

# HEATHER JAMES FINE ART

For Immediate Release

## **SAM FRANCIS: FROM DUSK TO DAWN** Heather James Fine Art, Palm Desert November 15, 2018 – April 29, 2019



**Sam Francis**, *A Whirling Square*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 220 x 210 in.  
Heather James Fine Art



**Sam Francis** in front of *A Whirling Square*, 1975, in his Broadway studio, Santa Monica, CA. 1983. Photo: Michael Childers. Courtesy: The Sam Francis Foundation.

PALM DESERT, CA (November 7, 2018) – An exhibition of paintings by the acclaimed California artist Sam Francis will be on view at [Heather James Fine Art](#), Palm Desert, from November 15, 2018, through April 29, 2019. Drawing upon diverse influences including Fauvism, French

Impressionism and Modernism, Color Field painting, and Japanese calligraphy, Francis is considered a central figure of the second generation of Abstract Expressionists whose pioneering style helped to establish the movement on the West Coast and internationally.

Comprising over 28 paintings and works on paper, spanning from 1955 to 1994, *Sam Francis: From Dusk to Dawn* includes works from the Sam Francis Foundation, and Kaare Berntsen Collection, among others. Featuring 18 paintings completed shortly before the artist's death in 1994 placed alongside more than 20 seminal works from 1955 through 1986, the exhibition chronicles how Francis's lifelong dedication to exploring the many different ways color, space, and light can convey emotion and meaning advanced the standing of abstract painting both here and abroad.

Standouts on view include *Untitled*, 1961-62, from his prominent *Blue Balls* series, which he first began in Paris during the early 1960's, and *A Whirling Square*, 1975, a monumental oil on canvas from the collection of Francis's daughter, Kayo Francis Malik, on view for the first time in over 20 years.

"Heather James Fine Art's survey exhibition will shed new light on Sam Francis's important contribution to abstract art," said Debra Burchett-Lere, Executive Director/President of the Sam Francis Foundation, who has written an introduction for the accompanying catalogue.

At 71, battling prostate cancer, confined to a wheelchair, and without the use of his right arm, Francis embarked on a series of small-scale abstract compositions, now known as *The Last Works*. Featuring bold biomorphic shapes intertwined with fervent pools and splatters of paint, the entire series of 152 paintings on canvas and paper filled the walls of his Santa Monica studio. Reflecting his signature vibrant color palette and sweeping brushwork, paintings from this series are imbued with both a sense of urgency and vitality.

In describing his paintings at the time, Francis noted, "I work in a circular, gyro-like manner-spiral...I keep coming back to something from before, but approached from a completely different point of view. A rearrangement of the psyche."

Shortly after his death, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art mounted *Sam Francis Last Works*, a complete recreation of the artist's Santa Monica studio that included 18 of the paintings on view.

## **ABOUT SAM FRANCIS**

Samuel Lewis Francis (1923 - 1994) was one of the first post-World War II California painters to develop an international reputation as a leading interpreter of light and color.

In 1941, Francis enrolled at the University of California, Berkley, and then enlisted in the army in 1943. While serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WW II, Francis contracted spinal tuberculosis. He was hospitalized for many years and in 1945, he began painting while confined to a hospital cot, and in a full-body cast. Returning to Berkley in 1948, he studied painting while

earning his Masters. In 1950, Francis moved to Paris and attended the Atelier Fernand Léger, where he was exposed to the work of Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse. In 1956, 7 paintings by Francis were included in *Twelve Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, led to critical success. A visit to Japan in 1957 inspired a series of paintings featuring light-filled centers. In 1961, Francis experienced a recurrence of tuberculosis, and was hospitalized for almost a year in Switzerland during which time he created hundreds of small *Blue Balls* works on paper.

In 1962, he returned to California, settled in Santa Monica, and worked extensively for the next thirty years on his printmaking and painting. In 1964, his paintings were included in Clement Greenberg's landmark exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Over the next decades, Francis's style evolved from depictions of bright, lyrical forms that recall Tibetan mandalas (influenced by his study of Jungian psychology), to explorations of grid-like structures during the late-1970s, to compositions featuring serpentine forms and colorful drips in the 1980s.

Credited with helping secure international recognition for post-war American painting, Francis maintained studios in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Bern, and Tokyo. His paintings and works on paper are part of major museum permanent collections, including: the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, where he was a founding Trustee; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Kunstmuseum Basel; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, among many others.

Solo exhibitions have include the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1967); the Centre national d'art contemporain, Fondation Rothschild, Paris (1968); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1972); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (1979); the Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan (1988), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1999), and the Pasadena Museum of California Art (2013), among many others.

#### **ABOUT HEATHER JAMES FINE ART**

Heather James Fine Art presents a rare look into art history's past and present, offering important works from a cross-section of periods, movements, and genres — including Impressionist, Modern, Post-War, Contemporary, Latin American, Old Masters, and antiquities.

In 22 years, Heather James Fine Art has expanded into a global network with galleries located in Palm Desert, California; San Francisco, California; Montecito, California (opening fall 2018); Jackson Hole, Wyoming; and New York, New York, and consultancies in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Austin.

Each year, its galleries present an array of museum quality exhibitions exploring historical and contemporary themes, or examining the work of individual influential artists.

Heather James Fine Art is dedicated to bringing exceptional art to private clients and museums globally, and to providing the utmost personalized logistical, curatorial, and financial services.

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Heather James Fine Art galleries:

New York

42 East 75 Street, New York – Exhibition: [de Kooning X de Kooning](#) (November 8, 2018 – February 28, 2019)

California

45188 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert

49 Geary Street, Suite 511, San Francisco – Exhibition: [Wojciech Fangor: The Early 1960s](#) (October 11 - December 31, 2018)

1298 Coast Village Road, Montecito – opening fall 2018

Wyoming

172 Center Street, Suite 101, Jackson Hole

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