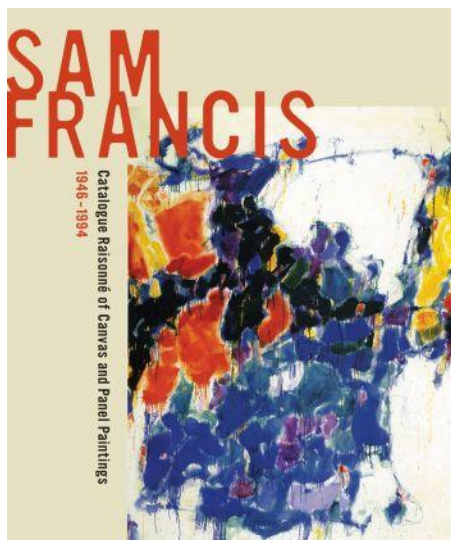


Sam Francis: Catalogue Raisonné of Canvas and Panel Paintings, 1946–1994, ed. by Debra Burchett-Lere. University of California Press, Oct. 2011. 320 p. + 2 DVDs. ill. ISBN 9780520264304 (cl.), \$495.00



Seventeen years after the death of California-born painter and printmaker Sam Francis (1923–1994), and more than a decade after the posthumous retrospective *Sam Francis: Paintings, 1947-1990*, the publication of this catalogue raisonné represents a major contribution to the documentation and interpretation of his artistic legacy. Edited by Debra Burchett-Lere, Director of the Sam Francis Foundation (SFF), it comprises an illustrated book containing an essay by art historian William C. Agee, a biographical timeline, and two DVDs: the catalogue raisonné proper, holding images and information for all his known paintings, and a collection of supplementary documentation. The critical text is an updated and expanded version of that published for the retrospective in 1999, with the other half of the 352 pages of the high-quality hardbound volume devoted to the editor's excellent timeline. The set is boxed in a clamshell container.

DVD I: The Catalogue, holds images of 1,910 paintings, hundreds reproduced for the first time; documentary images (installation, frame, back of canvas, etc.); and “zoomable” images (enlargement facility). The catalogue raisonné apparatus includes technical details, provenance, history, exhibition and collection details, and bibliography: a wealth of systematic information at the core of its value as a research tool and scholarly source. This content can be navigated via web browser by SFF number, title, decade, work period, format, and public collection. *DVD II* stores writings by the artist and collaborators; illustrated essays on studios and work techniques; exhibition and public collection listings; bibliography; photo album; and two documentary films. The DVDs are compatible with current Mac and Windows operating systems.

Presented as a hybrid, innovative catalogue raisonné, this is an electronic publication accompanied by a book with additional material. Its digital nature offers large storage capacity and browsability via links, but the choice of format (DVD) is questionable. In addition to preservation issues (disk and software obsolescence), it lacks some of the advantages of online catalogue raisonnés (a growing publishing model, with around thirty currently completed or in progress), particularly accessibility and the ability to change, although the latter has been addressed by the Foundation by promising access to online updates. The quality of the digital images (JPEG) is adequate for most research purposes, but the lack of high resolution (another growing trend in digital art publishing), and color issues, common to all digital imaging (color calibration, light conditions, etc.), are also a consideration. Technical information for images and software is minimal.

These production issues, however, do not detract from the achievement and value of the scholarly content of this catalogue raisonné, which includes a vast amount of new material. It is now the standard reference source on Francis and, as such, a recommended acquisition for academic and specialist libraries supporting research in modern and contemporary art or American art.

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