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Sam Francis

Redefining the Boundaries
of Abstract Expressionism

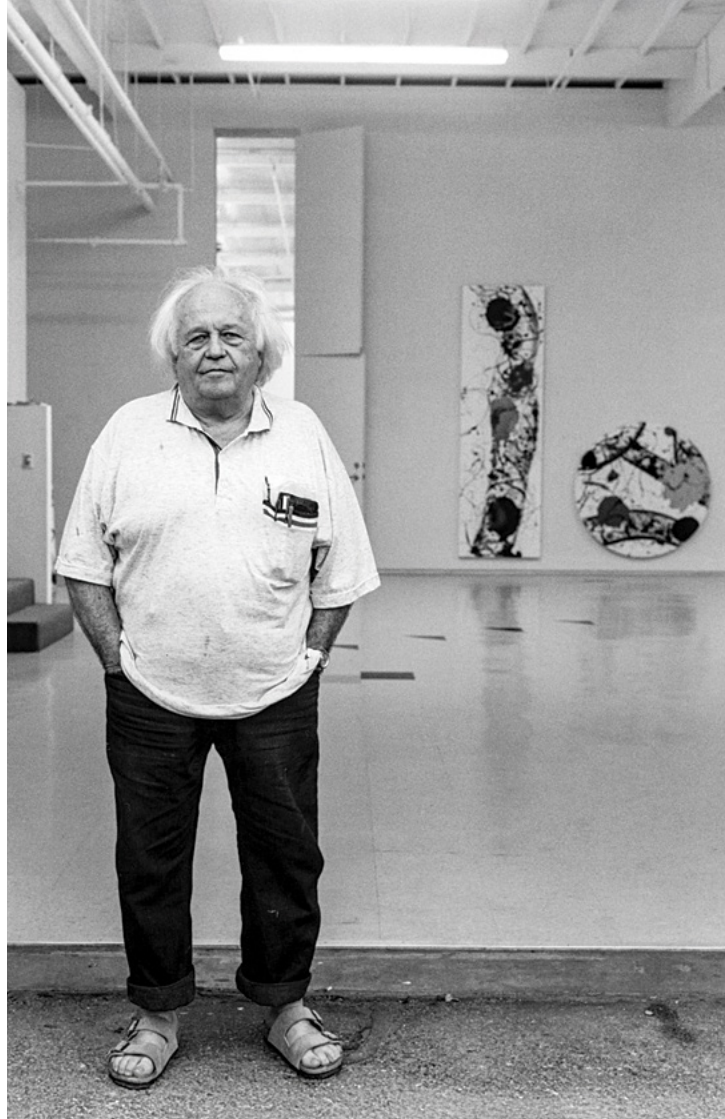


Sam Francis

A Kaleidoscope of Colors and Emotions,
presented to you by AXA XL.

Sam Francis in his Venice, California studio.

The cover features him in December 1989, while the left and right pages shown here depict him ca. 1988.





AXA XL is delighted to showcase a masterpiece by Sam Francis from our AXA Art Collection at TEFAF Maastricht 2025. For over two decades, we have championed the principles of expertise, elegance, and excellence — values that define our collaboration with TEFAF Maastricht. We deeply admire TEFAF's dedication to preserving historical connections while fostering new avenues for creative expression, offering a truly unique and enriching experience for all attendees.

In 2024, AXA XL proudly celebrated 20 years of partnership with TEFAF, a milestone in our shared commitments to the arts. Now, in 2025, we take this partnership to the next level as we become the **Global Lead Partner** for both the Maastricht and New York editions. This new chapter further reinforces our support for TEFAF's mission and the art community worldwide.

As your trusted insurance partner, AXA XL provides tailored solutions and a network of passionate art experts to safeguard the economic and intrinsic value of your art and collectibles — helping to ensure their legacy for future generations.

We look forward to celebrating the beauty of art and discovery with you at TEFAF Maastricht 2025.

Sincerely, Your AXA XL Team



Untitled, 1989

Courtesy AXA Collection, Paris

Acrylic on canvas

69 x 69 in (175 x 175 cm) each

Sam Francis Foundation

Catalogue Raisonné: SFF.1612 / SFF.1607.

“Painting is
about the beauty
of space and
the power of
containment.”

— Sam Francis

1923	Born in San Mateo, California.
1943	After spinal surgery and onset of tuberculosis during pilot training with the US Army Air Corps, he abandoned his dream of becoming a doctor to take up painting during months of hospitalization. A visit to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, where he saw El Greco's St. Peter, profoundly impacted him and he credited painting with saving his life.
1948	Graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in English literature and psychology.
1950	After receiving his degree in Studio Art in the fall, moved to Paris and became part of the abstract expressionist movement.
1952	Had his first solo exhibition in Paris at Galerie Nina Dausset.
1961	Represented the United States at the Venice Biennale.
1962	Returned to California and established a studio in Santa Monica.
1964	Moved to Tokyo and spent several years exploring Japanese art and culture.
1975	In addition to his lithography studio, formed an alternative energy company, Wind Harvest that continues today.
1987	Created a naturopathy-based medical research center and the ongoing publication of artist books through the Lapis Press.
1990	Founded the Sam Francis Art Museum to perpetuate his creative legacy and support charitable donations.
1994	Died in Santa Monica, California.

“Color is born of the interpenetration of light and dark.

What we want is to make something that utterly fills the sight and can't be used to make life only bearable. An increase in light gives an increase in darkness.” — Sam Francis

From AXA Group's collections in Paris, a masterpiece by the legendary American artist Sam Francis (1923-1994) takes center stage at our stand, radiating color and energy.

A pivotal figure in Abstract Expressionism, Francis had deep ties to Europe, where he became one of the most prominent ambassadors of American painting. His work perfectly embodies the artistic and cultural dialogue between the two continents — an exchange that TEFAF itself represents. Recognized as one of the most influential Abstract Expressionists of the 20th century, Francis was among the first post-World War II painters to achieve global renown. Over his career, he produced thousands of paintings, as well as works on paper,

prints, and monotypes, many of which are now housed in major museums and institutions worldwide. Renowned for his mastery of color and light, his art reflects influences ranging from New York Abstract Expressionism and Color Field painting to Chinese and Japanese art, French Impressionism, and his own Bay Area roots.

Sam Francis redefined the use of color, the canvas, and the very gesture of painting, developing a new visual language that was both expansive and deeply personal. In the large-scale canvas from our collection, this vibrant polychromy envelops us — sensual yet fragmented, generous yet restless — revealing the lyrical enchantment of his gaze upon painting itself.



Sam Francis in his Venice, California studio, November 1989.

This monumental, panoramic work exemplifies Francis's enduring fascination with immersing the viewer in the profound space-time of painting, a captivating concept that reflects his deep engagement with both alchemy and psychology, revealing layers of meaning and experience.

For him, art was not merely an aesthetic pursuit but a powerful catalyst for transformation. He believed that truly impactful art has the profound power to spark change, driving both cultural evolution and personal growth: "Art should bring forth emotions, challenge perceptions, and inspire meaningful change."



Get the latest insights from our art experts.

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