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Fontaine, Pearl. "Hugo McCloud Paints with Single-Use Plastic in 'Burdened'."
Whitewall. January 18, 2021.

whitewall



Hugo McCloud, "with all your might," 2020, single use plastic mounted on panel; © Hugo McCloud, courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York

Hugo McCloud's solo exhibition "Burdened" features new work created in the artist's studio in Mexico over the past nine months spent in isolation. On view at **Sean Kelly Gallery** in New York from January 22—February 27, the paintings fill the entirety of the space's three galleries and showcase the artist's first explorations of figuration, made using single-use plastic bags.

Infused with McCloud's search for beauty in the everyday, the new series evokes topics like geopolitics, the human and economic cost of labor across the world, and environmental issues. McCloud, known for working with found materials unusual to the artistic practice (like industrial material, tar paper, scrap metal, and solder), has cut plastic bags into hundreds of tiny pieces, utilizing them as one might a palette of paint. This choice of medium creates a noteworthy textured appearance, while applying layers of meaning that encourages viewers to confront the ubiquitous presence of the plastic bag in everyday life.

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Hugo McCloud, "Pineapple Express," 2020, single use plastic mounted on panel, 71 x 61 inches; © Hugo McCloud, courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York.

On view in the main gallery are large-scale works on panel that incite stories of the burdens faced by humans trying to make ends meet, referencing the Mediterranean refugee crisis. Typically on foot, McCloud's subjects partake in acts of manual labor like pushing carts full of trash or wheeling bicycles weighed down with goods, like in *Pineapple Express* or the tropical-hued *portmen*.

In the lower gallery, viewers find a series which the artist calls "quarantine drawings." Working on a more intimate scale, these poetic works capture imagery like plants and flowers, and are the result of McCloud's quest to set aside time every day to focus on something beautiful amid the chaos and concern that has flooded this last year.

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Hugo McCloud, "take a seat," 2020, single use plastic mounted on panel; © Hugo McCloud, courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York.

“Burdened” precedes an upcoming major exhibition of works by the artist due to open at **The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum** in Ridgefield Connecticut, in June 2021.



Hugo McCloud, "purplehaze," 2020, single use plastic mounted on panel; © Hugo McCloud, courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York.