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FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM

This is the first monograph devoted to the American painter Francis Cunningham.

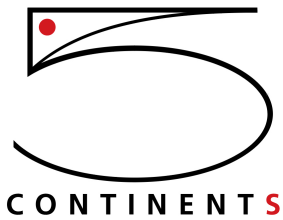
While the art world was turning its eyes towards abstract art and action painting, Cunningham's interest in figurative art and the human form never waned. This is the underlying reason for his lukewarm reception, keeping him out of the limelight, although this is not to say his art was second rate. In a sense, this marginal status was a blessing in disguise, enabling Cunningham to broaden and develop his thinking on his personal artistic sensibility and thus on the central role played by "color-spot" painting, the technique borrowed from his master Edwin Dickinson, and on the importance of teaching, of which he had personal experience at the New Brooklyn School of Life, Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture and at the New York Academy of Art.

The book chronicles Cunningham's development from his earliest, small, and mostly abstract canvases characterized by large color fields suggesting landscapes, to his later figurative work, in which the study of anatomy takes over, only to give way, as if coming full circle, to paintings containing large empty spaces and a drastically reduced number of elements.

Most of Cunningham's paintings are large and depict nude subjects, sometimes portrayed alone and sometimes in triptychs. A feature of his works from this "second period" is what might be called their "vertical" nature, which contrasts strongly with his very last, mostly still life paintings, which stand out for their horizontal orientation. The human figure has virtually disappeared and Cunningham seems almost to have returned to the preoccupations of his youth.

The artist's many facets are explored in essays by art historians and art critics, including Christopher Knight, Edward Lifson, John Walsh, and Valentina De Pasca, as well through the reminiscences of his favorite model, Regina Hawkins-Balducci.

Francis Cunningham is an American figurative painter known for working across three genres – nude, landscape and still-life —and for being an influential master instructor. He co-founded the New Brooklyn School of Life, Painting, Drawing & Sculpture, Inc. (1980–1983), and the New York Academy of Art in 1983 with sculptor Barney Hodes and Stuart Pivar. Cunningham has had one-man shows in Washington, D.C., Chicago and New York City, where he exhibited at the Waverly, Harry Salpeter and Hirschl & Adler galleries. He has also been featured in solo shows in Stockholm and Copenhagen, and participated in group exhibitions extensively throughout the U.S. He currently maintains studios in Manhattan and in the bucolic western part of Massachusetts, known as the Berkshires. Cunningham graduated from Harvard College in 1953. After two years as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps, he attended the Art Students League of New York (1955–1959), where he studied drawing and anatomy with Roberty Beverly Hale and painting with Edwin Dickinson. He taught for four years at the Art Students League of New York. Among other awards, Cunningham received the Artist Equity's Benjamin West Clinedist Medal (2003) for "the achievement of exceptional artistic merit". He is the recipient of a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant (1973). He was elected Academician of the National Academy



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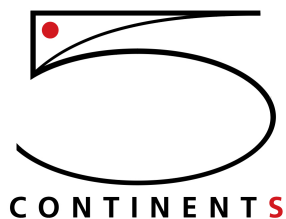
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of Design in 1994. He was a Fellow with the Bogliasco Foundation (1997). His work has been purchased by The Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Christopher Knight is chief art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*. A three-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Criticism (1991, 2001 and 2007), Knight received a Lifetime Achievement Award in Art Journalism from the Rabkin Foundation in 2020, and the 1997 Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism from the College Art Association, the first journalist to win the award in more than 25 years. Knight has appeared on CBS' "60 Minutes," PBS' "NewsHour," NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered" and CNN and was featured in the 2009 documentary movie, "The Art of the Steal." He is the author of two books: "Last Chance for Eden: Selected Art Criticism, 1979-1994," published in 1995 by Art Issues Press, and "Art of The Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection," published by Rizzoli in 1989 and reissued in 2003. Prior to joining the staff of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1989, Knight served as *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* art critic (1980-89), as assistant director for public information at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1979-80) and as curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (1976-79). From 1986 to 1989 he also served as a program adviser to the Lannan Foundation and to the Archives of American Art regional office in Los Angeles. Knight was a Ketcham/NEA Fellow at the Toledo Museum of Art (Ohio) in 1974-75.

Edward Lifson is an award-winning writer on art, architecture, design, and culture. He created and hosted a public radio show on the arts called "Hello Beautiful!" Lifson was also a U.S., foreign, and war correspondent, and domestic and foreign bureau chief for National Public Radio. He managed communications for the Pritzker Architecture Prize. Lifson was a 2007 fellow in the USC/Annenberg Getty Arts Journalism program, a 2008 Loeb Fellow at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, a 2009 Annenberg Fellow at the University of Southern California, and a 2010 Visiting Fellow at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. He grew up in Chicago and lived and studied for many years in Paris, Florence, Berlin, London, and Boston. He was interim director of the Shanghai-based American Academy in China; and currently teaches at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism in Los Angeles. Lifson served as chairman of the Mies van der Rohe Society in Chicago.

John Walsh is Director Emeritus of the J. Paul Getty Museum. He served as Director from 1983 until October 2000. He is the author of many articles and catalogues on Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century, and of several books including "Jan Steen, The Drawing Lesson", and "The J. Paul Getty Museum and Its Collections: A Museum for the New Century". In the field of contemporary art, he has organized exhibitions of the painter Sheridan Lord and the painter-printmakers Ed Ruscha and Leon Kossoff; he was curator of an exhibition of the video artist Bill Viola in 2003-04, "Bill Viola: The Passions," and editor/co-author of a book of the same title. After earning a B.A. in English from Yale in 1961, he took M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in art history from Columbia. For two years he was Lecturer and Research Assistant at the Frick Collection in New York. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art between 1970 and 1975 he served as Associate for Higher Education, then as Curator in the Department of European Paintings while teaching part-time at Columbia. As a freelance art historian and teacher, Walsh was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 2002, and since 2003 he has been teaching intermittently as Visiting Professor of the History of Art at Yale, as well as training graduate students at the Yale University Art Gallery. In 2003-'04 he gave the Andrew Carnduff Ritchie



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Lectures at Yale, "Works of Art and the Work of Architecture." Since 2013 he has given many more public lectures, all available on YouTube. Walsh serves on the boards of the Yale University Art Gallery and the Hammer Museum.

Valentina De Pasca is a historian of ancient art. She obtained a PhD in art history and medieval archaeology from Milan University with a thesis titled "Intercultural Exchanges and Interactions with the Eastern Mediterranean Area in Lombard Art in Italy (16th–17th Century): the Case of the Disk Fibulae," which she defended in 2018. She also specializes in late antiquity and early medieval art, and compiled a study on the influence of Eastern Mediterranean style on the valuable artifacts unearthed in the Central Italian necropolis of Castel Trosino and Nocera Umbra. In 2019 her first illustrated children's book, *Pomodori da scartare*, was published by Edizioni Gruppo Abele.

Regina Hawkins-Balducci is the life model who Francis Cunningham has painted most. A trained dancer from Seattle, Washington, she was given a scholarship to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York. After performing with Ailey, she joined Crowsfeet Dance Collective, a socially conscious dance company. When a car accident ended her dance career, she turned to life modeling. She has modeled at Parsons School of Design, School of Visual Arts, Pratt Institute, Yale University, Sarah Lawrence College, Society of Illustrators, Century Association, International Center of Photography and Arts Students League of New York.