

PRESS RELEASE

First Exhibition to Explore Indian Influences in Artist Francesco Clemente’s Practice Opens at Rubin Museum of Art in September 2014

Exhibition Marks First New York Retrospective of Artist’s Work in More Than a Decade and Features Series of New Sculptures Created for the Exhibition



New York, NY, August 21, 2014—The Rubin Museum of Art will present a major survey on the work of Francesco Clemente that illuminates the previously underexplored influence of Indian culture on the acclaimed artist’s oeuvre. On view from September 5, 2014 to February 2, 2015, *Francesco Clemente: Inspired by India* marks the first-ever exhibition dedicated to the work that Clemente created while living in India, an extended period of cross-cultural exchange that has shaped the artist’s creative vocabulary over the past four decades. Rarely exhibited works from Clemente’s early practice will be displayed alongside new sculptures created especially for the Rubin exhibition, highlighting Clemente’s continuing engagement with Indian artistic traditions.

Organized by Rubin Museum Assistant Curator Beth Citron, the exhibition features approximately 20 iconic works, including paintings, sculpture, and five fragile, large-

scale works on paper that have not been on public view in nearly 15 years. Together, the featured artworks represent important milestones and episodes in Clemente's engagement with the diverse cultures and communities of India and provide audiences with a narrative of the evolution of his practice. *Inspired by India* marks Clemente's first solo museum exhibition in New York in more than a decade, and is an opportunity to experience his work from a new perspective.

Since his first visits to India in the 1970s, Clemente has immersed himself in the daily experiences of India's local cultures, establishing collaborations with artisans and incorporating regionally diverse styles, mediums, and modes into his work. From massive Pop-inflected paintings that evoke Tamil signboards, to canvasses that draw on the erotic iconography of temples in the eastern state of Orissa, to recent large-scale sculptures created in the Rajasthani metalworking tradition, the impact of Clemente's travels in India are felt in the range and innovative quality of his practice.

"Clemente's travels throughout India inspired a rich and personal visual language that transformed ancient symbols, myths, and ideas into dreamlike landscapes and representations of animals and human figures. His work is rooted in his experiences with local craftspeople and the use of traditional and artisanal materials, exceptional as he developed this vocabulary at a time when many artists were focused on conceptual art and industrial production," said Citron. "The exhibition is an opportunity to explore the powerful impact of South Asian cultures on the work of leading, contemporary artists—reinforcing the importance of artistic activity emanating from this region on artists from across the globe."

Exhibition highlights include:

- ***Two Painters (1980)*** – one of Clemente's earliest large-scale paintings created in India, depicting two painters in a kind of existential combat;
- ***Four Corners (1985)*** – perhaps Clemente's most iconic large-scale work, produced in the style of Tamil signboards;
- ***Black Book watercolors (1989)*** – intimate representations that evoke the erotic imagery seen in temples in Orissa;
- Four new sculptures with metal bases that address themes and iconography from Clemente's earlier works on paper. For example, one of the sculptures features a partial painting of a moon, referring directly to the painting *Moon* in the exhibition, and another features the same Ouroboros serpent seen in *Hunger*. The relationship between these new works and the large-scale paintings reflect a generation of the artist's engagement with different sites and materials in India.

Related Programs

Clemente x 8

To further explore the chief motivations in his life and work, Clemente will take the to the Rubin stage eight times with eight personalities from a very different walk of life. Both Clemente and his guest will bring to the conversation a found object that will act as catalyst to a freewheeling conversation.

October 1, 7PM: cultural icon **Patti Smith**, \$55
October 5, 3PM: theater visionary **Robert Lepage**, \$45
October 7, 7PM: rapper-philanthropist **Nas**, \$45
October 8, 7PM: Clemente's spiritual teacher **Gelek Rimpoche**, \$45
October 22, 7PM: chef **Eric Ripert**, \$45
October 29, 7PM: architect **Billie Tsien**, \$45
November 5, 7PM: *The Sopranos* creator **David Chase**, \$45
November 9, 3PM: Oscar-winning director **Alfonso Cuarón**, \$45

Artists on Art

In conversation with curator Beth Citron, contemporary artists engage in informal dialogues about Clemente's work and their own in the exhibition gallery. Free.

Date TBA: **Julian Schnabel**
September 19, 6:15PM: **Jeni Spota**
September 26, 6:15PM: **Fred Tomaselli**
October 17, 6:15PM: **Philip Taaffe**
October 24, 6:15PM: **Sandeep Mukherjee**
November 7, 6:15PM: **David Salle**
November 14, 6:15PM: **Terry Winters**
November 21, 6:15PM: **Swoon**

My Formative Years

Clemente has selected ten films that have been formative in his life and work for Cabaret Cinema, the Museum's Friday night feature film series. Each film will be introduced by a notable guest, including Philip Glass (*Chappaqua*, October 24) and playwright Neil LaBute (*The Hired Hand*, November 14). Free with \$10 purchase during K2 Friday Nights.

September 26, 9:30PM: *Le Fleuve (The River)*

1951, Jean Renoir, France/ India/ USA, 99 min, English
Introduced by Pulitzer-Prize winning poet Vijay Seshadri

October 3, 9:30PM: Viridiana

1961, Luis Buñuel, Spain/ Mexico, 90 min, Spanish with English subtitles
Introduced by filmmaker Stella Schnabel

October 10, 9:30PM: Vivre Sa Vie

1962, Jean-Luc Godard, France, 85 min, French with English subtitles
Introduced by film director Ry Russo-Young

October 17, 9:30PM: Before the Revolution

1964, Bernardo Bertolucci, Italy, 105 min, Italian with English subtitles
Introduced by filmmaker Chiara Clemente

October 24, 9:30PM: Chappaqua

1966, Conrad Rooks, USA, 82 min, English
Introduced by composer Philip Glass

November 7, 9:30PM: Antonio Das Mortes

1969, Glauber Rocha, Brazil, 100 min, Portuguese with English subtitles

November 14, 9:30PM: The Hired Hand

1971, Peter Fonda, USA, 93 min, English
Introduced by playwright Neil LaBute

November 21, 9:30PM: The Holy Mountain

1973, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Mexico/ US, 115 min, English

November 28, 7:00PM: Salò, Or The 120 Days of Sodom

1975, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italy/ France, 116 min, Italian with English subtitles
Introduced by choreographer Karole Armitage

December 5, 9:30PM: Sacro GRA

2013, Gianfranco Rosi, Italy/France, 83 min, Italian with English subtitles

Francesco Clemente

Francesco Clemente was born in Naples, Italy, in 1952. After an early academic background in classical languages and literature, he briefly enrolled as an architecture student at the University of Rome in 1970. Throughout the 1970s, he exhibited drawings, altered photographs, and conceptual works across Europe. Since 1973 he has frequently resided and worked in India. In 1981 Clemente moved to New York City, where he currently lives with his wife. The artist has often engaged in collaborations, both in India with local craftsmen, and in New York with artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol, among others. He has published many works in conjunction with poets, including John Wieners, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Creeley, and Rene Ricard. Clemente's work has been the subject of numerous international exhibitions, including a comprehensive retrospective, Clemente, mounted by the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1999–2000), which traveled to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain (2000).

Beth Citron

Beth Citron is an Assistant Curator at the Rubin Museum of Art, where she has organized Modernist Art from India, a three-part exhibition series that explores the development of Indian art since the country's independence in 1947. She also organized *Candid - The Lens and Life of Homai Vyarawalla*, an exhibition celebrating India's first female photojournalist; *Living Shrines of Uyghur China: Photographs by Lisa Ross*; and *Allegory and Illusion: Early Portrait Photography from South Asia*.

Citron is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Art History Department at New York University, where she teaches a course on contemporary South Asian art. She completed her Ph.D. in the history of art from the University of Pennsylvania in 2009, with a focus on contemporary art in Bombay. She has contributed to numerous publications including ARTFORUM and ArtIndia, and she published a major scholarly article entitled "Bhupen Khakhar's 'Pop' in India, 1970 – 72" in the summer 2012 issue of ArtJournal.

About the Rubin Museum of Art

The Rubin Museum of Art's immersive environment stimulates learning, promotes understanding, and inspires personal connections to the ideas, cultures, and art of the Himalayas, India, and neighboring regions. Since its founding in 2004, the Rubin has welcomed more than 1.6 million visitors. Its outstanding collections of Tibetan, Chinese, Indian, Afghan, Bhutanese, Mongolian, Nepalese, and Pakistani art, which include photography, are complemented by a diverse array on stage conversations, concerts, and special events. The Museum's education, community, and access programming is dedicated to providing audiences of all ages and backgrounds with multidimensional experiences that foster dialogue and active engagement with the traditions and cultures of the Himalayas. The Rubin Museum's Café Serai and shop are also inspired by the region and serve as a natural extension of the gallery and programming experience.

Image credits (left to right):

Francesco Clemente, *The Four Corners*, 1985, Gouache on twelve sheets of handmade pondicherry paper joined with handwoven cotton strips, Private Collection; Francesco Clemente, *The Black Book*, 1989, Watercolor, Courtesy of the artist.

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