

SEAN KELLY

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See How Hugo McCloud Makes a Painting

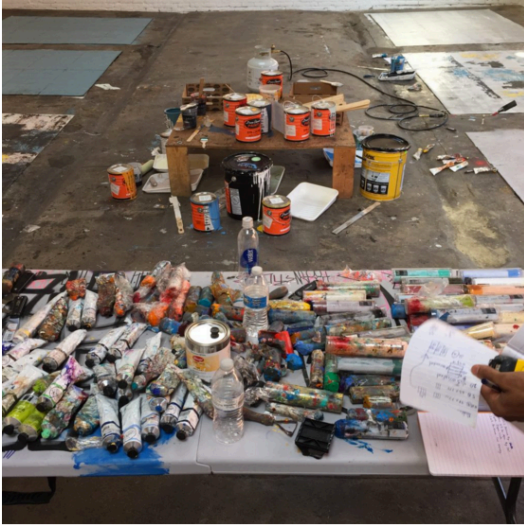


Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.

Before Brooklyn-based painter Hugo McCloud was an artist, he worked in industrial design, fabricating custom projects for architects and interior designers. That background deeply informs his current work, featuring unorthodox materials such as tar paper and aluminum foil, currently on view in his second solo exhibition at New York's Sean Kelly Gallery.

"All of my work is kind of process oriented," McCloud told *artnet News* in a phone conversation, walking us through the creation of his abstract works, which he primarily makes with "construction-based materials" such as roofing paper and liquid tar.

This sets McCloud apart from other contemporary painters. "When I had a desire to go into the fine art realm," he explained, "I didn't really have an understanding of how to work on canvas or use brushes and traditional art making tools. That wasn't really my foundation."



Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.

Instead, he stuck with what materials he was already comfortable using—breaking the boundaries of conventional art in the process. In doing so, he's following in the footsteps of some pretty impressive artists, such as Jackson Pollock's embrace of house paint or, more recently, Katharina Grosse's utilization of an industrial spray gun to create her large-scale works.

"There's not really a formula for [using construction materials] when you're doing fine art, so I think it forces you to think outside the box a little bit," said McCloud. "The manipulation, what you can possibly do with something, how to adapt all the different tools you use in the construction world in those materials, that's what makes it interesting."

Step-by-step, McCloud described the unorthodox process by which he creates the works in his "Veiled" series. Rather than the expected canvas, he begins with a sheet of roofing paper. "I layer that with liquid tar and an adhesive," he said. "Over that is an aluminum sheeting."



Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.

At that point, he has a choice: leave the work as is, or add a layer of block printing, from prints he's either carved by hand or drawn and sent to a friend who does laser cutting. The designs are often inspired by discarded furniture fabric patterns or things he's seen in his travels.



Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.

In preparation for this final step, “I go through a heating process that warms the material up, that makes it more malleable,” said McCloud, who applies an additional layer of aluminum foil and stamps the designs using silver, gold, or white paint, obscuring much of his initial work.

“I used to use a roofing torch,” the artist told us, but he’s since designed a special table with a built in infrared heater. “It’s not as dramatic, of course, from a visual aspect, but it doesn’t tarnish the color of the paint. It keeps the colors much more vibrant.”



Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.

“Not only does it emboss as I hammer it into the painting, it embosses so you get a relief on the painting,” McCloud added. The pressure of the wooden blocks also punctures the foil coating in some places, leaving traces of the oil painting beneath.

In preparation for his current exhibition, McCloud worked simultaneously on roughly 20 different paintings, giving each one time to dry between each stage. He estimates that each one takes a couple of weeks from start to finish.



Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.

“When I’m working on a show, it’s pretty regimented,” he noted. “I’m usually in here at the same time every day.” That being said, his work is affected on a daily basis, based on what is going on in his personal life.

“You come to the studio with different experiences and things that you’re going through, and problems... all those mixed emotions go into your work day to day,” McCloud reflected. “That’s the great thing about abstract art: you can kind of put those different layers into the work. That’s usually what creates the piece.”



Hugo McCloud at work in his studio. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery.