



Sam FRANCIS
b. 1923- d. 1994

American Abstract Expressionist artist Sam Francis was introduced to art during WWII. While serving in the US Air Force, he was injured in a flight test and hospitalized for many weeks. During his hospital stay, Bay area artist David Park visited Francis and encouraged him to take up painting to pass the time. Upon being discharged, Francis decided to study art at the University of California, Berkeley, where he received both his B.A. and M.A. Francis perfected his expressive use of color by studying famed artists as Mark Rothko, Arshile Gorky and Clyfford Still. He was also influenced by fellow second generation Abstract Expressionist peers Helen Frankenthaler and Joan Mitchell.

During the 1950s, Francis spent most of his time in France, but he also traveled frequently to Tokyo, Mexico City, California and New York. During his travels, he was exposed to the European Art Informel, French Modern painting and Zen Buddhism. These multicultural influences led him to develop his own abstract style. Francis became internationally known in 1953 when his work was featured at the MoMA in New York. His presence in the US, Europe and Asia allowed his work to infiltrate the global market. Francis began his famous *Blue Ball* series in the early 1960s. The highest auction price for a work in this series was *Middle Blue* (1957), which sold for \$6.3 million in 2010. Francis was also a skilled printmaker of lithographs, monotypes and etchings.

Francis was elected into the National Academy of Design as an Associate member in 1991, and he became a full Academician in 1994. After a fall injured his right hand, Francis used his left hand to paint a series of 150 small drip paintings before he died in 1994 in Santa Monica, California. Following his death, the [Sam Francis Foundation](#) was founded with the mission to "research, document, protect and perpetuate the creative legacy of the artist."

Sam Francis has work featured in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the MoMA, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Tate Gallery, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Kunstmuseum Basel.

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