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FRANCESCO CLEMENTE "TWENTY YEARS OF PAINTING: 2001-2021"
PRESENTED BY VITO SCHNABEL AT THE OLD SANTA MONICA POST OFFICE

November 18, 2021



Installation view of Francesco Clemente "Twenty Years of Painting: 2001 - 2021" Photo by Elon Schoenholz; Courtesy Vito Schnabel Gallery

Twenty years of painting. Twenty years of ecstatic, radical sensuality. A romantic paroxysm of western and eastern imagination with a tinge of Italian anarchism. Francesco Clemente *20 Years of Paintings: 2001-2021*, the artist's first solo show in Los Angeles in nearly 20 years—presented by Vito Schnabel Gallery at the Old Santa Monica Post Office—is a love letter to the medium, to the brush stroke, to paint, to materiality, to size, scale, and beauty itself. In one large painting, easily the *pièce de résistance*, an ancient Grecian helmet is haloed by a bright red glow, a formidable metaphor for the psychosis of frantic empires, symbolized by a single, imposing hieroglyph of war, protection and survival. It connotes an impending sense of decline, but also hope in triumphant renewal. Painted during the pandemic, the work might also be something of a glorified self-portrait. The title, *Our Backs to the Sea Far From Our Native Land 4-3-2021* is a reference to the *Ilyad*, but also to Homer's *Odyssey*, the epic that depicts the hero Odysseus' ten-year journey home from

fighting the allegorical Trojan War, which lasted a preceding ten years. Twenty years of war and return, twenty years of painting. The painter as mythic hero, Clemente's *20 Years of Paintings* is more opus than oeuvre, that feeling of the quiet moment just after a symphonic crescendo, when the last note dies out and there is a pure kind of silence. Clemente proves that he is an artist of the body and the mind, a rare twin quality belonging to only a few painters before him. His paintings proof of the artists existential pain and exuberance and exhilaration. Francesco Clemente "*Twenty Years of Painting: 2001-2021*" will be on view until January 16 at Vito Schnabel Gallery at the Old Santa Monica Post Office, [click here to make an appointment](#).