

The Old Santa Monica Post Office Re-Opens as Art Gallery

NYC gallerist Vito Schnabel debuts an exhibition by painter Francesco Clemente in the 1938 Moderne-style building.

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Vito Schnabel (left) and Francesco Clemente at the old Santa Monica Post Office in front of the works *Dormiveglia V* and *Dormiveglia IV*. Courtesy of Elon Schoenholz

The old Santa Monica Post Office on Fifth Street, which closed in 2013, is now an art space.

For the coming months, New York-based gallerist Vito Schnabel will be presenting shows in the grand Depression-era structure, which has 15,000-square-feet of exhibition space. The 1938 Moderne-style building is currently owned by Alexander Dellal of U.K.-based Allied Commercial Exporters Ltd. (A.C.E.), which bought it in 2018 from David Ellison's Skydance Media for \$30 million.

A.C.E. also owns the historic Venice Post Office, which it purchased in 2019 for \$22 million, and is developing it for an undisclosed use; the building had previously been owned by producer Joel Silver, who had planned to turn it into offices. Schnabel's first Santa Monica show, which runs through Jan. 16, is Francesco Clemente: Twenty Years of Painting, 2001-2021; it spotlights the 69-year-old Naples-born, New York-based painter's colorful, large-scale works that are replete with dream-like symbolism.

Says Francesco Clemente, "Every image should be memorable but also should give a sense that the image is transitory," because, he adds, "the spirit world is not some kind of refuge where you can finally anchor yourself to something permanent. No way – it's impermanent, just like everything else."

The Clemente show also includes new watercolors; a self-portrait of the artist with pink antlers sprouting from his head; and portraits of writers Fran Lebowitz and Toni Morrison. It's Clemente's first solo show in Los Angeles in nearly two decades.



Francesco Clemente's *Initiation*, 2006, oil on canvas, 78 x 68 1/8 inches (198.1 x 173 cm). © Francesco Clemente; Courtesy the artist and Vito Schnabel Gallery