

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

For Immediate Release

HUGO MCCLOUD: FROM WHERE I STAND **June 7, 2021 to January 2, 2022**

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum presents *Hugo McCloud: from where i stand*, the artist's first solo museum exhibition. McCloud's work has been defined by a restless experimentation, an ongoing engagement with process and materials, an exploration of issues surrounding the value of labor, a concern with the disparities in social and racial economics, and the balance between meaning and beauty. The works presented span the years 2014 to 2021, a period that has witnessed the radical evolution of the artist's practice. *Hugo McCloud: from where i stand* will be on view at The Aldrich June 7, 2021 to January 2, 2022.

McCloud's work in the 2014 to 2018 period can generally be categorized as abstraction, but as with many other African American artists whose work is primarily non-representational, it was informed by the experience of being biracial—in subtle ways that pose an affinity to the methods of African American artists of previous generations, such as Jack Whitten and Melvin Edwards. This is most evident in the materials (roofing metal, tar paper, and plastic bags) and processes he gravitates to, which McCloud uses to encode social and cultural memory. To a great extent, however, the content of McCloud's work touches on notions of class, particularly through his recent use of single-use plastic bags, the ubiquitous carrier that unites the bodega in New York City with the street vendor in Mexico. The social content of McCloud's plastic bag works is made apparent by the abject nature of the material and the fragmented text that alludes to the world of trade and commerce.

Beginning in 2018, McCloud made a transition with the plastic bag works that was decisively figurative. Based on photos of individuals carrying large, wrapped bundles, which he captured during his travels, these experimental works pointedly engage with issues concerning the economics of labor that are veiled in his abstract works. For instance, McCloud became fascinated with the towering piles of bags that are balanced atop motorcycles and bicycles (and sometimes human backs) in developing countries, as well as the ad hoc carts piled with plastic bags filled with belongings utilized by the homeless in New York City. These forms speak of human labor on an extremely basic level, which the artist has flattened and recontextualized as compositional elements in his paintings.

McCloud's work encapsulates his interest in global culture. He has traveled extensively, including extended trips to South Africa, the Philippines, and India. Recently, McCloud has spent significant time in Mexico where his experiences—coupled with the challenges of maintaining a practice in New York City—led him to build a studio in Tulum where he now lives and works.

McCloud often speaks of “building” his works rather than painting them, a word choice that aligns his practice more with manual labor than with the usual terminology applied to art making. His awareness of the contradictions implicit in working in the high art world while economic inequality becomes more pronounced both globally and in the United States, greatly informs his struggle as an artist. McCloud understands that the decision to move his studio to Mexico echoes the current conflict over free trade and in many ways places his practice in the center of the political debate on immigration and global economics. The title *from where i stand* posits McCloud as an artist who is looking at the world from a singular point of view and a deep belief in being a global citizen that is not defined by either society or birthplace.



Hugo McCloud
5 on #7, 2019
© Hugo McCloud
Courtesy of the artist and
Sean Kelly, New York
Collection of Beth Rudin deWoody



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Hugo McCloud (b. 1980, Palo Alto, CA) has had solo exhibitions at The Arts Club, London and Fondazione 107 in Turin, Italy. His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York and The Drawing Center, New York. His work is included in the collections of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., the North Carolina Museum of Art, the Detroit Institute of the Arts, the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, and the Brooklyn Museum, among others. McCloud lives and works in Brooklyn, New York and Tulum, Mexico.

Hugo McCloud: from where i stand is organized by Richard Klein, Exhibitions Director. The exhibition will be accompanied by a book with essays by Klein and scholar and curator Lucy Kwabah Mensah.

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