Francesco Clemente & The Art Market

By

Renee Cullivan

Submitted to the Department of Art History
School of SUNY Purchase
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College State
University of New York

May, 2020

Sponsor: Titia Hulst

Second Reader: Elizabeth Guffey

It's not uncommon to hear Francesco Clemente named among other famous artists of the 1980's. David Salle, Julien Schnabel, and Jean-Michelle Basquiat are all included in the circle of sensational, successful artists. But Clemente's journey as an artist ended differently than his acclaimed friends'. With recognized artistic talent and the unusual momentum of the booming art market of the 80s, Clemente's success was established, but the integrity of it, stardom wise, was compromised somewhere along the way. By the turn of the century going into 2000, Clemente would no longer be a part of the art market big leagues like Schnabel and Salle. So, what happened?

Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat & Francesco Clemente, New York, 1984 © Beth Philipps, Courtesy Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, Zürich

This paper will explore Francesco Clemente's career within the art market. First I will provide a basic background of the artist as his beginnings in the art world are spotty and somewhat confusing. I will cover the timeline, which will be split geographically between the three countries most critical to his career. I will then transition into highlighting articles and literature published in the United States concerning the artist and his contemporaries relating to notable exhibitions and events throughout the 1980s. From there I will track Clemente's

trajectory in the secondary art market using auction records dating back to 1985. I will also be tracking another neo-expressionist, Julian Schnabel, including a brief background for him as well as auction records to compare the fluctuations and other important differences. This comparison will be important to my research in finding how Clemente's market looks different from at least one of his contemporaries and when or if a change began to happen. At the end of the paper I will outline my conclusions of where the art market took Clemente's professional art career.

Early Career

Francesco Clemente, an Italian-born painter found himself at odds like many in his generation with the uneasy political climate in a country that was plagued by terrorism between the far right and far left between 1960 and 1980. In 1970, at the age of eighteen, Clemente left Naples, where he was born, to attend a university in Rome to study architecture. Prior to attending university Clemente had painted for his own pleasure as a way to find balance in his life. Instead of seeing the degree through, he decided to take an extended trip to India in 1973 – the first of many. This trip solidified his calling to be an artist.

Clemente's ability to travel frequently gave him somewhat of an advantage when it came to his work. A formative trip early in his career to Afghanistan with Italian painter Alighiero Boetti, someone Clemente also considers his mentor, in 1974 was an experience that lent imagery and concepts to his paintings for the rest of his career. Returning to Italy he had his first notable exhibition in 1975 at Gian Enzo Sperone in Rome. Few details about this show are available except for its listing on the website of Mary Boone, Clemente's current art dealer. Other galleries and organizations that have shown Clemente's work also mention this first

exhibition making it clear that this is where Clemente's professional career in art began. Following this debut, he had exhibitions in Italy and other parts of Europe.

In 1977, the artist returned to India for an entire year. His experiences in this country further shaped his imagery and concepts for the rest of his career to date. He then returned to Italy for the second time, where Clemente felt unplaced in the art scene despite being a notable member of the Transvanguardia movement. His feelings of displacement were a result of the uneasy political times Italy was experiencing. He again decided to leave Italy and took an extended trip to India that he considered more as a move.[1] The artist traveled frequently and exhibited his work in The Netherlands, Switzerland, England, Italy and New York. Interestingly enough, there were no exhibitions located in India for all of Clemente's career found within my research. This shows that India was clearly a place for him to create and meditate his work. According to a recent article in Forbes by Natasha Gural, "his work gained global attention"[2] when he participated in the 39th Venice Biennial in 1980.

Early Exhibitions

No details were found on the extent of art dealer Gian Enzo Sperone and Clemente's relationship, but the exhibition records show that Clemente was given solo exhibitions six times between 1975-1980 at the Gian Enzo Sperone Gallery in Rome. It can be assumed these were successful exhibitions because Sperone then brought Clemente's work to New York where he

[1] Clemente, Francesco, et al. *Francesco Clemente: an Interview with Francesco Clemente by Rainer Crone and Georgia Marsh*. Vintage Books, 1987. In the interview Clemente states that he left India with works for a show in New York, but did not talk about when he left Italy for India.

[2] Gural, Natasha. "Explore India In Francesco Clemente's Cross-Cultural Journey Through 'Contradictory Reality'." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 21 Nov. 2019.

and his two gallery co-owners, Angela Westwater, and Konrad Fischer gave Clemente his first exhibition in the U.S. in 1980. Meanwhile the same year, Sperone gave him yet another exhibition at his independent gallery in Rome. In 1981 Clemente traveled from India to the U.S. for a group show at Sperone Westwater Fischer Gallery in New York City. This was Clemente's first trip visiting the U.S. and described America as "a completely different civilization" and quickly takes a liking to the city. Accompanying him were two other members of the Transvanguardia group from Italy, Sandro Chia and Enzo Cucchi. The American art critic Hilton Kramer encouraged his readers to visit the trio's exhibition:

> It isn't that American art is now in any way being devalued. There is certainly no sign of that, and there is no sign, either, that New York is in any danger of losing its place as the art capital of the Western world. But European artists, some of whom spend a good deal of time in this country now, are finding a warmer reception for their work than was true, say, in the late 1960's and early 70's. In part, this is a reflection of the more open, pluralistic character of the art scene today. But it also has something to do with the quality of what these Europeans are doing in their art.
> ……..
> Mr. Clemente's is a representational art much occupied with bizarre images and mysterious scenarios. Naked figures and fragments of the body abound in his paintings and pastels. Often the imagery is grotesque, the color lurid and the emotion heated in the manner of Northern European Expressionism. And while it is fundamentally to the Expressionist tradition that Mr. Clemente's paintings belong - this is itself a new development in Italian painting, and one that encompasses a number of the artists with whom Mr. Clemente has been closely associated - Expressionism is by no means the only tradition that has shaped his work.[3]

The article by Hilton Kramer titled "Expressionism From Italy Arrives" published in *The New York Times* provided a welcoming introduction of the artists to the city. This article is one of the first to include details about Clemente and his work in the context of the city. The

[3] Kramer, Hilton. "ART: EXPRESSIONISM FROM ITALY ARRIVES." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 June 1981, www.nytimes.com/1981/06/05/arts/art-expressionism-from-italy-arrives.html?searchResultPosition=1.

established art critic's piece pointed out the arrival of the young European artists finding a suitable place for themselves within the New York art scene and market. Kramer is one of the first American critics to write about Clemente, Chia and Cucchi with excitement.

After the group exhibition closed, Grace Glueck wrote in the *The New York Times* describing Clemente as "already famous" from his success in Italy with the Transvanguardia movement. She went on to discuss how sales for galleries had revived since the lull of reductive painting which wasn't for everyone. Clients reemerged excited for the revival of painting which focused more on accentuating brush strokes with light, shadows and details as opposed to the more flat, geometric style of painting in the minimalism movement. Their enthusiasm can be considered the beginning of the 1980's art market frenzy.[4]

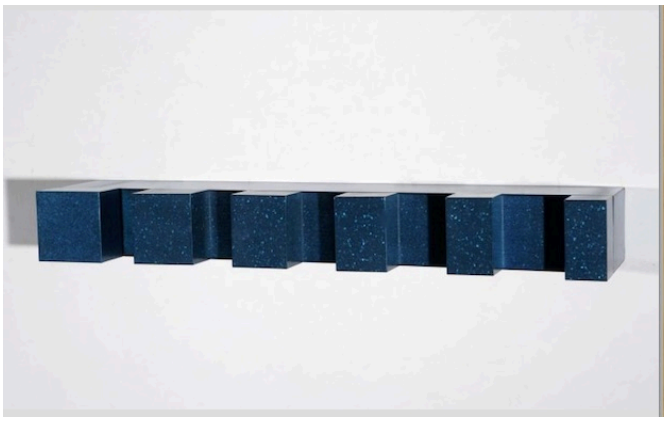
Minimalism to Neo-Expressionism & A Time of Transition

To gain a better understanding and perspective of this transition of art movements both Kramer and Glueck discussed in their articles it is helpful to look at Tate Modern's explanation of the Minimalist and Conceptual movement of the 1960s and 1970s. As the museum explained: "Both movements challenged the existing structures for making, disseminating and viewing art and argued that the importance given to the art object is misplaced and leads to a rigid and elitist art world which only the privileged few can afford to enjoy"[5] To expand on this explanation,

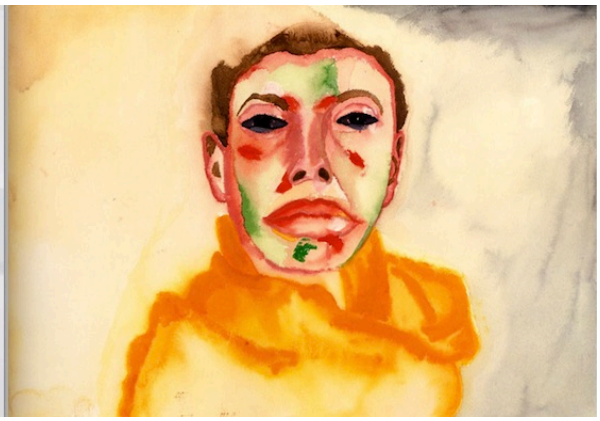
[4] Glueck, Grace. "FRESH TALENT AND NEW BUYERS BRIGHTEN THE ART WORLD." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 18 Oct. 1981, www.nytimes.com/1981/10/18/arts/fresh-talent-and-new-buyers-brighten-the-art-world.html?searchResultPosition=8.

[5] Tate. "Minimalism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed March 30, 2020. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/minimalism.

Minimalist artists were trying to pay attention to the presence of the object. The works did not show the hand of the artists and were often made from metals providing an industrial look. The Guggenheim Museum lends their own commentary on the movement stating that "In Minimal art what is important is the phenomenological basis of the viewer's experience, how he or she perceives the internal relationships among the parts of the work and of the parts to the whole…"[6] By stripping down the objects to their core, the viewer could experience them for what they were rather than for what was desired of them. Minimalist artists had turned away from gestural painting and focused on the true shape and form of objects. From this point in art history, we quickly arrive in a very different place in the new decade as art, politics and American culture all began to quickly shift. As minimalism came to an end, the artists who displayed a much more expressive form of painting were being highlighted in the press as a breath of fresh air.



Donald Judd, *Untitled,* 1967-1969.



Francesco Clemente, *I,* 1982.

[6] www.guggenheim.org/artwork/movement/minimalism. Accessed April 9, 2020.

The 1980s were a time of political and social transition: Jimmy Carter gave way to Ronald Reagan, the Hippie movement came to an end and "Yuppies" – young urban professionals – replaced them. The horror of the AIDS epidemic, which affected the arts disproportionally, shook the country and AIDS activists demanded response from the government that had been slow in coming. Considering these developments, there were sure to be changes in how people expressed themselves from how art was being made to how it was being bought. The first work relating to what the art world is now familiar with as AIDS art was made in 1981. From this moment, artists close to the epidemic began rolling out jarring depictions of what AIDS looked like for those battling it.[7]

Despite a recession between 1981-82, it is clear that some stability was offered to the economy through the Reagan administration, especially for the wealthy. What people now refer to as Reaganomics (trickle-down economics) was implemented, giving tax breaks to the wealthy. With the wealthy often being major players in purchasing art, more comfortability was offered to the market as the economy recovered. In 1975 the DOW closed with an average price of 802.89. by 1985 the DOWs closing price average was 1,327.99 and by 1987 it was 2,277.53.[8] These prices show just how much changed economically in the new decade.

[7] Douglas, Sarah. "Is This the First AIDS Artwork?" *ARTnews.com*, ARTnews.com, 18 Nov. 2019, www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/is-this-the-first-aids-artwork-4953/.

[8] "Dow Jones - DJIA - 100 Year Historical Chart." *MacroTrends*, www.macrotrends.net/1319/dow-jones-100-year-historical-chart.

Nature of Clemente's Work

Clemente's work envelopes the characteristics of "true painting" in relation to the return of painting as a medium in the 1980s. His oeuvre includes works with several different mediums including pastels, oil, fresco, watercolor, and textiles. His watercolors are impressive evoking a sense of spontaneity with how the paint travels on its own, yet he executes precise, controlled lines when necessary. Watercolors are a difficult medium to work in because the paint bleeds so uncontrollably, so his ability to work in such large scales, with some works up to twelve feet wide, is an incredible feat. Other bodies of work that require particular skill are his fresco paintings, a method most famously used during the Italian Renaissance. Fresco painting involves applying wet plaster and pigment onto a surface, only being able to work until the plaster dries, the artist has to carefully choose one section to do at a time. Clemente being a self-taught painter is especially remarkable considering these difficulty levels of these mediums. Overall, the work has a distinguished spirituality stemming from his time in India. This spirituality is presented through interesting concepts such as images of himself picking his nose, which appears to be silly and playful while suggesting the orifices of a human lead to one's inner psyche. These works are juxtaposed with paintings connecting to European antiquity with iconography from the Greco-Roman period such as skulls and hearts. Clemente is a self-educated intellectual with an interest in philosophy, often having his work refer to Marxist thinkers such as Guy Debord. One body of work, textile flags, Clemente included embroidered quotes from Debord's *Society of the Spectacle.* The artist also collaborated with poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Robert Creely where Clemente would provide images to accompany the literature.

Clemente is popular for challenging his viewers with imagery that stimulates personal reflection. In addition to the intellectual efforts that go into the work, the self-taught painter has

been allotted many kudos given the scale of materials used as well as the obvious technical capability.[9] So many art enthusiasts in New York were craving expressive, thought-provoking artwork like his.

New York City

The 1980s was a time where art, friendships and partying all collided into success more than ever. It can easily be argued that success is about who you know in the art industry and Clemente and his wife, Alba, knew everyone. By 1982 Clemente and Alba along with their two young daughters moved to New York. They declared the city only one of their permanent residencies, along with their homes in India and Italy. The two quickly made close friends with popular artists of the city. The Clementes often went clubbing and hung out at spots in TriBeCa like The Mudd Club and Paradise Garage where they met many of Clemente's soon-to-be contemporaries.

In a 2003 interview with Brooks Adams, Clemente says the first friends he made in the city were David Salle and Julien Schnabel.[10] Both Salle and Schnabel were popular artists belonging to the Neo-Expressionism movement. Clemente quickly began making works in his new NoHo studio and also found his way to fruitful collaborations with other artists and poets such as pop artist Andy Warhol, Neo-Expressionist painter Jean-Michael Basquiat, and poets Allen Ginsberg and Robert Creely. Throughout the decade Alba ended up becoming a muse for so many artists around the city. Her work with

[9] My general knowledge of Clemente's painting techniques, contexts and materials come from my time spent as a Docent during his solo exhibition at The Brant Foundation in 2018.

[10] Adams, Brooks, and Brooks Adams. " '80s Then: Francesco Clemente Talks to Brooks Adams." Artforum (U.S.A.) 41.7 (2003): 58–260. Web.

Warhol, Schnabel, Katz and more further solidified relationships. A quote from Clemente in a 2013 interview for an article published in the UK publication underscores just how popular Alba was with other artist and why:

> A muse opens the door [....] And each door is particular to an individual. Each artist sees himself in his muse. So Alex Katz paints Alba for her style. Julian Schnabel paints her because he doesn't understand her. Robert Mapplethorpe saw her ambiguity. David Seidner portrayed her out of nostalgia for a woman of character. Basquiat painted Alba out of affection, and Kenny Scharf out of friendship. Agnes Martin said she admired her glamour and Joseph Beuys her simplicity. I paint her because I love her.[11]

Exhibitions & Collaborations

In early January 1983 Clemente had his first solo exhibition at the internationally renowned Whitechapel Gallery in London. This is the first show that displayed Clemente's twelve-part series 'The Fourteen Stations' that were painted in New York between 1981-1982.[12] Both the show and series proved successful and the paintings are still requested for exhibitions today. The Whitechapel exhibition is considered of major importance to Clemente's career. That same year Clemente was given his first solo exhibition at Mary Boone Gallery. The next year he would continue to solidify his resume with five more notable shows both abroad and in New York (see Exhibit 1).

In 1983 The Swiss dealer Bruno Bischofberger encouraged Clemente to collaborate with other artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol. The gallerist first recommended the

[11] Slater, Lydia. *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 1 Apr. 2013, fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG9958749/Alba-Clemente-interview-a-life-on-canvas.html.

[12] Tate. "'Midnight Sun II', Francesco Clemente, 1982." *Tate*, 1 Jan. 1982, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/clemente-midnight-sun-ii-t03551.

collaboration to Basquiat and suggested a three-person collaboration with Warhol and Clemente. Bischofberger recalled the beginnings of the collaboration as follows:

> Jean-Michel knew and respected Clemente, whose studio was only two blocks away from Jean-Michel's. In the following years he became great friends with him and his wife Alba.
> […]
> On my next visit to New York I suggested the whole project to Andy Warhol and also to Francesco Clemente. Both found it interesting and surely a new challenge and soon started on their work.
> […]
> Between September 15 and October 13, 1984, I showed the group of fifteen works at my Zurich gallery in an exhibition entitled *Collaborations – Basquiat Clemente Warhol*, with a publication of the same name. In all works on canvas Warhol used a technique of the silkscreen that he had been using since 1962. In two of the works he repeated the first panel, which had been done by Basquiat and Clemente, five times in the same size using silkscreening. In three of the works Basquiat also used a silkscreen.

There is no evidence found of how this collaboration faired with the public and collectors at the time and there are no articles found in *The New York Times* archives showing and press for the event either. However, there is an interesting piece in Bischofberger's recollection about the collaboration between Basquiat and Warhol about a year later where the two decided to work together without Clemente or Bischofberger.

An unprecedented event in the world of contemporary art happened in 1985 when Clemente was given solo exhibitions at three different galleries simultaneously. The Sperone Westwater Gallery, Leo Castelli Gallery, and Mary Boone Gallery held the shows in April. All three galleries were highly desired among artists at the time. Not everyone considered it a wise career move. John Russell of the *New York Times*, for example, commented at the time:

> In itself, [Clemente's triple exhibition] was a venture much debated. Almost everyone would like to show in those particular galleries. Who was Clemente to tie them up for his own sole self? Though now much hankered after as a brevet of charisma, fecundity and universal genius, the multiple exhibition can also be a form of professional suicide.

The critic went on to praise each individual show for their uniqueness and noting that none of the three overlapped in vision, so to visit all three would have been a new experience with each show. Yet, Russell pointed out the exhibitions could also be detrimental to Clemente's career. The overexposure from the three high-profile shows could lead to a lack in the perception of the exclusivity of an artist (a known source of value for collectors), hence Russell's strong wording of "professional suicide". However, the dealers may have felt it was appropriate because of each exhibition's significant differences, showing Clemente's range in talent, vision and medium.[13] The exhibitions marked a major moment in the artist's career as they coincided with the boom of Neo-Expressionist painting in New York. Clemente was one of the handful of artists heavily promoted and desired.

Leo Castelli Gallery, Installation view, Francesco Clemente Exhibition.

[13] Russell, John. "ART: TRIPLEHEADER SHOW OF FRANCESCO CLEMENTE." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 Apr. 1985, www.nytimes.com/1985/04/05/arts/art-tripleheader-show-of-francesco-clemente.html?searchResultPosition=1.

The exposure generated by the three shows at these particular galleries undoubtedly made for more sales, but unfortunately the nature of the business does not allow us to know anything for certain. One thing we can look at are auction house records, but Clemente's initial climb in the market would not show up in auctions until about 1986. Early career artists' works are typically being sold from dealer to collector in order to keep control of prices and to keep the work in the hands of valued collectors. It isn't until later on, in some cases just months to a year, when those works will start to show up in auctions as people decide to re-sell or if a dealer is ready to offload some work themselves, which unfortunately is never a good sign for the artist. Even the auction records don't disclose the purchasers of the work, so further investigation of specific collectors is not possible, but there is the ability to do some general tracking of sale dates and prices to see when an artist starts to gain popularity.

Julian Schnabel & Francesco Clemente

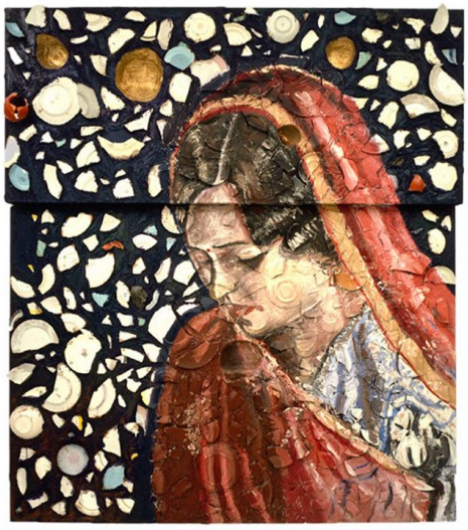
When examining Clemente's career, looking closely at another living artist whose popularity grew alongside Clemente will be helpful. Julian Schnabel's market will be a good comparison for this because his popularity with the public has grown steadily up to today, unlike Clemente in certain respects. By doing this, it is possible to see the similarities and differences and ask ourselves what moment in the market made Clemente depart from his successful contemporaries.

It is important to note that in no way has Clemente's career been unsuccessful. The artist continues to be a very well known, respected painter selling works and having exhibitions. The purpose of this research is to find out why he did not transcend into stardom along with Schnabel, Koons or others alike. My reasons for choosing Schnabel are because both he and

Clemente have been represented by Mary Boone, are of similar age and also belonged to the Neo-Expressionist movement in New York. However, Schnabel's differences from Clemente are also of interest.

Julian Schnabel was born in New York City, but spent his most formative years (1965-1973) in Houston, Texas. He graduated with a BFA from the University of Houston and then moved to New York where he participated in the independent study program at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Following the independent study he traveled throughout Europe and was inspired by architect Antonio Gaudi's mosaics in Barcelona. Drawing from this inspiration, Schnabel made his first plate painting. These works of broken crockery situated on a canvas along with paint to depict a portrait or allegorical scene would become his most famous contributions to the Neo-Expressionist movement.

Julian Schnabel, *The Death of Fashion,* 1978.



Julian Schnabel, *Portrait of a Girl,* 1980

His first solo exhibition was held at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston when he was twenty-five years old. His next two solo shows were held in New York at Mary Boone Gallery. There he debuted his distinguished plate paintings upon returning from Europe in 1979. The shows were held in February and then October, a rare and unprecedented circumstance considering shows are almost always given no less than a year apart, sometimes even two years.[14] Just as there was a reason for Clemente having three shows at once, there is also an explanation for Schnabel's phenomenon: his first show ever sold out before it had even opened. Thanks to Boone's unbelievable marketing skills and Schnabel's ability to make people gravitate towards him, this was an unbeatable duo. The decision to give the sensational artist another show the same year was likely a no brainer for the two trend-setters. With work that popular there was certainly a sweet spot with overexposure – the ability to give those who missed out a second chance.

Schnabel has had a reputation in the art world as being somewhat boastful concerning his own work. As Jerry Saltz recalled that very year, 1979, when Schnabel had those two exhibitions: "Julian Schnabel shows plate paintings at Mary Boone Gallery, makes everyone crazy with his ambition, self-centered pronouncements, high prices, sell-out shows, waiting lists and magazine coverage. The first time oil paint is smelled in New York galleries in years."[15] This is a perfect example of the influence Schnabel sent ringing throughout the New York art scene.

---

[14] "Julian Schnabel " About." *Julian Schnabel RSS*, www.julianschnabel.com/about.

[15] *The New York Canon - Artnet Magazine*, 23 Apr. 2008, www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/saltz/saltz4-23-08.asp.

Grace Glueck highlighted the artist's fame and personal "quirks" surrounding himself and his work, offering more insight to the nature of Schnabel:

> Mr. Schnabel, who sees his work as "driving people crazy; they don't know what to make of it," has unquestionably earned his place in the big, booming art world of today…. True, Mr. Schnabel in person, as full of rhetoric as his paintings, tended to be a self-appreciator; unlike the retiring heroes of Minimalism, he talked, impressing himself and his views on art worldlings he met with an awesome self-confidence that sometimes left them on the ropes. Nevertheless, his robustious imagery and exuberant self-confidence made him a natural for the kind of mythmaking the art world was ripe for.[16]

As asserted the article, Schnabel was persuasive and self-indulgent in referring to himself.

While Schnabel's work deals with history and mythology, he is also known for breaking down barriers between figuration and abstraction. Meanwhile, Clemente has been producing work that is deeply associated with the human condition and building bridges between different people concerning culture, religion, background and location. While Schnabel's work is also related to history, culture and religion, the key difference between the two artists is the sense of connecting people and bringing them together. The discourse between the artists concerning themselves is vastly different. Glueck points out the art world was "ripe" towards a rhetoric such as Schnabel's. A notable factor when considering what art-goers and collectors were drawn to at the time. The economic and social changes in and outside of the art world can be an explanation as to why collectors and enthusiasts were so excited about Schnabel. This transition from Hippies to "Yuppies" was sure to have Schnabel connecting more to the young business

[16] Kramer, Hilton. "ART: EXPRESSIONISM FROM ITALY ARRIVES." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 June 1981, www.nytimes.com/1981/06/05/arts/art-expressionism-from-italy-arrives.html?searchResultPosition=1.

professionals able and willing to spend money on art. It is very possible Clemente's quiet demeanor missed the mark for what people of the new decade were desiring.

This personality difference didn't affect the relationship between the two. Gleuck points out that Schnabel and Clemente fall under the same group of notable Neo-Expressionists of course, but are also close friends. As Schnabel's fame grows, and Clemente's as well, it had become public knowledge that the two artists respected each other's work and Schnabel's personal art collection included a fresco among many other works by Clemente.

Charles Saatchi

For many well-known artists of the 80s, Charles Saatchi is a major part of their story – including Clemente and Schnabel. The British advertising mogul, co-founder of Saatchi & Saatchi and major art collector had been behind the scenes making big moves in the art world. He's known for buying artworks in large quantities – and off-loading works in large quantities. When it came to buying art it seems Saatchi took strategic approaches to his acquisitions, even though when asked about buying art for investment he plays coy as if everything in his collection was purely for his own aesthetic pleasure.

Saatchi was on the board and a patron of places like Whitechapel Gallery and Tate Gallery giving him a voice when it came to exhibition planning. Author Chin-Tao Wu of the book *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s* explains some of Saatchi's finessing in order to uplift his personal collection concerning the works of both Schnabel and Clemente:

> Despite Saatchi never having served on the Tate board, he was once on the Committee of the Partrons of New Art, a committee of which he was the driving

> force when it was first established in 1982, and whose membership in those days included many collectors and nearly all the London art Dealers. In the same year, the Tate Gallery organised the first exhibition of Julian Schnabel's work in collaboration with the Patrons; nine out of the eleven paintings in the show were owned by Charles Saatchi and his then wire Doris.
>
> While this and other similar manoeuvres by Charles Saatchi in the early eighties do not readily lend themselves to investigation, his activities at around the same time at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, of which he was a trustee, provided clearer evidence of how he was able to take advantage of the various interlocking positions of power he held. During his trusteeship, his advertising company was actually making donations of several thousands of pounds to the Whitechapel to supplement their public funding. Shortly *after* the Gallery decided to mount an exhibition of Francesco Clemente's paintings, but before the exhibition went on show, Saatchi bought up 12 Clementes for his private collection. There is, this time, no doubt about the timing, since this sequence of events was explicitly confirmed by the Whitechapel's then director, Nicholas Serota.

Saatchi's strategic plays in the market were undoubtedly pointing to his eventual plans to offload the works for a profit. For Schnabel and Clemente, this was an exciting time as their careers were growing stronger with notable exhibitions and Saatchi, a contemporary art tastemaker was making their markets only more desirable.

The time eventually came when Saatchi began selling. In 1989 the collector did a major offloading of works. Grace Glueck from *The New York Times* reported that the dealer sold fifteen works by Schnabel and fourteen works by Clemente. The two took the biggest hit of works sold out of the group listed including David Salle (seven works sold), Bill Jenson (two works sold) and Malcolm Morley (six works sold).[17] There were no major stories highlighting the effect that these sales made on these particular artists' markets, but there is a such story that was followed

[17] Glueck, Grace. "A Leading Art Collector Is Selling, And the Market Wonders Why." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 Nov. 1989, www.nytimes.com/1989/11/23/arts/a-leading-art-collector-is-selling-and-the-market-wonders-why.html?searchResultPosition=1.

in the press concerning Saatchi's decision to sell the work of Sandro Chia. An interview exchange with Saatchi offers more insight on the situation:

Interviewer:

> Do you feel a sense of personal responsibility towards the artists whose work you collect? Artists who benefited from your patronage in the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as Sean Scully and Sandro Chia, felt an acute sense of betrayal when you offloaded their work in bulk onto the market. In the case of Chia, you have been accused of having destroyed his career. Do you regret how you handled these artists' works?

Saatchi:

> I don't buy art to ingratiate myself with artists, or as an entrée to a social circle. Of course, some artists get upset if you sell their work. But it doesn't help them whimpering about it, and telling anyone who will listen.
>
> Sandro Chia, for example, is most famous for being dumped. At last count I read that I had flooded the market with 23 of his paintings. In fact, I only ever owned seven paintings by Chia. One morning I offered three of them back to Angela Westwater, his New York dealer, where I had originally bought them, and four back to Bruno Bischofberger, his European dealer, where, again, I had bought those. Chia's work was tremendously desirable at the time and all seven went to big-shot collectors of museums by close of day.
>
> If Sandro Chia hadn't had a psychological need to be rejected in public, this issue would never have been considered of much interest. If an artist is producing good work, someone selling a group of strong ones does an artist no harm at all, and in fact can stimulate their market.[18]

While Saatchi speaks on this subject in confidence and makes compelling points, I am still not convinced of his claims to not have had major persuasion in an artists' market. Saatchi's actions were so consequential that other collectors of Clemente's and Schnabel's works would have to be naïve to not pay attention.

[18] Saatchi, Charles Nathan. *My Name Is Charles Saatchi and I Am an Artoholic: Everything You Need to Know about Art, Ads, Life, God and Other Mysteries - and Werent Afraid to Ask.*. Phaidon, 2009.

The Art Market

According to artnet's Price Database in a search of all major auction houses (Sotheby's, Christie's, Bonhams, etc.) between 1985 – 1989[19] , there was one painting offered by Clemente, a large gouache (128.5 x 84 inches), estimated between $40,000 and $60,000, which was included in a 1985 Christie's New York auction. The piece was Bought-In, meaning there was either no bid at all, or the bids did not reach an acceptable selling point. That same year, only one Schnabel, a 91 x 60 inch oil on canvas was submitted to the same auction estimated between $45,000 - $65,000 and was withdrawn. In the following year, six Clemente's were auctioned at Christie's and Sotheby's (New York). The works ranged from a pencil and pastel (11.6 x 7.9 inch) sold for $6,600 to a 82.5 x 74.6 inch gouache sold for $44,000. The sales averaged $15,299 USD Premium included. Premium prices include a fee from the auction house. For perspective of Clemente's records, five Schnabel's were also submitted to these same two auctions. These works ranged from a 29.5 x 39.5 inch oil on paper sold for $4,400 to a 72 x 119 inch oil on canvas sold for $121,000. All five works sold averaged $27,041 USD Premium.

Auction prices steadily rose for Schnabel in the following years. See table below for his average market prices:

[19] Artnet's Price Database tracking starts in 1985.

Year	Average cost per painting
1986	$27,041
1987	Insufficient information
1988	$35,612
1989	$29,814
1990	$31,442

Schnabel's records show, for the most part, a steady incline with the exception of an unusual year in 1987 where only two paintings were offered at auction. One piece sold for $66,000 and another does not provide whether it was sold, bought-in or withdrawn. I didn't feel like this was enough information to put an average cost. While this is very interesting, it is not a direction I am able to investigate for this paper concerning Clemente.

Clemente's market, however, looks more unstable with larger fluctuations of average prices. See table below for his average market prices:

Year	Average cost per painting
1986	$15,299
1987	$6,237
1988	$17,076
1989	$61,867
1990	$17,981
1991	$20,763
2019	$14,055

The different price ranges we are seeing between the two artists have to do with Schnabel's work being priced higher initially in his career. This is likely the work and recommendation of Mary Boone, his first dealer who participated in the initial pricing of Schnabel's work. Clemente's work was likely initially priced by the partners at Sperone Westwater Fischer Gallery who first represented him. The data shows that each year more works were being circulated for both artists, meanwhile, Schnabel was selling fewer works for more money, but with more (not perfect) consistency.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper show an interesting narrative, but not the narrative I expected to find. When setting out on my research I was predicting to see a much lower margin of sales for Clemente when compared to Schnabel. In addition, I was also expecting to see a steep drop off point in sales as well as finding a clear-cut story line as to why. What I did end up finding, however, were some explanations that offer more context to how Clemente's painting career panned out.

The main explanation I can offer for the initial question of this paper, which was why Clemente did not transcend into stardom along with some of his contemporaries, has to do with his personal lifestyle choices. As mentioned, Clemente has deeply rooted himself in Indian culture, religion and ideals. The artist still today splits his time between mainly India and New York. With having never participated in a formal exhibition in India, it is obvious he does not concern himself with outside happenings other than painting and self-examination. In terms of lifestyle choices, he and his wife have been happily married since the early seventies and now

have four adult children who they appear very close with.[20] By the time his third and fourth children (twins) were born in 1988 it is safe to say Clemente became less concerned with climbing the professional totem pole. This has been the opposite for Schnabel, whose market prices don't show anything out of the ordinary, but has managed to stay in the limelight with other ventures such as directing films. The second detail I feel is important to highlight for any artists' career trajectory is the influence of having a prominent dealer. The marketing and networking efforts that a motivated dealer can make ends up being a major factor.

Finally, my research shows no other explanation for a 262% increase in the average cost of a Clemente painting from 1988-1989 other than the offloading of work by Saatchi. By 1990 the auction prices showed a -70% decrease brining the average prices back to normal proving any influence Saatchi had to Clemente's market unsustainable and really, just a blip on the radar. Overall, Francesco Clemente is alive and well and as of 2019 averaging a price of $14,055 per painting at auction.

[20] Based off of social media posts that frequently include the whole family together.

Appendix 1

Francesco Clemente Exhibition List (1975-1986):

1975
Massimo Minini, Brescia, Italy
Franco Toselli, Milan, Italy
Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, Italy
Gian Enzo Sperone, Rome, Italy

1976
Lucrezia de Domizio, Pescara, Italy
Gian Enzo Sperone, Rome, Italy

1977
Paola Betti, Milan, Italy

1978
Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland
Galerie Paul Maenz, Cologne, Germany
Art & Project, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Art & Project, Amsterdam, Netherlands

1979
Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea Emilio Mazzoli, Modena, Italy
Giuliana de Crescenzo, Rome, Italy
Lucio Amelio, Naples, Italy Francesco
Lisson Gallery, London, UK
Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, Italy

1980
Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy
Sperone Westwater Fischer, New York, NY
Galerie Paul Maenz, Cologne, Germany
Gian Enzo Sperone, Rome, Italy and Mario Diacono, Rome, Italy
Art & Project, Amsterdam, Netherlands

1981
Sperone Westwater Fischer, New York, NY
Art & Project, Amsterdam, Netherlands
University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA

The Art Museum and Galleries, California State University, Lon Francesco Clemente /Matrix 70, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, US (cat); Francesco Clemente Pinxit, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, UK (cat)"
Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich, Switzerland

1983
Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, UK, traveled to: Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany; Galerie d'Art Contemporain des Musées de Nice, France; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, UK
A Space, Toronto, Canada
Sperone Westwater, New York, NY and Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY
Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland
Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

1984
The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA
Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany, traveled to: Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, England; Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany
Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland
Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Arts Council Gallery, Belfast, Ireland
Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, Germany

1985
Sperone Westwater, New York, NY, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, NY, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich, Switzerland
John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL, traveled to: Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA

1986
Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, UK
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Sperone Westwater 1986–87, Sperone Westwater, New York, NY[21]

[21] "ARTISTSFrancesco Clemente." *Vito Schnabel*, www.vitoschnabel.com/artists/francesco-clemente/biography.