. If we told you Nogaro is the name of a city with an awesome automobile racetrack, would that change your interpretation of this artwork? Why or why not?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

A seminal figure in American postwar abstraction, Frank Stella's earliest work employed bold lines to explore complex variations of basic geometric patterns, while in the late 1960s, large fields of saturated color emerged in his paintings. Perhaps his most important transition occurred in the 1970s, however, when he began experimenting with relief. Stella's work became increasingly volumetric, and by the 1980s, he had completely abandoned the austere flatness of his early canvases.

ART CHATS



SCOTT PAVILION

Twentieth-Century Art:
Omaha-World Herald
Gallery S7

Image: Donald Judd (American, 1928–1994), *Untitled*, 1982, brass and blue anodized aluminum, 40 1/2 × 84 × 6 3/4 in. (102.9 × 213.4 × 17.1 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Museum purchase, 1984.16, © Donald Judd

Study the artwork.

LOOK

This abstract artist invites us to admire the clean lines, pure colors, simple geometric shapes, and smooth surfaces of his sculpture.

That's it! Luckily, abstract art is all about freedom—freedom to interpret the artwork any way you want!

It does not have to have a meaning, a message, or any explanation at all. Look closely at this artwork for at least one minute.

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

Now that you've looked at the sculpture, does it remind you of anything you have seen before?

Do the shapes, lines, and colors make you feel calm and quiet? Why do you think so?

Donald Judd is working in a style called Minimalism. Talk about what that word means to you, and how that label helps explain his work.

What more do you wonder about this piece of Minimalist art?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Like many artists of the 1960s, Donald Judd favored a rigorous aesthetic of clean lines, pure colors, simple geometric shapes, and smooth surfaces that emphasized the industrial properties of his materials. Working with a factory to produce his sculptures, Judd investigated three-dimensional form through repetition. By the early 1970s, he had adopted the shape of the box or rectangle almost exclusively, in this instance organized in an architectural post-and-lintel configuration.