



Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi
27 September 2024 – 26 January 2025

Palazzo Strozzi celebrates Helen Frankenthaler's revolutionary art with the largest exhibition ever held in Italy, organized with the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, which places her works in dialogue with contemporary artists such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, Anne Truitt

From September 27, 2024, to January 26, 2025, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi presents *Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules*, a major exhibition celebrating one of the most significant artists of the 20th century. Frankenthaler's revolutionary approach to painting is explored through works produced between 1953 and 2002, in dialogue with paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists, including Jackson Pollock, Morris Louis, Robert Motherwell, Kenneth Noland, Mark Rothko, David Smith, Anthony Caro, and Anne Truitt.

Organized by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, and curated by Douglas Dreishpoon, Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Catalogue Raisonné, the exhibition aims to highlight the artist's innovative practice through the lens of the artistic affinities, influences, and friendships that marked her personal and artistic life.

Through large canvases and sculptures by Frankenthaler and numerous works by other artists, the project stands as one of the most important exhibitions ever dedicated to the artist in Europe and the most comprehensive survey of her work to date in Italy. Loans come from the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation in New York and renowned international museums and collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Tate Modern in London, Buffalo AKG Art Museum, National Gallery of Art in Washington, ASOM Collection, and the Levett Collection, as well as Helen Frankenthaler's own personal collection.

With her innovative soak-stain technique, Frankenthaler indelibly marked the evolution of modern painting, establishing a new relationship between color, space, and form. The technique involved applying diluted paint horizontally on untreated canvases, creating effects similar to watercolor but with oil paints on a large scale. Frankenthaler applied paint with brushes or sponges, or directly from buckets, allowing it to spread and blend naturally, creating unique chromatic interactions marked by blurred transitions and translucent overlays.

Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules celebrates an artist who challenged conventions and expanded the boundaries of painting with a bold and intuitive vision that broke traditional norms. Frankenthaler is distinguished by her unique ability to combine abstraction and poetry, technique and imagination, control and improvisation, expanding her practice beyond established canons in search of a new freedom in painting.

Arturo Galansino, Director General of Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, states, "We are thrilled to bring Helen Frankenthaler's work to Italy at an unprecedented scale, introducing new audiences to one of the greatest American artists of the twentieth century. With her innovative and no-rules approach, Frankenthaler stood out as a pioneering figure in the field of abstract painting, expanding the potential of the genre in ways that continue to inspire artists today."

"Helen Frankenthaler's dedication to painting was enriched by her friendships with artists, some of whom became part of her extended family," remarks **Douglas Dreishpoon**. "Frankenthaler's artistic circle was like an ecosystem of creative forces in constant play. Seeing their work in close company enables us to better understand Frankenthaler's own innovations."

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HELEN FRANKENTHALER PAINTING WITHOUT RULES

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27.09.2024 | 26.01.2025

Born in New York City, Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) studied studio art and art history with Paul Feeley at Bennington College, before returning to Manhattan, where she gravitated to abstract art. By the early 1950s she had gained direct access to the New York School and key figures in postwar American art, some of whom became part of her social circle. Frankenthaler surrounded herself early on with kindred artists who shared her unwavering commitment to experimentation. With trusted friends she shared studio visits, ongoing correspondence, and poignant perspectives on life. She also collected friends' work, which was prominently displayed in her Manhattan home. Among them, *Helen's Collage*, 1957, a paper collage by **Robert Motherwell**; *Aleph Series V*, 1960, a painting by **Morris Louis**; and *Ascending the Stairs*, 1979-83, a sculpture by **Anthony Caro**, will all be on view in *Painting Without Rules*.

Organized chronologically, the exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi tracks the development of Frankenthaler's creative practice over six decades, with each room dedicated to a decade from the 1950s to the 2000s. Frankenthaler's artistic innovations, seen in tandem with contemporaneous paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by friends, sheds light on the synergies and affinities between these artists.

The exhibition demonstrates the well-established influence of **Jackson Pollock** on Frankenthaler in the 1950s. Pollock's *Number 14*, 1951, an abstract black and white enamel painting that hints at subliminal imagery, is shown alongside Frankenthaler's *Mediterranean Thoughts*, 1960, a colorful oil painting with similar "elements of realism abstracted or Surrealism"—a phrase Frankenthaler used to describe Pollock's work after seeing it in person in 1951. Viewers will be invited to make visual connections between subsequent works and their affinities. For instance, Frankenthaler's *Tutti-Frutti*, 1966, a buoyant painting of colored clouds created using her innovative soak-stain technique, finds a Euclidean analog in **David Smith's** *Untitled*, 1964, a painted steel sculpture constructed of geometric shapes stacked one on top of another, all coasting on four small wheels. Frankenthaler's own sculptures are also included in the exhibition. *Heart of London Map*, 1972, a steel assemblage, bears an affinity to **Anthony Caro's** *Ascending the Stairs*, 1979-83, in its piece-by-piece construction. Frankenthaler's works from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s are a testament to an artist who never stopped breaking the rules to explore new ways to make art.

The exhibition is augmented with educational projects that will provide visitors access to Frankenthaler's life, her artistic practice and community. Further, a rich and articulated public program will offer activities for schools, families, young people and adults, with a particular attention to accessibility and engagement.

Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules is co-organized by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. Public Supporters: Comune di Firenze, Regione Toscana, Città Metropolitana di Firenze, Camera di Commercio di Firenze. Private Supporters: Fondazione CR Firenze, Intesa Sanpaolo, Fondazione Hillary Merkus Recordati, Palazzo Strozzi Partners Committee.

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Helen Frankenthaler

Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011) is widely credited for playing a pivotal role in the transition from Abstract Expressionism to Color Field painting and is best known for her invention of the soak-stain technique. Throughout a career spanning more than six decades, Frankenthaler experimented tirelessly, producing unique paintings on canvas and paper, as well as ceramics, sculpture, tapestry, and especially printmaking. Frankenthaler's substantial body of work continues to make a profound impact on contemporary art and is represented in the collections of major museums worldwide.

Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Established and endowed by Helen Frankenthaler during her lifetime, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation advances the artist's legacy and inspires a new generation of practitioners through a range of philanthropic, educational, and research initiatives. Since becoming active in 2013, the Foundation has continued to strategically expand its program, which includes organizing and supporting significant exhibitions of the artist's work, fostering new research and publications, advancing educational programs in partnership with arts organizations around the world, and launching groundbreaking initiatives that foster systemic change in the field. As a primary resource on the artist, and a steward of her collection and archive, the Foundation holds an extensive selection of Frankenthaler's work in a variety of mediums, her collection of works by other artists, and original papers and materials pertaining to her life and work.

Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi

A dynamic cultural center set within a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture, Palazzo Strozzi is a focal point of Italy's art scene and a key cultural hub in the heart of Florence. Since its inception in 2006, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi has organized more than 70 exhibitions, attracting in excess of three million visitors to date. Creating a lively dialogue between the old and the new, Palazzo Strozzi's exhibitions range from critically acclaimed historical surveys of old masters, such as Donatello and Verrocchio, to site-specific collaborations with leading contemporary artists including Ai Weiwei, Jeff Koons, Marina Abramović, Olafur Eliasson, Anish Kapoor, and Anselm Kiefer (on view until July 21, 2024). This unique mix of the historical setting and contemporary programme makes Palazzo Strozzi an active workshop for the new in Florence: where new artworks are produced, new studies and discoveries are made, and the public are engaged in discussions about important issues in contemporary society.

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PHOTO SHEET

Helen Frankenthaler
Open Wall
1953
oil on canvas
136.5 × 332.7 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
Foundation

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Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New
York.



Helen Frankenthaler
Alassio
1960
oil on linen
216.5 × 332.7 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
Foundation

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Helen Frankenthaler
The Human Edge
1967
acrylic on canvas
315 x 236.9 cm
Syracuse, NY, Everson Museum of Art,
Museum purchase to honor Director,
Max Sullivan on the opening of the IM Pei
building, 68.23

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Helen Frankenthaler

Mornings

1971

acrylic and marker on canvas

294.6 × 185.4 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler
Foundation

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York.



Helen Frankenthaler

Ocean Drive West #1

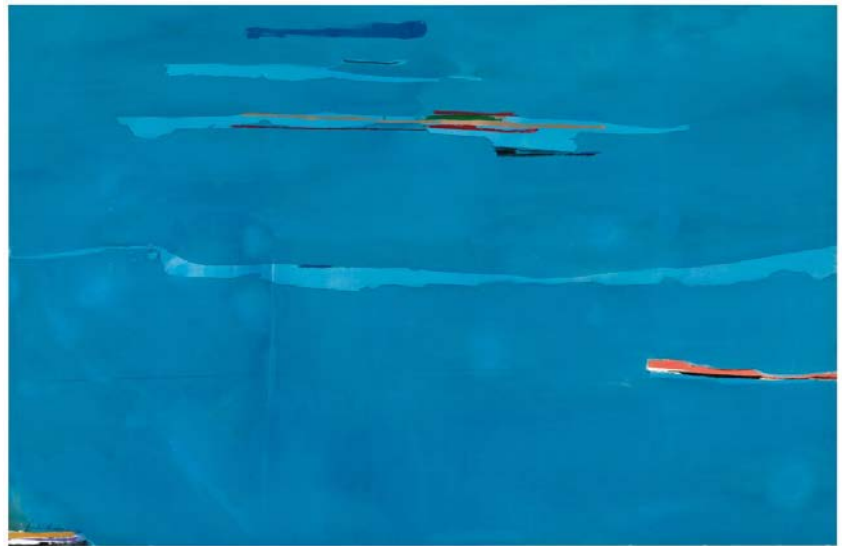
1974

acrylic on canvas

238.8 × 365.8 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler
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Helen Frankenthaler
Star Gazing
1989
acrylic on canvas
181.6 × 365.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
Foundation

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Helen Frankenthaler
Janus
1990
acrylic on canvas
144.8 × 240.7 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
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Helen Frankenthaler
Solar Imp
1995
acrylic on paper
198.1 × 151.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
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Helen Frankenthaler
Matisse Table
1972
steel
209.6 × 134.6 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
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Helen Frankenthaler
Heart of London Map
1972
steel
221 × 63.5 × 209.6 cm
The Levett Collection, inv. CL 1026

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Anthony Caro
Ascending the Stairs
1979–83
steel, sheet, varnish
111.8 × 83.8 × 101.6 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
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© Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Jackson Pollock
No. 14
1951
enamel on canvas
149.3 × 269.5 cm
Londra, Tate. Purchased with assistance
from the American Fellows of the Tate
Gallery Foundation, 1988.

© Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists
Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo:
Tate.



Robert Motherwell
Summertime in Italy
1960
oil and graphite on paper
148.4 × 107.9 cm
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art.
The Nancy Lee and Perry Bass Fund,
1999.55.4

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Morris Louis
Aleph Series V
1960
Magna on canvas
266.7 × 208.3 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler
Foundation

© Maryland College Institute of Art
(MICA) / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New
York.



Mark Rothko
Untitled
1949
oil and mixed media on canvas
228.9 × 112 cm
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art

©1998 Kate Rothko Prizel and
Christopher Rothko / Artist Rights Society
(ARS), New York.



Helen Frankenthaler in her Third Avenue
studio during a break in work on *Alassio*
(1960), New York, 1960.
Courtesy Helen Frankenthaler
Foundation Archives, New York.

Photograph by Walter Silver © The New
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Helen Frankenthaler in her East 83rd Street studio with *Small's Paradise* on the wall and *Fire* on the floor (both in progress), New York, 1964.

Photograph by Alexander Liberman; © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2000.R.19). Artwork © 2024 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown studio, summer 1968, with *Summer Banner* (hanging), *Spices* (in hand), and *Summer Core* (foreground).

Photograph by Alexander Liberman; © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2000.R.19). Artwork © 2024 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



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Helen Frankenthaler in her studio on East 83rd Street while working on *April Mood* and *Under April Mood* (both 1974), New York, 1974.

Photograph by Alexander Liberman; © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2000.R.19). Artwork © 2024 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Helen Frankenthaler in her studio on East 83rd Street while working on *Under April Mood* (1974), New York, 1974.

Photograph by Alexander Liberman; © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2000.R.19). Artwork © 2024 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



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CURATOR'S WALKTHROUGH WITH QUOTES BY THE ARTIST

Gallery 1

The exhibition opens with four works from the 1970s, a period when Helen Frankenthaler was perfecting her soak-stain technique, developed in 1952. A painting like *Moveable Blues* showcases the artist in peak form: pouring, painting, and drawing with absolute confidence. The lessons she learned from Jackson Pollock in the early 1950s—that it was possible to paint using various materials and tools while circling a large canvas spread out on the floor—inspired another type of abstract painting with expansive fields of color, known as Color Field painting. *Fiesta* and *Untitled* show how similar ideas explored in a smaller format share the same tonal atmosphere, spatial complexity, and linear articulation as *Moveable Blue*. Other works in this exhibition present the achievements the artist reached during this decade. *Matisse Table* is one of the ten sculptures Frankenthaler created in the London studio of her friend Anthony Caro in 1972. Frankenthaler had a deep appreciation for sculpture and sculptors, especially Caro, David Smith, and Anne Truitt, whose works she owned and kept close by. Many of the sculptures created during Frankenthaler's two-week stay in Caro's studio pay homage to Smith, who early on had encouraged her to create three-dimensional works. It is not only the materials used, some of which came from Smith's studio, that honor him, but also the way they were cut, welded, and composed. Frankenthaler approached sculpture with the same intuitive impulses she channeled to paint. *Matisse Table*, with its tilted surface, fan-like shapes, and still life elements, refers to Henri Matisse's painting *Pineapple* (1948), transforming the original model into something new.

Helen Frankenthaler
(New York, 1928–Darien, Connecticut, 2011)
Moveable Blue
1973
acrylic on canvas; 177.8 × 617.8 cm
ASOM Collection, inv. E 809

Helen Frankenthaler
Untitled
1973
acrylic on canvas; 51.4 × 85.7
New York, Helen Frankenthaler

Helen Frankenthaler
Matisse Table
1972
steel; cm 209.6 × 134.6
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Fiesta
1973
acrylic on paper; cm 56.5 × 76.8
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler on *Matisse Table*:

"I made this in London when I worked at the sculptor Anthony Caro's studio one summer [in 1972] and made ten metal sculptures . . . a few years later, he came to my studio in New York and painted."

—Palm Springs lecture transcript, 1996.

"I had been staring at a Matisse [painting] called *Pineapple* from '48 [reproduced on a large poster in Caro's studio] . . ., and thought, could that in any way be translated into a sculpture?"

—AIC lecture transcript, 1991.



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Gallery 2

Frankenthaler was living a bohemian life in downtown New York City when she saw Jackson Pollock's *Number 14* in a solo exhibition of his black-and-white paintings at the Betty Parsons Gallery. The work had a profound impact on the young painter who, while visiting Pollock on Long Island, saw his rustic studio barn and witnessed his painting process. Pollock maneuvered around monumental canvases rolled on the studio floor. As abstract as *Number 14* appears, tell-tale images emerge. The suggestion of subliminal imagery intrigued Frankenthaler, who responded to Pollock's radical methods: the choreography of an improvised full-bodied gesture—"ropey skeins of enamel, webbing, working from the shoulder not the wrist"—and the possibility that abstract painting could have some kind of "message."

Abstraction, born from spontaneous drawing, allowed Frankenthaler to express her imagination with pictorial signs, symbols, and evocative "scenes" without fully revealing herself. Ambiguity is essential for her images to remain mysterious—like poems,—to mean different things to different people. Pollock enabled her to see painting as an intuitive process primed by drawing: an approach without limits that inspired Frankenthaler's masterpiece, *Mountains and Sea*, as well as many of the paintings in this exhibition, including those in this room, which indicate a precocious artist of prodigious talent.

Jackson Pollock
(Cody, Wyoming, 1912–Springs, New York, 1956)
Number 14
1951
oil on canvas; 146.5 × 269.5 cm
London, Tate. Purchased with assistance from the American Fellows of the Tate Gallery Foundation, 1988

Helen Frankenthaler
Western Dream
1957
oil on canvas; 177.8 × 218.4 cm
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, 2023 (2023.560)

Helen Frankenthaler
Open Wall
1953
oil on canvas; 136.5 × 332.7 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Mediterranean Thoughts
1960
oil on sized, primed canvas; 256.5 × 237.5 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler on Jackson Pollock's *Number 14*:

"[Pollock's *Number 14*] was more than just the drawing, webbing, weaving, dripping of a stick held in enamel, more than just the rhythm. It seemed to have much more complication and order of a kind that at the time I responded to. Something . . . more baroque, more drawn and with some elements of realism abstracted or Surrealism or a hint of it . . . It is a totally abstract picture, but it had that additional quality . . . for me."

—Interview by Barbara Rose, 1968

Helen Frankenthaler on *Open Wall*:

"[The painting began as] an experiment to create some kind of sense of space and boundary. . . In the end, a spine of the painting, what makes one respond, has very little to do with the subject matter per se but rather the interplay of spaces and juxtapositions of forms."

—Interview by Julia Brown, *After Mountains and Sea* exh. cat., 1998.



HELEN FRANKENTHALER PAINTING WITHOUT RULES

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Gallery 3

To see a painted steel sculpture by David Smith and a painted wood column by Anne Truitt, both from the 1960s, in the same room as four Frankenthaler canvases from the same period, is to appreciate why Frankenthaler developed close friendships with both sculptors. If the weightless clouds in *Tutti-Frutti* pulse with buoyant abandon, the rectilinear banners in *The Human Edge* descend monolithically.

Frankenthaler and Smith shared a common belief when it came to making art: No rules! It didn't matter whether you were a painter or a sculptor (or both), the message was the same: no rules meant never being complacent about how your art got made, what materials were used, or what the results might look like.

Being open to surprise, even if it meant failing, was part of the creative process. So was constantly pressing against the limits of what had already been done to express yourself anew. Smith's *Untitled (Zig VI)*, constructed out of heavy girder beams stacked, welded, and coasting on miniature wheels, like a child's monumental toy, is joyful. Truitt's *Seed* gains personality through its painted surfaces.

Frankenthaler and Truitt shared close friends, life experiences, and a mutual commitment to painting, something that Truitt—like Smith—did independently and in tandem with her sculpture.

Helen Frankenthaler

Alassio

1960

oil on linen; 216.5 × 332.7 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

1966

acrylic on canvas; 297.18 × 175.42 cm

Buffalo, New York, Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr. 1976, K1976:8

Helen Frankenthaler

Cape (Provincetown)

1964

acrylic on canvas; 278.5 × 237.2 cm

Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria.

Purchased with the assistance of the National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1967, inv. 1773-5

Helen Frankenthaler

The Human Edge

1967

acrylic on canvas; 314.9 × 237.1 cm

Syracuse, New York, Everson Museum of Art, Museum purchase to honor Director, Max Sullivan on the opening of the IM Pei building, 68.23

David Smith

(Decatur, Indiana, 1906–South Shaftsbury, Vermont, 1965)

Untitled (Zig VI)

1964

steel, paint; 200.3 × 112.7 × 73.7 cm

New York, The Estate of David Smith

Anne Truitt

(Anne Dean; Baltimore, Maryland 1921–Washington D.C., 2004)

Seed

1969

acrylic on wood; 217.2 × 45.7 × 45.7 cm

Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art. Gift of Katharine Graham, Washington, D.C., BMA 1995.121

Helen Frankenthaler

Tutti-Frutti

Helen Frankenthaler on *The Human Edge*:

"[The Human Edge] was painted around the time of the debut of severe minimalist painting. At the bottom edge, it's a very personal, worried, non-geometric, non-clean line—L-shaped. When it came time to title [the painting] . . . I [knew that I] would call it The Human Edge because there was a lot about Minimalism that removed the human quality—the human edge."

—Palm Springs lecture transcript, 1996.



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FIRENZE PALAZZO STROZZI

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Gallery 4

The works by other artists displayed in this gallery, and in the two smaller adjacent rooms, provide a deeper understanding of Frankenthaler's artistic circle. Some works came to Frankenthaler as gifts, tokens of friendship. Others were purchased by the artist. Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis saw Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea* at her studio six months after it was painted. Compared to Pollock's dense abstractions, Frankenthaler's lightly stained canvas, full of light and space, offered an alternative approach that set American art on a new course.

Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell were married for thirteen years (1958–71). During this time, they shared family and friends, spent summers on Cape Cod and in Europe, and exchanged artistic ideas. Separated in age by fourteen years and temperamentally different (Frankenthaler extroverted, gregarious, and impish; Motherwell inherently shy, bookish, and introverted), both lived to paint. Motherwell's *Summertime in Italy* and Frankenthaler's *Alassio* (in previous gallery) allude to the summer of 1960, when the couple rented a villa in that seaside town. Inspired by each other's company, the sun and the surf, both paintings radiate *joie de vivre*.

Mark and Mell Rothko were also part of the couple's artistic circle. What Pollock was to Frankenthaler in the 1950s, Rothko was in the early 1960s: the catalyst for another kind of abstract image. Frankenthaler's *Cape (Provincetown)*, in the previous gallery, has a distinct affinity to the Rothko in this gallery. Both artists render geometric form in ways that elevate its human qualities.

Mark Rothko

(Marcus Rothkowitz; Dvinsk, Russia, 1903–New York, 1970)
Untitled
1949
oil and mixed media on canvas; 228.9 × 112 cm
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art. Gift of the Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc. 1986.43.158

Morris Louis

(Baltimore, Maryland, 1912–Washington, D.C., 1962)
Aleph Series V
1960
Magna on canvas; 266.7 × 206.1 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Robert Motherwell

(Aberdeen, Washington, 1915–Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1991)
Summertime in Italy
1960
oil and graphite on paper; 148.4 × 107.9 cm
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art. The Nancy Lee and Perry Bass Fund, 1999.55.4

Kenneth Noland

(Asheville, North Carolina, 1924–Port Clyde, Maine, 2010)
Helen's Choice
1977
acrylic and graphite on canvas; 239.1 × 174 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Gallery 5

In the early 1950s, Frankenthaler made the first of many visits to David Smith's home and studio in the Adirondack mountains near Lake George, a 352-kilometer drive north of New York City. Bolton Landing was like another world, one where clouds hung off totemic steel sculptures spread across open fields. Inside Smith's cinderblock studio, one would sense a space full of potential, a creative struggle with heavy metals cast and welded.



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The sculpture featured in this room is a personage—prehistoric, gladiatorial, threatening. *Portrait of the Eagle's Keeper* was one of Frankenthaler's earliest art acquisitions, something she kept close by always. As she moved, the sculpture moved with her, eventually occupying a prominent place in the Upper East Side townhouse she shared with Robert Motherwell. There, it joined *Mountains and Sea*, Motherwell's *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 70* (1961), Rothko's *Untitled* (1949, a gift to Motherwell) and other cherished works by contemporaries and old masters.

David Smith

Portrait of the Eagle's Keeper

1948–49

steel, bronze; 96.5 x 32.7 x 57.8 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Gallery 6

Frankenthaler met David Smith through the American critic Clement Greenberg. After she married Robert Motherwell in 1958, Smith became a beloved member of the family. All three artists, frequently joined by their young children, spent time together in New York City, at Bolton Landing, and on Cape Cod during the summer months. Smith's untimely death in the spring of 1965 was a profound loss.

The smaller works in this gallery, all gifts to Frankenthaler, are a tribute to love and friendship. Smith's *Untitled* tabletop sculpture is a rumble-tumble free-for-all animated by the same orgiastic energy as Frankenthaler's *Tutti-Frutti*. Two untitled works on paper, among the hundreds of figurative brush drawings that Smith made during the 1950s, attest to a sculptural imagination free of rules.

Motherwell made *Helen's Collage* a year before he and Frankenthaler were married. *At Five in the Afternoon*, Motherwell's first "Elegy" painting, is titled after Federico García Lorca's poem about the death of a bullfighter. *Black on White No. 4*, a single geometric figure suspended in space, signals the painter's transition to related figures, open and closed.

Robert Motherwell

At Five in the Afternoon

1948–49

casein and graphite on paperboard;

38.1 x 50.8 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Robert Motherwell

Helen's Collage

1957

oil, pasted papers, and charcoal on paperboard;

74.9 x 49.5 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

David Smith

Untitled

1951

ink on paper; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

David Smith

Untitled

1961

bronze; 14 x 29.2 x 12.7 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

David Smith

Untitled

1957

enamel and oil on paper; 58.4 x 63.5 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Robert Motherwell

Black on White No. 4

1968

acrylic and graphite on paper; 15.2 x 20.3 cm

New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation



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Gallery 7

During the early 1970s, following her divorce from Motherwell, Frankenthaler reinvented herself. Summers became a time for travel—to Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, and England. She leased a waterfront home with a studio in Stamford, Connecticut, and spent more time outside of New York City. Eventually, she purchased a home nearby on Shippan Point and built a new studio there. Some of the paintings from this period reflect this serene setting. Others portend another side of the painter's personality—liberated, tough, provocative.

From her living room, Frankenthaler had a clear view of Long Island Sound. Being near the water, as she had been for many summers in Provincetown with Motherwell, was comforting. Seascapes joined landscapes as the basis for new abstract paintings—tonal and atmospheric. As monochromatically uniform as *Ocean Drive West #1* appears, awash in cerulean blue, thin passages of white offset by prismatic lines activate the surface.

A series of “strip” paintings from the mid-1970s evoke the vertical ascent of an urban setting. The directional white bands that bookend *Plexus* open the surface like vents. These also compress the painting's center—clouds of delicately sponged and brushed color. Frankenthaler's strips hum with the same erratic energy as the banners in *The Human Edge*.

Mornings is one of a flurry of images resembling geologic formations or somatic cavities. Strokes of black and red marker, like errant jabs, dart across oceanic white foam.

Helen Frankenthaler
Mornings
1971
acrylic and marker on canvas; 294.6 × 185.4 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Ocean Drive West #1
1974
acrylic on canvas; 238.8 × 365.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Heart of London Map
1972
steel; 221 × 63.5 × 209.6 cm
The Levett Collection

Helen Frankenthaler
Plexus
1976
acrylic on canvas; 289.6 × 228.6 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler on *Ocean Drive West #1*:

“[The painting] was done there [at Frankenthaler's studio on Ocean Drive West, Shippan Point, Stamford, Connecticut] . . . On Ocean Drive West you are always staring at horizon lines... There are hazed-out parts of Long Island across the Sound, parts of it can be visible, [other] parts not. I wasn't looking at nature or seascape but at the drawing within nature—just as the sun or moon might be about circles or light and dark.”

—HF in Frankenthaler: A Paintings Retrospective, 1989.

Gallery 8

Entering middle age is a rite of passage for anyone. For Frankenthaler crossing the midlife threshold meant confronting new realities. She knew that maintaining a presence in New York to see others' art and to conduct business was important. She also knew that spending more time away from the city, close to the water, was not only calming but essential. It was a question of balance. She found ways to have both, painting all the while.

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Frankenthaler's respect for the history of art, nurtured early on in Paul Feeley's classes at Bennington College, never ceased. From Paleolithic caves to Monet's water lilies, she drew from art of the ages, and during the late 1970s and 1980s, found renewed inspiration in paintings by Titian, Velasquez, Manet, and Rembrandt. Scrutinizing abstract details in old master paintings enabled Frankenthaler to cross a technical threshold into a tonal world of diaphanous veils, tinted grounds, subtle washes, and transparencies. She discovered another kind of space and light and brought these to bear in works like *Eastern Light*, *Cathedral*, *Madrid*, and *Star Gazing*.

Anthony Caro entered Frankenthaler's social arena in 1959, on his first trip to New York, and from then on remained one of her closest friends. It is a fitting tribute to see Caro's *Ascending the Stairs* in the same gallery as Frankenthaler's *Yard*. Caro's sculpture, completed after he and Frankenthaler attended a David Smith symposium at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., evolved piece by piece, weld by weld, in much the same way that Frankenthaler's *Yard* did. Both shared with Smith an empirical constructive approach that played out in real time.

Helen Frankenthaler
Yard
1972
steel; 109.2 × 68.6 × 96.5 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Cathedral
1982
acrylic on canvas; 179.4 × 304.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Anthony Caro
(New Malden, UK, 1924 - London, 2013)
Ascending the Stairs
1979–83
steel, sheet, varnish; 111.8 × 83.8 × 101.6 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Madrid
1984
acrylic on canvas; 162.2 × 295.9 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Eastern Light
1982
acrylic on canvas; 175.3 × 301 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Star Gazing
1989
acrylic on canvas; 181.6 × 365.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler on *Cathedral*:

"I started using [thick] paint in what I call "clumps" . . . as drawing itself in certain portions of a tinted canvas, treating the rest of it as if it were watercolor on paper, which is something I've done all my life. I think [that] bearing down on something because it is canvas and big and serious often gets in your way. [Better] to treat things as if they were important but dispensable."

—Pollock-Krasner lecture transcript, 1994.

Helen Frankenthaler on *Madrid*:

"I have always responded to the wonders of the natural environment. When I was a child, I used to take my mother to the window of my room in our apartment on the thirteenth floor in Manhattan, and have her look at clouds, because I was so mesmerized by what I could see out the windows, all the spaces and changes of nature."

—HF interview with Tim Marlow, May 2000, Connecticut.



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Helen Frankenthaler on *Star Gazing*:

“I always feel. . . I retain my origins [in] Cubism. And whenever I’m stuck. . . I feel, well, go back to the familiar . . . to a road you’ve traveled and something new will happen from there. That’s usually my way out. I see signs of it here in something like [those] rectangles.”

—Q&A with Andrew Forge, Yale Art Gallery transcript, 1993.

Gallery 9

By the 1990s Frankenthaler painted in two ways. One might coalesce all at once in a single session, with only minor additions—the breakthrough initiated decades earlier by *Mountains and Sea*. The other mode—what she called the “redeemed picture”—bore a more “worked-into or scrubbed surface, often darker, more dense.” The desired result, regardless of approach, was, a “beautiful picture” that looked like it had been “born at once, regardless of how many hours, or weeks, or years it took to make it.”

Frankenthaler never questioned why she painted or for whom. Expressing herself through art was something she had done since childhood. Making art channeled her emotional energy and kept her focused and stable.

Janus and *Yin Yang* commune like brother and sister. Sites for the confluence of opposites, both paintings share tinted grounds, layered surfaces, and transparent vectors. Some passages, rimmed with trails of fire or splattered with a spew of black dots, feel like thresholds to other galaxies, not unlike *Star Gazing* (in previous Gallery).

The Rake’s Progress and *Fantasy Garden* display a dense physicality, because the painter was experimenting with gel medium mixed with acrylic and manipulated with rakes, masonry trowels, spatulas, sponges, and wooden spoons. The energized surfaces of *Borrowed Dream* and *Maelstrom* (both in the next Gallery)—tough, edgy, recalcitrant—raise existential questions about the artist’s late work.

Helen Frankenthaler
Yin Yang
1990
acrylic on canvas; 146 × 284.5 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
The Rake’s Progress
1991
acrylic on canvas; 240 × 174 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Janus
1990
acrylic on canvas; 144.8 × 240.7 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Fantasy Garden
1992
acrylic on canvas; 242.6 × 179.1 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Video Room

The composite video explores Helen Frankenthaler’s career through moving and archival images from various sources. It is an opportunity to see and hear the artist speak about people and things that mattered to her.



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Gallery 10

Frankenthaler had always shifted seamlessly between painting on canvas and paper. Paper provided an alternative to canvas, one that was easier to manipulate and, if need be, discard. The dialogue between paper and canvas was also age contingent: when working on the floor became too physically demanding, the artist used large sheets of paper or canvas placed on flat surfaces elevated on sawhorses.

The paintings on paper that followed Frankenthaler's marriage to Stephen DuBrul in 1994 seem to celebrate a new lease on life, while honoring past relationships. Optimism, buoyed by calligraphic clarity, characterizes *Solar Imp* and *Cassis*—each of which incorporates colored rectangles stamped onto the paper with a wide sponge. In *Solar Imp*, the rectangles appear below two black forms, recalling figures that appear in numerous paintings and works on paper by Frankenthaler and Motherwell during their marriage. Frankenthaler never wavered in her dedication to beauty, even when other younger, more politically engaged artists dismissed it as “obsolete, meaningless.” Frankenthaler's vision of beauty embodied the human condition. Some of her most poignant late works, like *Southern Exposure*, feel like veils of time fleeting. Looking at *Driving East*, one might glimpse finality. Is the flickering light along the horizon ascending or descending?

There's every reason to be philosophical about growing old. “Over time, we're left with the best,” was how Frankenthaler summed up her pursuit of an art unencumbered by rules. Given a life fully lived, there was no reason to believe otherwise.

Helen Frankenthaler
Borrowed Dream
1992
acrylic on canvas; 214.6 × 275.6 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Solar Imp
1995
acrylic on paper; 198.1 × 151.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Maelstrom
1992
acrylic on canvas; 118.1 × 273.1 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Driving East
2002
acrylic on canvas; 132.4 × 207 cm
Toronto, Audrey and David Mirvish

Helen Frankenthaler
Cassis
1995
acrylic on paper; 154.3 × 198.8 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler
Southern Exposure
2002
acrylic on paper; 153.7 × 187.6 cm
New York, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation



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VIDEO DOCUMENTARY IN THE EXHIBITION

Within the exhibition, a short video is presented, produced by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in collaboration with the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, which explores Helen Frankenthaler's career through archival images and footage from various sources: an opportunity to see and hear the artist talk about the people and things that were important to her.

The video is also included until November 10, 2024, as part of the program *CONTROLUCE: STORIES OF BEAUTY*, a showcase of films and artist videos at Gucci Visions (Florence).

Below are some excerpts of the artist's words:

"I believe in tradition. In my case, my basic training—my heritage—was through Cézanne, the analytic Cubism of Picasso and Braque, Kandinsky, Miró, Gorky, Pollock and many of their peers, mentors, and satellites. I learned how to appreciate the Old Masters, the Quattrocento, the Renaissance, along with the work of my contemporaries. Sometimes for an artist, I think the aesthetic developments sneak in almost without notice, a subtle urgency, an unconsciously programmed surprise. There's a natural order."

"I first saw Jackson Pollock's paintings at a show he had at Betty Parsons in the fall of 1950. And I think what I particularly responded to was that there was an all at once, overall, this happened quality to it."

"I had to develop my own technique, but I think technique determines aesthetic as much as one's aesthetic determines a new medium. The making of them, controlling them, and the surprise from them is a gesture that I do best, feeling that the edges can spread and that I can manipulate the paint and the sides in relation to top, bottom, drawing, spilling, staining, tinting, with much more reach and fewer limits."

"Beautiful painting relies in large part on drawing with color. In a way, drawing is the secret of color because color that doesn't work in space is meaningless decoration."

"I think that once who has had the training and limits, in my case anyway of cubism, and you stretch out from that, instead of going further and further in, you are going further and further out, up, down, surface. Which doesn't mean that you give up depth and perspective, but that you are going out of the border and staying in and on the picture plane."

"I wanted my pictures to work in terms of surface, but also in depth. Playing with an ambiguity, when successful, is part of the *je ne sais quoi* magic that makes any picture work and gives a message."

"One cliché I use on myself all the time is that the one rule is no rules, and if you have real sense of limits, then you are free to break out of them, the end."



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HELEN FRANKENTHALER: BIOGRAPHY

12 December 1928

Helen Frankenthaler is born in New York City, the youngest of Martha Lowenstein and New York State Supreme Court judge Alfred Frankenthaler's three daughters. [1]



1. Helen Frankenthaler, in the center, with her family, 1933.

1946–49

She studies painting with Paul Feeley at Bennington College in Vermont.

1948

Frankenthaler makes her first trip to Europe. [2]



2. Frankenthaler and her friend Gaby Rodgers, Brussels.

1949

She graduates and returns to New York, where she has a studio.

1950

She begins a relationship with critic Clement Greenberg, who introduces her to New York School artists Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and David Smith. Adolph Gottlieb chooses her for a group show at the Kootz Gallery, *Fifteen Unknowns*.

1951

Frankenthaler is the youngest artist showing at the 9th Street Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture. She frequents Smith's home and studio in Bolton Landing, New York, and acquires *Portrait of the Eagle's Keeper* (1948–49). [3]



3. Frankenthaler with David Smith's *The Hero* (1951–52, in progress), Bolton Landing.

She has her first solo show at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York. [4]



4. Frankenthaler installing her first solo exhibition at Tibor de Nagy Gallery.

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1952

In October, she paints *Mountains and Sea*, her first work using the “soak-stain” technique. [5]



5. Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Sea*, 1952. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art. Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, New York, on extended loan to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

1953

Frankenthaler’s second solo show includes *Mountains and Sea*. Greenberg shows the painting to Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland; both begin experimenting with the soak-stain technique.

195

In the summer, Frankenthaler and Greenberg visit Peggy Guggenheim in Venice and see the 27th Biennale, where David Smith is one of the artists representing the US. [6]



6. Frankenthaler and Greenberg, Piazza San Marco, Venice

1956

Frankenthaler’s *Trojan Gates* (1955) is purchased by the Museum of Modern Art.

1957

In December, Frankenthaler's work is included in a group exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery. She and Robert Motherwell attend the opening as a couple. [7]



7. Frankenthaler in her studio, New York, 1956, *Life*, 1957.

1958

Frankenthaler moves into Motherwell’s home on East 94th Street. [8]



8. *Untitled*, 1958, a valentine card Frankenthaler drew for Motherwell.

They wed on April 6 and honeymoon in Spain and France. They rent a villa in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and each set up studios. [9]



9. Frankenthaler and Motherwell in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France.

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1959

Frankenthaler begins showing her work at the André Emmerich Gallery. She and Motherwell rent a house in Falmouth, Massachusetts, for the summer. Their guests include Smith and Mark Rothko. [10]



10. Motherwell, Frankenthaler, Mark, and Mell Rothko in Falmouth.

Anthony Caro travels to the US for the first time and meets Frankenthaler, Motherwell, and Smith.

1960

Frankenthaler's first retrospective, curated by poet Frank O'Hara, opens at the Jewish Museum, New York. [11]



11. Frankenthaler and O'Hara at the opening of the exhibition

In the summer, Frankenthaler and Motherwell travel to Paris and then to Alassio, where they set up studios.

1961

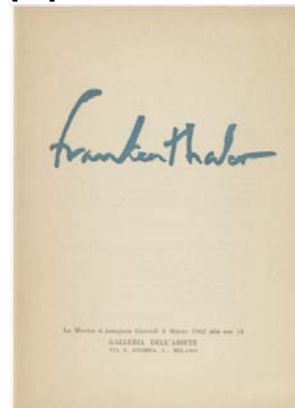
Frankenthaler and Motherwell summer in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and establish studios. They spend most summers in the '60s there. [12]



12. Frankenthaler and Motherwell in Provincetown, 1961.

1962

She begins experimenting with acrylic paints. Her first solo show in Italy opens at Milan's Galleria dell'Ariete. [13]



13. Title page of the catalogue.

1963

She visits Anna Truitt's first solo show at the André Emmerich Gallery. Shortly after, the artists begin a correspondence that lasts decades.

1964

Frankenthaler is included in the *Post-Painterly* group exhibit curated by Greenberg at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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23 May 1965

Smith dies in a car crash. Frankenthaler writes: "We'll never recover from the shock of losing him. We miss him terribly." [16]



14. Frankenthaler and Smith, Bolton Landing.

1966

Frankenthaler, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jules Olitski are chosen for the US Pavilion at the 33rd Venice Biennale. Caro is one of the British Pavilion's five artists. [15]



15. Frankenthaler and Anthony Caro, Torcello, Venice

1969

Frankenthaler's paintings retrospective opens at the Whitney Museum of American Art, before moving to the Whitechapel Gallery, London, the Orangerie Herrenhausen in Hanover, and Kongresshalle Berlin [16]



16. Frankenthaler, Kongresshalle, Berlin

Frankenthaler is the only woman included in *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940–1970* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1970

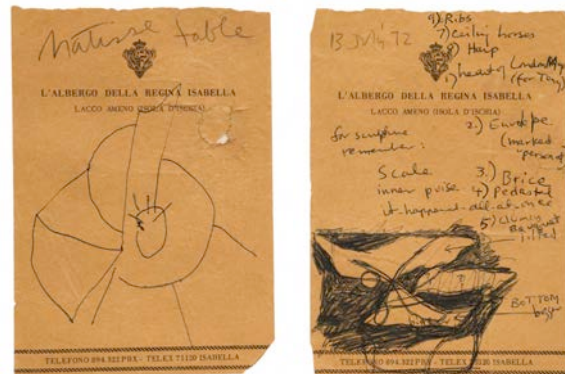
Frankenthaler moves her studio to East 83rd Street.

1971

Frankenthaler and Motherwell divorce in the summer of 1971. Frankenthaler continues to live at East 94th Street.

1972

Barbara Rose's monograph of Frankenthaler's paintings is published. In July, Frankenthaler vacations on Ischia.



17. Sketches for *Matisse Table* on the letterhead of the Hotel Regina Isabella in Lacco Ameno, Ischia, 1972.

She produces ten sculptures at Caro's London studio, some using materials from Smith's Bolton Landing that Caro acquired. [17]



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1973

She produces her first woodcut, *East and Beyond*, at ULAE.

1974

She summers at Shippan Point, Stamford, Connecticut, overlooking Long Island Sound, and establishes a studio. [18]



18. Frankenthaler in her studio, Shippan Point.

1977–79

Director Perry Miller Adato produces a documentary entitled *Frankenthaler: Toward a New Climate*. She purchases a home on Shippan Point and establishes a studio there.



19. Kenneth Noland, Frankenthaler, and Clement Greenberg at Saddle Rock Road, Shippan Point, 1979.

1984

Frankenthaler designs sets and costumes for Michael Corder's ballet *Number Three*, performed by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, London, in spring 1985.

1985

Frankenthaler's works on paper retrospective opens at the Guggenheim Museum.

1988

She completes *Gateway* with Tyler Graphics Ltd., a three-panel screen made with prints and bronze panels cast at the Tallix Foundry, Beacon, New York. [20]



20. Frankenthaler at work on *Gateway* at Tallix Foundry, 1987.

1989

Helen Frankenthaler: A Paintings Retrospective opens at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and moves to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

John Elderfield's monograph, *Frankenthaler*, is published.

1991

She leaves her New York studio after 21 years. Her new studio on Saddle Rock Road, at Shippan Point becomes her primary painting space. [21]



21. Frankenthaler's Saddle Rock Road studio, Shippan Point, Stamford, Connecticut, 1991.

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Helen
Frankenthaler
Foundation



HELEN FRANKENTHALER PAINTING WITHOUT RULES

FIRENZE PALAZZO STROZZI

27.09.2024 | 26.01.2025

1992

She begins to show her work with Knoedler & Company.
She meets Stephen DuBrul in July. They wed in 1994.

1993

Frankenthaler's retrospective of prints opens at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and travels in the US and Japan.

1997

Frankenthaler and DuBrul move from Shippan Point to Darien, Connecticut.

1998

After Mountains and Sea: Frankenthaler 1956–1959 opens at the Guggenheim Museum. Frankenthaler leaves the house on East 94th Street, choosing Darien as both her home and her studio.

2001

She is awarded the National Medal of the Arts.

2004–10

Health issues impair Frankenthaler's ability to continue painting. Numerous exhibits of her work are held in the US and internationally.

27 December 2011

Frankenthaler dies in Darien at the age of 83.

Photo credits

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AN EXHIBITION, A PLATFORM OF EXPERIENCES

Palazzo Strozzi pays special attention to its visitors and offers numerous activities designed to make the art experience engaging for everyone. Here below a selection of our activities. For full program and reservation: www.palazzostrozzi.org / prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org / T. +39.055.2645155

Guided tours

Visits to the exhibition through the works by Helen Frankenthaler.

For groups, reservation required: € 100, max 20 people.

For individual visitors (only in Italian): free with the ticket entrance on Mondays at 18.00, on Sundays at 15.00, with the support of Unicoop Firenze. Reservation required.

Inside Painting

A series of special guided tours of the exhibition (only in Italian) led in dialogue by a museum educator and an expert painting conservator. Free with the exhibition ticket. Reservation required.

Kit Teenager

Interpretative material with in-depth explanations and ideas for discussion designed for teens to explore the show alone or with friends. The Kit can be downloaded on the website palazzostrozzi.org.

With the support of Fondazione Hillary Merkus Recordati.

No Grown-ups

Thursday 23 January, from 17.00 to 21.00: a special evening where high school students from the Metropolitan City of Florence lead relay-style guided tours, presenting the exhibition's artworks to their peers. The activity is free with the exhibition entrance ticket. With the support of Fondazione Hillary Merkus Recordati.

Tours and workshops for schools

Conversational tours and creative experiences for discovering the art of Helen Frankenthaler. Available in multiple languages for all school levels; the contents of the activity are tailored to suit the various different age groups. € 3 per student, tour of the exhibition; € 4 per student, tour + workshop; € 80 university student groups (max. 20 people). The cost of admission to the exhibition is not included. Reservation required.

Workshops for families

Activities in Italian for children and adults to discover the exhibition together and experiment with the languages or art. Free with exhibition admission ticket. Reservation required.

- *Watching the Clouds*: every Saturday at 10.30 for families with children aged 3 to 6

- *Fantastic Stains*: every Sunday at 10.30 for families with children aged 7 to 12

Family Kit

A kit for adults and children aged five and over to visit the exhibition together and play with art. The Family Kit indicates a pathway among the exhibits with suggestions for observing and curiosities. Available free of charge at the ticket office and online at palazzostrozzi.org. With the support of Ferrovie dello Stato.

Access Programs

A programme of activities designed to make Palazzo Strozzi a venue for coexisting with differences. Projects for autistic young people (*Nuances*), for people with Alzheimer's (*With Many Voices*), disabilities and mental distress (*Connections*), tours in Italian Sign Language (*Signs and Words*) and a dance pathway devoted to the wellbeing of people with Parkinson's (*Free Flowing*).



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THE MARIA MANETTI SHREM EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Opened in 2022 with **more than 40,000 people attending over 700 activities in the last 2 years**, the Maria Manetti Shrem Educational Center has become the heart and the starting point for all the Palazzo Strozzi's activities for schools, families, young people, and adults, with a particular focus on accessibility.

These spaces have been specifically designed to allow as many people as possible to experience Palazzo Strozzi's exhibitions through numerous activities aimed at transforming the encounter with art into an opportunity where the expressive potential of each participant is valued, and **where everyone can feel involved**.

The Maria Manetti Shrem Educational Center is a space where it is possible to forge new relationships between individuals and their families, as well as create an interdisciplinary field of work and discussion among artists, museum educators, healthcare professionals, and experts from various disciplines. Fundamental part of the activities are those dedicated to **inclusion and accessibility**, for autistic young people (*Nuances*), for people with Alzheimer's (*With Many Voices*), disabilities and mental distress (*Connections*), tours in Italian Sign Language (Signs and Words) and a dance pathway devoted to the wellbeing of people with Parkinson's (*Free Flowing*).

"The art of living is the art of giving. I am truly pleased to support the arts and culture and, in particular, make access possible for the most vulnerable people. Art can help people by bringing them together through a holistic vision." (Maria Manetti Shrem)

Born in Florence, Maria Manetti Shrem moved to San Francisco in 1972. She became instrumental in the internationalization of some of the world's most iconic fashion brands, such as Gucci and Fendi.

Maria and her husband, Jan Shrem, have long contributed philanthropic support in the U.S., Italy, and the UK to over 50 charitable programs through 35 foundations. In the U.S., these include UC Davis, the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, the San Francisco Opera, Festival Napa Valley, the San Francisco Symphony, SF MoMA, KQED, Cal Performances, ArtSmart, SF Film, and hospitals such as UCSF (neurology, orthopedics) and CPMC (cardiology). In Europe, Maria is one of the principal patrons of the King's Foundation, Royal Drawing School, Friends of the Louvre, the Venetian Heritage, the Italian National Trust (FAI), Palazzo Strozzi Foundation, Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Museo 900, Mascarade Opera, and the Andrea Bocelli Foundation.

The Manetti Shrems are co-founders of the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis, which opened in 2016 to complete a longtime art legacy that took 60 years in the making. The museum's collection includes works from major California artists such as Wayne Thiebaud, William T. Wiley, Robert Arneson, Roy De Forest, and Manuel Neri. The extraordinary architectural design of the museum was listed in *ARTnews* as "One of The World's 25 Best Museum Buildings of the Past 100 Years."

Maria has received numerous recognitions as an outstanding cultural ambassador between the U.S. and Italy and an unparalleled world-class arts philanthropist. Amongst them, in 2019, the President of Italy, Sergio Mattarella, bestowed upon her the *Grand Officer of the Order of the Star of Italy*. In 2022, the Mayor of Florence, Dario Nardella, awarded her with *The Keys of the City* for her inspiring role model of patronage, following in the steps of the Medici's legacy. The City and County of San Francisco proclaimed *June 22 - Manetti Shrem Day for Philanthropy*. The Festival Napa Valley bestowed upon the Manetti Shrem couple the inaugural *Angels of The Arts Award*. On a celebratory event organized by SF Opera and SF Symphony, "Maria--50 Years in America", the San Francisco City Hall rotunda exceptionally lit up in the Italian flag colors to honor her unparalleled philanthropic activity. Maria was recognized with the highest community honor, *The Spirit of the Opera Award*. She is the 2023 UC Davis Medal recipient—the highest honorary degree presented by the University of California system to individuals in recognition of extraordinary contributions that embody the university's vision—as the major philanthropist of the arts at UC Davis.

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27.09.2024 | 26.01.2025

Helen Frankenthaler: Friends and Affinities

A special panel discussion on the occasion of the exhibition

27 September 2024, 17.00-19.00

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi

In conjunction with the major exhibition *Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules*, Friday 27 September at 5 p.m. in the Sala Altana, Palazzo Strozzi is hosting a special panel discussion titled ***Helen Frankenthaler: Friends and Affinities***. This event will explore Frankenthaler's life and work, her friendships with kindred artists, and her reception in Europe—both past and present.

Moderated by Douglas Dreishpoon, Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Catalogue Raisonné and curator of the exhibition, the panel will bring together distinguished scholars, curators, and writers from Europe and the U.S., each with a deep understanding of Frankenthaler's impact on modern and contemporary art. The discussion will delve into the artistic connections and creative influences that shaped Frankenthaler's practice over her six-decade-long career.

Participants include Michael Brenson, a prominent writer, lecturer, art historian, and former *New York Times* art critic, who offers a rich understanding of the intersections between Frankenthaler's work and that of her contemporaries. Mary Gabriel, author of *Ninth Street Women*, brings valuable context to Frankenthaler's achievements, focusing on the pivotal role women artists played in the development of modern art. Finally, Daniel Zamani, Artistic Director of the Frieder Burda Museum in Baden-Baden, Germany, and curator of *The Shape of Freedom: International Abstraction after 1945*, will contribute his expertise in postwar abstraction, enriching the discussion of Frankenthaler's place within the broader narrative of 20th-century art.

This panel is an excellent opportunity to hear from leading voices in the art world and gain deeper insights into the life, work, and legacy of Helen Frankenthaler.

The event will be held in English. Free entrance subject to availability.

The event will be video-recorded and will be available online in the following days on the YouTube channel of Palazzo Strozzi. Reservation recommended.

Panelists:

- **Douglas Dreishpoon** (Moderator), Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Catalogue Raisonné and curator of *Helen Frankenthaler: Painting Without Rules*.
- **Michael Brenson**, writer, lecturer, art historian, and former art critic for *The New York Times*.
- **Mary Gabriel**, author of *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art*.
- **Daniel Zamani**, Artistic Director of the Frieder Burda Museum in Baden-Baden, Germany, and curator of *The Shape of Freedom: International Abstraction after 1945*.