

LÉVY GORVY

LÉVY GORVY TO PRESENT A RETROSPECTIVE OF FRANCESCO CLEMENTE'S PASTELS IN LONDON

Francesco Clemente: Pastels

12 December 2019–15 February 2020

Lévy Gorvy
22 Old Bond Street
London W1S 4PY

Opening Reception: Wednesday 11 December, 6–8 PM

London—Lévy Gorvy is honoured to announce *Francesco Clemente: Pastels*, an exhibition illuminating Clemente's extraordinary creative synthesis of diverse aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual traditions. Curated by architect Bill Katz, a long-time friend of the artist, the exhibition is organised thematically, presenting Clemente's expressions of the body and mind through his extended commitment to the medium. Held from 12 December 2019 through 15 February 2020 at Lévy Gorvy's space in Mayfair, this retrospective will present four decades of Clemente's pastels, many of which have never before been exhibited.

Clemente has often turned to pastels to develop his eclectic visions of physical and metaphysical subjects. The medium is well-suited to the intensity of Clemente's compositions—unique for its brilliantly saturated colour, directness of line, and autographic immediacy. Over the past four decades, he has developed



polymorphic, unabashedly sexual imagery that invokes perennial cycles of life and death. Visualising humanity in figurative and mythological terms, he employs metaphor to bridge individual differences and to reveal intercultural aspects of our existence.

Opposed to regarding identity as fixed, Clemente portrays the self as both embodied and protean. From the anatomical transfigurations of *Navel* (1981) and *Naso* (1983) to the cosmological and animalistic imagery in the *Self-Portraits in White, Red, and Black* (2008), his self-portraits evidence the constant evolution of mental, physical, and spiritual states. By doing so, they present the artist grounded in the corporal form of his body and engaged in a tireless creative search for meaning.

Clemente's striking series of *New York Muses* (1993) feature close-cropped heads of women, the directness of their gazes and larger-than-life forms communicating a sense of mythographic

timelessness as figures of creative inspiration. Likewise, the artist's close relationships and frequent collaborations with poets are represented by portraits of Allen Ginsberg and Michael McClure. These compelling pastels also convey the fertile imagination of these individuals, expressing the depth of their friendship and the creative stimulus that they have provided the artist. The resonance of poetry for Clemente is developed further in his recent *Un Chant d'Amour* series (2015), which takes inspiration from Jean Genet's language and imagery.

Lévy Gorvy will publish a catalogue to accompany the exhibition, which will include texts by Carlos Basualdo and Raymond Foye. Poetry chosen by the artist and conceived as a 'playlist' will include poems by Gregory Corso, Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, Kabir, Vincent Katz, Octavio Paz, Rene Ricard, Patti Smith, Anne Waldman, and John Wieners—many of whom have collaborated with Clemente. In the same spirit of Lévy Gorvy's commitment to culture as a whole, this catalogue will celebrate the multifaceted experiences that emerge from the exchanges between visual art and poetry.

About the Artist

Born in Naples, Clemente now lives and works in New York, New Mexico, and India. Major retrospectives of Clemente's work have been held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1990); Royal Academy, London (1991); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1994); Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo (1994); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1999); Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (2002); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2004); Museo MADRE, Naples (2009); Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2011); and Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2014). Recent one-artist exhibitions have been held at MASS MoCA, Massachusetts (2015); Springs Art Center, Beijing (2016); Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (2018); Brant Foundation, Connecticut (2018); and Dallas Contemporary (2019). *Self-Portraits and Sirens* will open in June 2020 at the Albertina, Vienna, with another solo exhibition to be presented by the Moscow Museum of Modern Art in September 2020.



About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, in Mayfair, London, and in Central, Hong Kong. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates that it represents and offers a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. The gallery also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications. The Zürich office, Lévy Gorvy with Rumbler, offers bespoke private advisory services to collectors and institutions around the globe.

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Images: FRANCESCO CLEMENTE. *Drawings for Geography, North*, c. 1990s. Pastel on paper, 25 1/4 x 24 inches (64.1 x 61 cm). Collection of the artist, New York. Courtesy of Francesco Clemente Studio. Photo: Tom Powel Imaging. FRANCESCO CLEMENTE. *Self-Portrait in White, Red and Black II*, 2008. Pastel on paper, 40 3/16 x 26 3/16 inches (102 x 66.5 cm). Collection of the artist, New York. Courtesy of Francesco Clemente Studio. Photo: Tom Powel Imaging. FRANCESCO CLEMENTE. *Untitled*, 1994. Pastel on paper, 26 3/8 x 19 inches (67 x 48.3 cm). Collection of the artist, New York. Courtesy of Francesco Clemente Studio. Photo: Tom Powel Imaging.