

Francesco Clemente

Watchtowers, Gates and The Sea of Stories

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Blain|Southern Berlin

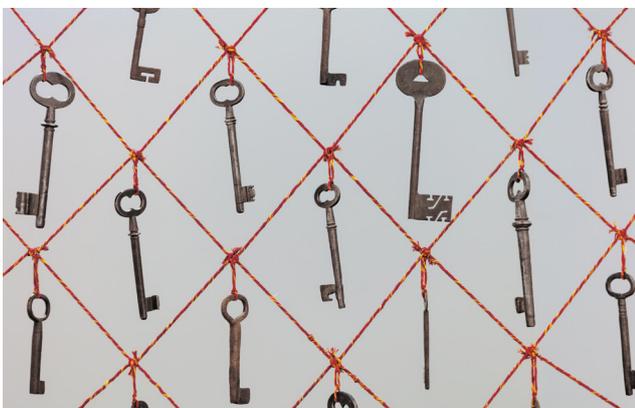


Equanimity (detail), 2017
Francesco Clemente: *Watchtowers, Keys, Threads, Gates* at Dallas Contemporary
Courtesy of the artist and Dallas Contemporary. Photo: Micah Welner

Blain|Southern Berlin is pleased to present *Watchtowers, Gates and The Sea of Stories*, a solo exhibition of recent works by Francesco Clemente (b.1952, Naples) and the first presentation of the artist's sculptures in Europe. The exhibition comprises *The Sea of Stories*, a monumental mural spanning the length of the gallery that will be created on site, and two bodies of sculpture created in collaboration with local artisans in Rajasthan.

Often described as a 'nomadic artist', Clemente first travelled to India in the early 1970s and continues to live and work between the subcontinent, Europe and the US. Influenced by India's traditions, symbolism and the artistic approaches of its artisans, Clemente has created a deeply personal visual vocabulary inspired by his experiences. Whilst celebrated as a painter, his lesser-known sculptural practice relates to the pictorial language of his paintings and works on paper. Every work is a confluence of different elements and motifs such as ladders, labyrinths, gates and keys which allude to transition, boundaries and spaces 'in between': earth and sky, the internal and external, and states of consciousness.

Watchtowers (2014-2019), is a series of sculptures cast in aluminium from everyday objects sourced in Rajasthan, which can be described as ladders which lead to platforms or altars. On these, objects resembling offerings or gifts have been placed on a higher level, "in order to avoid the flood to come" (Francesco Clemente). Evoking the seemingly precarious scaffolding seen all over India, each of the sculptures is characterised by an inherent balancing act. *Equanimity* (2017) resembles a scale which holds several sculptures of Krishna in varying sizes which unexpectedly counterbalance the two sides of the scales. In *Self-Portrait Watchtower* (2016), chains attach the eyes, ears, nose and mouth of the artist's head to concrete-cast bundles of rope anchored to the ground, creating a labyrinth on the ground.



Wall of Gates (detail), 2019
Courtesy of the artist and Dallas Contemporary. Photo: Kevin Todora

Wall of Gates (2019) is a group of eight freestanding metal frames, each with 97 vintage iron keys suspended within a network of votive string, which is traditionally given to worshippers at holy sites. The title, *Wall of Gates*, alludes to the paradox of a passage being blocked by a web of keys.

The Sea of Stories (2019) is a site-specific mural in which Clemente reinterprets the twelve signs of the zodiac, with each sign representing a gateway. Drawn directly onto the gallery wall by the artist, it is embellished in oxblood paint by muralists from Oaxaca, Mexico; a continuation of Clemente's long history of collaboration with other artists and artisans.

The exhibition tours to Blain|Southern Berlin from Dallas Contemporary, where it debuted in spring 2019.

Notes to Editors

About the artist

Francesco Clemente's work has been the focus of many international exhibitions including at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, UK (1983); the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, DE (1984); the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US (1985); the Art Institute of Chicago, US (1987) and Dia Center for the Arts, New York, US (1988). During the 1990s, surveys of his work were exhibited at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, US (1990); the Royal Academy of the Arts, London, UK (1990); Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR (1994) and the Sezon Museum, Tokyo, JP (1994). In 1999/2000, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Guggenheim Bilbao organised major retrospectives of Clemente's work.



The Sea of Stories [detail], 2019
Courtesy of the artist and Dallas Contemporary. Photo: Kevin Todora

Recent solo exhibitions include: Dallas Art Museum, TX (2019); The Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, US (2018); Springs Art Center, Beijing, CN (2016); Mass MoCA, Massachusetts, US (2015); The Rubin Museum of Art, New York, US (2014-2015); Palazzo Sant'Elia, Palermo, IT (2013); Uffizi Gallery, Florence, IT (2011); Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, DE (2011); Museo MADRE, Naples, IT (2009); Museo Maxxi, Rome, IT (2006); The Rose Art Museum, Massachusetts, US (2004); the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, IE (2004).

The Albertina Museum in Vienna and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art will host solo exhibitions of Clemente's work in 2020.

Clemente is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London, Berlin and New York. The gallery represents an expanding roster of international artists and is the exclusive representative of the estates of Lynn Chadwick and Avigdor Arikha. Recent exhibitions include: Ed Moses & Qin Feng, Herbert Zangs, Bernar Venet, Enrique Martínez Celaya, Abdoulaye Konaté, Joan Snyder and Bill Viola.

Blain|Southern
Potsdamer Straße 77-87
10785 Berlin

Tuesday to Saturday: 11am - 6pm
+49 (0)30 6449 31510
blainsouthern.com

For further information on the exhibition, please contact:

Honor Westmacott at Blain|Southern Berlin
+49 (0)30 64493 1510
honor@blainsouthern.com

Laura Callendar at Blain|Southern London
+44 (0)20 7493 4492
laura@blainsouthern.com