Another Place - 1971-72  Plexiglas: 6'8" x 26'2" x 17'
Sylvia Stone

"...Stone has consistently solved her problems in past works. She has succeeded again and brilliantly in her largest work to date, Egyptian Gardens, 7' 9" high by 26' long by 18' wide. It synthesizes the basic concepts in the major constructions of her last two shows: Another Place (1971-72) and Manhattan Express (1974).

As in Another Place, the primary components of Egyptian Gardens are vertical planes that section an immense space, but they are active triangles rather than stable rectangles. The two elongated triangles of different shapes are almost parallel, spaying out somewhat, creating a dynamic horizontal and diagonal thrust, a directional energy akin to that of Manhattan Express. The new work partakes of both the objectness of the low-lying, compact Manhattan Express and the environmental, open-field character of Another Place. The dominating, larger than human scale triangles and wedge-like elements that support them hold the viewer at a distance while the 6' 5" corridor-like space between the uprights invites entry, but only for a few steps, because most of the ground area within the sculpture is covered with triangulated plexiglas. This plastic carpet and the wedge-shaped props set up a floor-hugging counterpoint to the vertical projection—a kind of sprawl that Stone has long cultivated in her work.

Egyptian Gardens soars majestically, and this appears to be Stone's intention. But she also seems to want the opposite of monumentality, for she dissolves much of whatever mass there is in her transparent medium, using its reflections and refractions to produce a shimmering, cool green-tinted light, a poetic atmosphere that pervades and surrounds the plexiglas elements, and changes surprisingly with the viewer's slightest shift in position. In this, the new piece relates to Another Place. But Stone also introduces some of the mass of Manhattan Express by sending a number of her surfaces to produce varying opacities, the most dense of which becomes rest stops for the eye within the perpetual, luminous flicker.

"...Stone uses a clearly legible geometric design and a dissolving flux of lights—the first focused and clear in conception, the second unfocused and confusing to the eye—as foils for each other. The one strives but never succeeds in overcoming the other, and this provides the dialectical drama in her sculpture. She has been venturesome in her use of both components. When minimalism dominated taste, she risked working in a de-materialized, planar medium which generated "pictorial" or "illusionistic" light effects at a time when sculpture was supposed to be only "sculptural." She also dared to employ a complex design which demands a slow part to whole reading when primary objects were in vogue and any concept related, no matter how remotely, to historic Cubist and Constructivist relational design was suspect. But that was before the "isms" and their slogans expired. Now, without the blinders of dogma, her work may be seen—finally.

Stone's originality stems first of all from her strong sense of artistic identity, but also from her desire for freshness and from her contemporary state of mind. The last needs to be stressed, for Stone's originality stems not only from her independence of spirit, but also from her openness to change. Although she has long been one of the most honest of the Minimalists, she has always looked away from the group's main thrust as if for refreshment. She has never been afraid to accept the superspersonal, rationalistic, doctrinaire, and utopian ideal that motivated the earlier artists and replaces it with a multi-referential, spatially disorienting, intuitive, and lyrical vision."

Excerpts from Irving Sandler's Article "Sylvia Stone's Egyptian Gardens"—Arts—April 1977
Excerpts from Carolina Robinson's essay "The Edges of Illusion". Art Spectrum, 17, Jan. 1975

"...Walk into the domain of Sylvia Stone's new work, and edges and boundaries dissolve. The formal sculpture, her geometric arrangement of horizontal and diagonal planes of colored glass, becomes a shimmered sheet, a mirrored sheet on the floor. A patch of glass to browned glass, to gray prints. A series of frameless windows open on to each other, opening distances the eye alone of the beholder. Insert this light into the space, and you find that visual and verbal reflections has no final place, no specific location in human geography. Reflection's depth, we know, is simply a matter of light. And within this inner space that Cubist painting first revealed, and traveling and intersecting lines of our vision is every day life. Only a blow of a car crash, a head-on collision by hand or machine can blink out the angles and corners of daily sight. Up, down, around and through, peripheral objects in space preoccupy us, objects always just beyond the reach of tactile impress. This simultaneity of vision is, of course, one of the conventions of analytic cubist art. Modern sculpture has, up to now, been most concerned with asserting its presence vis-à-vis the space around it. A mysterious, monolithic form, a concrete object perfectly monumental in size characterized the sculpture of the sixties. This form often existed in tension, in uneasy balance with the open negative space around it, but the concreteness of its shape was never in question. Sylvia Stone's Grand Illusion at the Empicier Gallery, 20 feet long and 10 feet wide in terms of actual floor space, is a sculpture that calls into question the whole idea of silhouette and overall shape.

Grand Illusion is a series of horizontal planes, one resting, one abutting a mirrored sheet, one reaching diagonally across the other two while balancing on their top surface edges. It is a sculpture to be simultaneously looked down into, and across. It is a sculpture of shifting light. Light slides through the piece and catches on its darkened edges. The complexity of Sylvia Stone's light is heightened by the prismatic quality of each plexiglass sheet. Bronze, light brown and pale green plexiglass, the colors cast to make each plane a screen. Thus color and light are inherent in the materials the artist works with, and these very qualities, characteristic of show rooms and shop windows, to turn receive their discipline from the artist's conceptual norhisness. With Grand Illusion, Sylvia Stone liberates sculpture from its large object limitation and turns it into a series of shifting surfaces in space, questioning, but finally not losing its actual physical presence. The work removes an object to be walked around.

In terms of height, Another Place and Crystal Palace are Sylvia Stone's largest pieces. Her most recent works, sculptures such as Grand Illusion, sit lower on the ground and are more self-contained. The environment lies within the sculpture. One looks over and into it, and in, and the work itself becomes a more exciting place. The tinted edges of its diagonals, the reflections, the body of color reflecting horizontal waves force the eye to continually travel its slowly colored surfaces. Crystal Palace and Another Place were pieces that visualizes the idea of the work, to set them as pieces of an object, or new glass and sculpture. Bridge, a piece twenty-six feet long, is set in two pieces as pieces of silence, as all glass works should be. But Grand Illusion and all the new works have returned to the idea of the piece in space, and in that they are works of sculpture in the most simple. Never-never land is gone, confronted with the immediate drama of point-to-point movement light and color. Everything comes in parts as in a Cubist painting. Glass balances on glass with a clear cutting edge that triple reflections make a triple experience. How many times do we learn where our reflection is? Seeing past them is sometimes the most deadly of all. Clear edges illusions of all kind are the substance of Stone's work, beautifully done in one of the most challenging and durable materials man has yet invented.

Excerpt from Nancy Foster's "Art in America" May/June 1975

"...Sylvia Stone's new plexiglass and mirror sculptures affirm the extraordinary virtuosity with which she handles her materials. The compositional complexity of these new pieces comes as a surprise after the spareness of her previous work, but they acknowledge a similar repertory of structural and optical concerns, while offering somewhat different interpretations. In a loosely constructivist mode of large-scale on the floor sculpture, long rectangular panes of plexiglass and mirror are juxtaposed at angles, some lying flat, parallel to the ground, and others standing up on their sides. Unlike her earlier pieces, which were composed of a very large number of more or less frontally positioned slabs, the new works contain many elements which overlap consider and in all directions, adding a sense of solidity, weightness and full three-dimensionality not previously present. This impression of mass is unusual in work made with material which is characteristically transparent and reflective..."
Detail, Crystal Palace 1971 - Plexiglas: 6'6" x 14' x 16'

Detail Viewed - 1973-74 - Plexiglas and Plate Mirror: 3'4" x 21' x 10'
SYLVIA STONE

Born - Toronto, Canada
Studied Painting at Art Students League, New York, 1946, 1951 - 1953
Commenced Sculpture, 1965
One Woman Shows

Two Man Shows
"Ronald Bladen Sylvia Stoni" Brata Gallery 1960
"Second Hofstra Invitational" 1968

A Selection of Group Exhibitions
Brata Gallery 1959
Martha Jackson Gallery 1960
Easthampton Gallery, Easthampton, New York
Bertha Schaefer Gallery (4 man) 1963
Park Place Gallery 1960
Loeb Student Centre, New York University 1966
"Out From the Wall" Des Moines Art Centre 1967
"Cool Art" Newark Museum 1968
"Highlights of the Season" Larry Aldrich Museum 1968
"Some Younger American Painters and Sculptors" American Federation of Arts, 1968
"Transparencies" Virtual Arts Gallery 1968
"Made of Plastic" Flint Institute of Art, Flint, Michigan 1968
"Embassies Program" Museum of Modern Art, Mexico 1968
"Plastics as Plastic" Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York 1968
"Whitney Annual of American Sculpture 1966
"14 Sculptors, The Industrial Edge" Walker Art Centre 1989
"Critics Choice" New York State Council on the Arts 1970
"Summer Exhibition" Knoedler Gallery 1970
"Painting and Sculpture To-day", Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Ind. 1974
"Third Biennial of Small Sculpture", Budapest, Hungary 1975
"The Year of the Woman" Bronx Museum of Art, New York 1975
"Two Hundred Years of American Sculpture", Whitney Museum, New York 1976
"Small Sculpture", Andre Emmerich Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland 1976

Museum Collections...
Whitney Museum of American Art
Aldrich Museum
Witherspoon Art Gallery
Hartford Artium
Walker Art Centre

Grants
CAPS Grant 1971
National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artists Grant 1975