

JAMES COHAN GALLERY SHANGHAI

For immediate release

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# FRANCESCO CLEMENTE

## *THE CHINESE SHADOWS*

March 14 through April 13, 2014

Opening Reception: March 14, 2014, Friday, 6-8pm

Venue: James Cohan Gallery Shanghai

Address: 1F, Building 1, Lane 170 Yue Yang Road, by Yong Jia Road



FRANCESCO CLEMENTE 弗朗切斯科·克莱门特  
*Chinese Shadows - Red Ribbon IV, 中国影子-红丝带4*, 2012  
Watercolor on Chinese paper, mounted on silk 水彩, 皮纸  
33 3/16 x 64 15/16 inches; 84.2 x 165.0 cm

James Cohan Gallery Shanghai is pleased to present an exhibition by **Francesco Clemente**, *The Chinese Shadows*, opening on Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> and continuing through Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. This is the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery in Shanghai.

During the artist's first visit to mainland China in 2012, Clemente created a dynamic series of thirteen unique hand-painted monotypes, utilizing watercolor, gouache, and ink on traditional Chinese paper mounted to silk. Clemente, who is equally acknowledged as a master of various printmaking practices over the course of his career, occasionally engages printmaking technics to explore or further extend the ideas of serial imagery. He is also widely acclaimed and recognized for revitalizing the art of portraiture and, in particular self-portraiture, which the artist began to develop more intensely by the mid 1970s. For Clemente, the self-portrait is a means towards

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deeper introspection of the psychic imagination, reaching far beyond a formal or technical likeness. The self-portraits, as well as in the many portraits of others he has painted over the years, are essential to the understanding of artist's vision and personal cosmology. In *The Chinese Shadows* monotypes, Clemente has created a cohesive, sequential body of works that address the metaphysical or mythological self and the ancient Chinese philosophical principles of the universe *yin* (associated with the female, earth, dark, and cold) and *yang* (male, heaven, heat, and light) as a composite of the human spirit. Familiar motifs of Chinese life and culture are featured: flowing red ribbons, pomegranates suggesting small handheld lanterns, and four monotypes that feature the twelve heavenly creatures of the Chinese zodiac. The transformative juxtaposition between human and animal has been an ongoing theme the artist has continually explored throughout his career. Adhering to a defined palette of red, black and shades of gray, *The Chinese Shadows* exemplify the artist's astute awareness and knowledge of China's long traditions of both ink painting and supernatural storytelling.



FRANCESCO CLEMENTE  
弗朗切斯科·克莱门特  
*Sight* 视, 2013  
Watercolor on paper 纸本水彩  
16 x 12 3/16 inches; 40.8 x 31.0 cm

Also on view are selected watercolors that Clemente created in India, a place the artist has lived and worked since the early 1970s, as well as works made in New York and Los Angeles. Featured among this group is *A Story Well Told* (2013), consisting of twenty small watercolors, each measuring 29.6 x 21 cm; 11 3/5 x 8 1/4 inches, that depict the legendary Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne, an erotic tale of transformation, vengeance, unrequited love, and failed desire.

Francesco Clemente, born in 1952 in Naples, Italy, is widely recognized as a defining contemporary artist for the past four decades who has established an extraordinary, singular pictorial language that draws on timeless symbols, mythologies, cultures, and philosophies. The diversity of the artist's chosen mediums—paintings, frescos, watercolors, pastels, collage, and gouache—and the themes and subject matter of his works have been deeply informed by Clemente's nomadic artistic life.

Since the early 1970s the artist has continually traveled between Italy and India where many of the works in this current exhibition were made. He continued to travel to India, after settling in New York with his wife and family in 1980, where Clemente quickly became a vital member of the community of artists and writers. He collaborated with close friends, notably the poets Allen Ginsberg and Robert Creeley, and in 1981, reacting against a wave of anti-painting sentiment among critical circles, Clemente initiated a series of collaborative paintings with Jean-Michel

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Basquiat and Andy Warhol. The openness to collaborating with other artists combined with his experimental practices contributed to Clemente becoming a rising star of the international art world. His works were soon exhibited at both Documenta 7 in 1982 and the Venice Biennale in 1988, 1993, and again in 1995. Major solo museum exhibitions followed at the Nationalgalerie Berlin (1984), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1994), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1999), MADRE Museum, Naples (2009), and more recently at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2011) and Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2011). It has been said that Clemente's conviction in his role as an artist is a kind of universal witness of consciousness. He came of age as an artist during a time when the call for a renewal of consciousness was the anthem of the day, which also points to the origins of his artistic inclinations: "The original impulse in my life as an artist," Clemente has said, "was to write and to break from writing into image." He has since then pursued arresting and indelible images which bring about an increased realization of the need to break with established notions of Self in order to expand awareness. This imperative, which continues, and his unflinching interest in philosophy and spirituality took Clemente to India for the first time in 1973. He would spend more than half of the 1970s, at irregular intervals, in the southern city of Madras, present day Chennai, and traveled extensively throughout the country. It was not long before Clemente set up a studio and had begun collaborating with local artists and exchange ideas with members of the Theosophical Society there. It can also be said that Clemente's work and life continues to expand on multilayered records of experience, each place having its own influence on the works created at any given location, becoming an embarkation point for an ongoing visual memoir that encompasses simultaneously a profoundly personal and yet universal journey.



FRANCESCO CLEMENTE 弗朗切斯科·克莱门特  
*Bittersweet Truth* 苦乐参半的真相, 2005  
Watercolor on paper 纸本水彩  
18 x 24 inches; 45.7 x 60.9 cm

For further information or image requests please contact Angela Li at [ali@jamescohan.com](mailto:ali@jamescohan.com) or contact the gallery at +86 21 54660825. Gallery hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Monday by appointment.