

INTERNATIONAL REVIEWS

notion of the handcrafted object. The results were both playful and puzzling.

Opie creates computer-generated images of seemingly generic figures, landscapes, and still lifes. These are variously executed—as paintings, sculptures, street signs, wallpaper, and electronic images on CDs.

For this show, he catalogued his designs in a glossy, noisy, full-color booklet, with all items illustrated and priced. The artist invites us to choose from the offerings. For example, a basic design for a human figure is available in multiple variations, with different outfits (wearing jeans or a miniskirt or underwear), poses (sitting, kneeling, squatting), sizes (large, medium, small), and colors (black, blue, yellow).

Each design can be replicated endlessly, according to demand. One just has to place an order. So coolly modern, so simple in color, so clean in line, Opie's idealized renderings of the commonplace are naïve and arresting.

—Michael Glover

Francesco Clemente

BRUNO BISCHOFBERGER

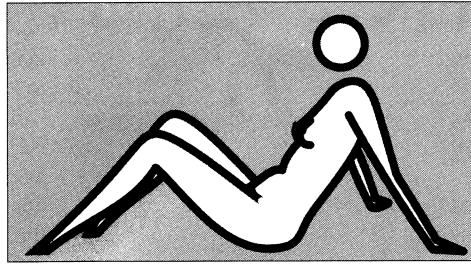
Zurich

For two decades, Francesco Clemente has been exploring imagery derived from sources that are mythological, mystical, or of his own imagination. In this show of new paintings and watercolors, images of mundane objects made a stronger impact than those works depicting more arcane iconography.

For his large-scale pieces (seven feet square, for example), Clemente used a rare frescolike medium, *cera punica*, in which a wax emulsion is painted onto a plaster surface, effecting a light wash of nuanced colors. It works well in *The Sky*, an image of a pink-hued dress hung by its spaghetti straps on a clothesline. It billows and sways, as if moved by a breeze. A similar motif appeared in *Vanitas*, a small watercolor portraying a dark-hued shirt hanging on a clothesline above a pair of shorts. In both works, the body seems barely absent.

Images that seemingly refer to some enigmatic source were less captivating. The seven-foot-square *Moon*, with three enormous trumpet lilies surrounded by the four lunar phases, and the nearly six-foot-square *Parabola*, with four figures stacked atop each other at different angles, all holding a tropical fruit, never transcend their obscure symbolism. These works pose mysteries but offer no incentive to solve them.

More impressive was the large-scale *cera punica* titled *Origin*. A doe is shown hog-tied and hanging upside down by her fettered hooves, her fear-filled eyes as large as grapefruits. In the watercolor version, *Nodo*,



Julian Opie, *Female Nude Lounging Knees Up Arms Back*, 2000, paint on aluminum, 49" x 97½" x 1".
Lisson.

Rita Ackermann

PETER KILCHMANN

Zurich

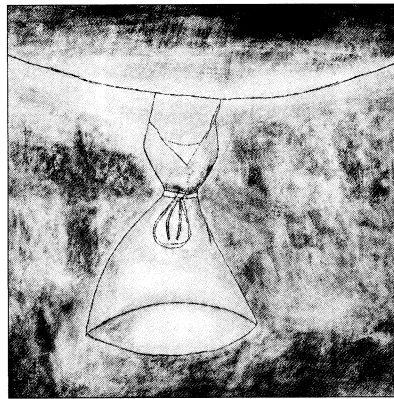
Though Rita Ackermann surely must have titled her show of new drawings in part as provocation, "The Only Way to Get to My Vagina Is Through Jesus" did embody a powerful mix of religious themes and unflinching realism in these drawings.

Most of the subject matter was fantastical, inspired by William Blake's illustrated poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In one image, a lamb suckles at a woman's breast while her child strokes the animal's neck and angels beatifically guard them from a squadron of wild-eyed succubi. *The Voice of the Devil (M of H&H)* depicts a chorus line of nude women offering infants to men with boar's heads and flames surrounding them.

Not all the drawings were as nightmarish. For the Hungarian-born artist, who recently moved from New York to Texas, bourgeois American life has its bizarre qualities. In *American Woman I*, female parishioners are asleep in their church pews with boulders on their laps or bricks on their shoulders. *The Art of Cleaning* shows a woman, dressed in a pinstripe suit and chef's hat, serenely forming a pyre of her domestic wares.

With the exception of a nine-foot-tall drawing, all works were torn from Ackermann's sketch pad; one even had a coffee stain on its corner. This casual presentation proved surprisingly effective. As paintings, much of this imagery would have seemed Grand Guignol, but the lightness of pencil and the informality of the format kept these surreal scenes lean and strong.

—Marc Spiegler



Francesco Clemente, *The Sky*, 2000, *cera punica*, 83" x 83". Bruno Bischofberger.



Rita Ackermann, *Carl May's Children*, 2001, pencil on paper, 9" x 6".
Peter Kilchmann.

Alexander Rodchenko

GMURZYNSKA

Cologne

It is difficult to imagine a single group of works that so succinctly embodies the spirit of the Russian avant-garde as the constructions Alexander Rodchenko began to produce from cutout components in 1918. Like

many of his colleagues (including, most famously, Kasimir Malevich and Naum Gabo), Rodchenko embraced a pictorial vocabulary of geometric forms divorced from every representational or symbolic overtone. By 1916 Rodchenko had produced an entire series of drawings whose lines were executed with mechanical drawing aids and thus firmly rejected any no-