

FRANCESCO CLEMENTE

JK's Walk

This second solo exhibition in Madrid by Francesco Clemente (b. Naples, 1952) takes place three years after the show dedicated to his series *New York Muses*. In this instance the Italian painter has created large-scale watercolours, which displayed a clear relation to his earlier works, most of them using the same technique although in general on a less ambitious scale than his most recent paintings, and which offer a survey of his work over the last twenty years.

The group of works which gives the exhibition its title make up part of a single composition structured around seven areas, signalling the preoccupations which have marked his work during recent decades in his search for the eternal within the contemporary. As an archaeologist of consciousness, Clemente seeks to bring together elements that for him belong to the same complex and universal reality: tradition and imagination, antiquity and modernity, East and West, spirituality and sensuality, past and present, individual and collective memory.

Using his experiences and memories as the basis for the different layers that make up his powerful images, he creates a richness and depth that owes much to the eclecticism of the stylistic sources for his personal mythology. He seeks to distance himself from literal borrowing, so that in taking iconographic motifs from different cultural traditions, rather than appropriating them for himself he prefers to give them a new currency, and through their fresh context they acquire new meaning in his own artistic imagery. Thus we may come across elements from the history and popular sculpture of India, the Romantic symbolism of William Blake, or references to the purely classical roots of Western culture.

This variety is matched by his technical experimentation, which often places him at the limits of traditional artistic practice and is reflected in the different materials, media and painting supports that he uses: oil, pastel, watercolour, fresco, tempera on paper or canvas, sculpture, printed works. Choosing a roll of large-format paper to register both the trace of the brushstroke and of his own movement over the support, he puts the creative process into relief, giving a sense of continuity and dynamism, as well as the space in which it is created, and what that sense suggests. The vibrant and luminous colours, for which he has a particular instinct, seem to pulse on the paper's surface with an almost watery texture that harks back to the origin of life.

His liberal arts education in languages and classical literature, as well as architecture, together with his intellectual preoccupations, have led him to frequent collaborations with writers, and he has illustrated books or texts by artists such as Allen Ginsberg, Robert Creeley, John Wieners and René Ricard. At the same time, he has also worked together with other contemporary artists of the stature of Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat on projects that stand alongside works created in co-operation with the Indian craftsmen he meets on his regular visits to Chennai (Madras).

Since the mid-eighties Francesco Clemente's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions across Europe, America and Asia. Worthy of particular note are those held at the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin (1985), at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (1991), at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (1995), at the Guggenheim Museums in New York (1999) and Bilbao (2000), and at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (2004). In 2011 he presented the project *Palimpsest* at Frankfurt's Schirn Kunsthalle, followed by *The Tarots (I Tarocchi)* at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence.

For further information or for images, please contact us.

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