

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

MICHAEL CLINE

INFO@MIERGALLERY.COM  
WWW.MIERGALLERY.COM  
7277 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD  
LOS ANGELES, CA, 90046  
T: 323-498-5957



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Michael Cline's practice meditates on objects that are close at hand. Executed in a restrained color palette dominated by soft blues and greens, Cline's paintings depict the plants, collected curios, memorabilia, pottery, and furniture in his immediate orbit. The artist is interested in exploring "an interior world using exterior signifiers," like the houseplants he nurtures, waters, and protects, or the inanimate ecosystem of his studio. Eschewing details that might root his works in a specific time or place, Cline instead opts to focus on the formal and material details present in his subjects, such as dust, textural oddities, and lighting. His perspectives are often manipulated or peculiar, resembling the often high-angle, haphazard compositions of vernacular photography.

*Michael Cline (b.1973 Cape Canaveral, Florida; lives and works in New York City, New York) studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Cline has presented solo exhibitions with Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago; David Kordansky, Los Angeles; Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York; and Daniel Reich Gallery, New York. His works have also been included in group exhibitions organized by the Parrish Art Museum, New York; Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome; Deste Foundation, Athens; David Zwirner, New York; Lehmann Maupin, New York; and Saatchi Gallery, London. Cline's paintings are included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; François Pinault Foundation, Venice; and the Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania.*

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## **SELECTED WORKS**

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Michael Cline  
*Plant, Lantern, and Cat, 2022*  
Oil on linen  
46 x 40 in  
116.8 x 101.6 cm  
(MCL22.002)



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Michael Cline *Plant, Lantern, and Cat*, 2022, detail



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Michael Cline  
*Perched Jade, Perched Pumpkin, 2022*  
Oil on linen  
52 x 32 in  
132.1 x 81.3 cm  
(MCL22.003)



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Michael Cline *Perched Jade, Perched Pumpkin* 2022, detail



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Michael Cline  
*Table Edge*, 2020-2021  
Oil on linen  
60 x 45 in  
152.4 x 114.3 cm  
(MCL21.001)



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Michael Cline  
*The Back Wall*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
58 x 45 in  
147.3 x 114.3 cm  
(MCL21.002)

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Michael Cline  
*Frog*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
16 x 20 in  
40.6 x 50.8 cm  
(MCL21.004)



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Michael Cline  
*Closer*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
24 x 30 in  
61 x 76.2 cm  
(MCL21.006)

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Michael Cline  
*Window Box*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
45 x 60 in  
114.3 x 152.4 cm  
(MCL21.010)



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Michael Cline  
*Articulated Figure and Plant*, 2021  
Watercolor on paper  
20 7/8 x 16 7/8 in (framed)  
53 x 42.9 cm (framed)  
(MCL21.012)



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## **INSTALLATION VIEWS**



# NINO MIER GALLERY

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Installation view of Michael Cline's  
*Above and Below*  
(September 3– October 1, 2022)  
Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, BE



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Installation view of Michael Cline's  
*Back Steps*  
(March 10 - March 22 2021)  
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

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## **PRESS**

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## MOUSSE

September 2022

### Michael Cline “Above and Below” at Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels

By Mousse Magazine Staff



Michael Cline “Above and Below” at Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, 2022

Time slows in “Above and Below,” which presents viewers with detailed paintings of the pottery, plants, textiles, and furniture that surround the artist on a daily basis. Among the houseplants he nurtures and the objects he collects, Cline finds ready subjects for creating a world of quiet respite and contemplation. Executed in a restrained color palette dominated by soft blues, browns, and greens, Cline searches for an interior world, seeking shelter from the relentless chaos of the information age.

The still lives in “Above and Below” developed from Cline’s past figural work. His early figurative paintings often focused on a central drama suggesting a larger narrative, one in which plants and objects play secondary roles. But in recent years, a sharpened focus on the marginal aspects of his early works has brought an invigorated freedom to his practice. Without suggestions of overt narrative or references to cultural or historical contexts, Cline has been able to develop a unique visual idiom that finds meaning in texture, light, and form.



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Cline's unusual vantage points and evident eye for the quotidian are reminiscent of the haphazard compositions of vernacular photography. Eschewing details that root his paintings in a specific time or place beyond the domestic interior, Cline opts to focus on the formal and material details present in his subjects, such as dust, textural eccentricities, and lighting. Moreover, each canvas is stippled to produce a sandpaper-like surface suggesting haze in each image. The emphasis of texture and light over color's saturation brings an intensity to the paintings that makes the modest objects appear as though they are vibrating, imbued with a surplus of energy that can never fully manifest.

at Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels  
until October 1, 2022

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## JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

July 2019

### Michael Cline Presents the “Here After”

By Juxtapoz Staff



Even though this show just came down from James Fuentes in NY this past week, we wanted to make sure our readers caught the looks of the newest paintings by NY-painter, Michael Cline in his solo show, Here After. The exhibition included a new series of paintings alongside earlier relief works.

Michael Cline is a self-described storyteller, making paintings filled with strange configurations of people and their surroundings. Bodies are in motion and yet caught catatonically stiff within streetscapes, contained by windows, or piled with objects. These scenes tend to be awash with a greenish light, adding a grotesque quality to their discordant details and faded palette. Liberally mixing styles and narratives, Cline renders an odd feeling of ambiguity and vulnerability. Altogether, Cline's works seem to be from another era and yet sit outside of time. Cueing the present day as much as centuries and styles past, these images describe a possibly parallel universe in which tradition is rehashed and current convention is frustrated. Within this adjusted sense of time Cline flattens perspective and shortens space. As much as these paintings seem apart from time, their layered



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images produce a multiplicitous sense of dimension. Eleven—or even one hundred—timelines are seemingly sandwiched upon each other in Cline’s estranged timespace.

Sharp shifts in scale add to this illusionistic effect. In many works a figure might stand in the shallow space between the flat surface of a wall and the picture frame. Details like soft shadows, a crack in the wall, or an odd doorway furnish this backdrop. By contrast, Cline’s earlier highly textured relief works move drastically closer to this plane, focusing on left-behind pieces of tape, torn bits of paper, and false wooden beams in trompe-l’oeil fashion. Impromptu and handprinted signs feature repeatedly, tipping into awkwardness with a misspelled word or adjusted numbers. These pieces of information provide an in-between setting that is as telling, if not more-so, as the characters they contain. Spilling with symbols, Cline’s works are irreducible to a single meaning, interval, or depth.

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## Flash Art

September 2016

### Michael Cline

By Nikola Cernetic

Nikola Cernetic: Recently you added some kind of sculpture-installation in your exhibition. Do you feel painting is not enough, or do you feel that somehow sculpture completes your message?

Michael Cline: My foray into sculpture and installation is a natural outgrowth of my practice and has been for some time. I've made sculpture for as long as I can remember. Only recently have I become comfortable with making my sculptures public.

NC: To be voyeuristic in private moments of life seems to be important in your work.

MC: I like character-driven stories; it's the one time where we are all given explicit permission to be voyeurs. Private moments are edged open, things are made more complicated and/or simplified, and what was voyeurism becomes insight.

NC: Painting the particular is for being ambiguous or to reveal something?

MC: There is something to what you say, something important and difficult to explain. It's true, my paintings are very particular and driven by detail. One might intuit that this sort of practice would make for predigested narrative or something like that. But in practice, I feel the more I add to the story, the more veiled and subterranean everything becomes.

NC: Does representing an imperfect world make you feel more sure about your life?

MC: I'm quite sure about my life. And I'm quite sure it's all incredibly tenuous and fleeting, which I find both exhilarating and melancholic. But to your question of representing the imperfect world, it's either that or setting out to detail the perfect world, which seems impossible.

NC: Your works seem to be from another time, like something belonging to the recent past...

MC: All time is relevant to the contemporary world. The past, after all, has a voracious appetite and is, in some oxymoronic way, contemporary. My aim is to make something that seems out of time, rather than being rooted in a specific one.

NC: For the spectator looking at your past shows, the feeling is that the color is changing in your work. Sometimes it is like there's no color — as it is all flat in the show — and sometimes the colors come



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out deeper in the image.

MC: Yes, it's true.

NC: Your paintings seem inspired by fables and folktales. Is that your way of dreaming?

MC: It is a way of dreaming.

NC: How comfortable do you feel painting sex and violence? Is that something related to the occult?

MC: I am interested in the occult and people like Aleister Crowley, Madame Blavatsky, Charles Leadbeater. But really I'm more drawn to and inspired by Christian iconography.

NC: It's not like storytelling; maybe it's more like a journey throughout unordinary everyday life?

MC: But that's a story, right? Hopefully, it's a journey where the ordinary is transformed.

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## The Daily Norm

February 2014

### Saatchi's Positive Body Language

By Delacy Brown



Whenever I visit the Saatchi gallery in Chelsea, I always do so on the assumption that I am going to hate most of the art on show. This reactionary pattern begun some years back, when Saatchi was still on the south bank, and the works included Tracy Emin's vile "unmade" tip of a filthy bed, and her even viler photographic self portrait surrounded by money shoved up and around her you-know-what. Then, when Saatchi moved to Chelsea, exhibitions included a show of Russian art, which turned out to be evenmore depressing in its lack of talent than one would have already guessed, and shows which decided that the car wrecks lifted straight out of a (probably tragic) accident scene would somehow make for an enticing art exhibit.

So, when I dropped into Saatchi's gallery last weekend, I wasn't expecting the latest offering, Body Language, to be much better than a convenient toilet stop in the midsts of some Chelsea shopping. But when you enter a gallery a see a sculpted portrait made out of Iberico ham, you pretty much know that you are going to be in for a treat. Oh yes, with his brilliantly innovative creation of Spain's best leg of meat, Kasper Kovitz' Carnalitos sculptures single handedly opened my eyes to the positives of Saatchi's ever revolving exhibitions of contemporary art works (eyes which had pretty much been sealed shut in opposition following the recent Nigella cafe strangle scandal...).

Other favourites from a varied show of contemporary artists include the paintings of Michael Cline, whose



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somewhat parodied figures reminded me of Stanley Spencer's Sandham Memorial Chapel paintings which were recently on show at Somerset House. I also loved Nicole Eisenman's energetic oil paintings such as the Beer Garden at Night (2007) which is full of whimsical figures and amusing social shenanigans which can keep an audience entranced for hours, and Makiko Kudo's fantastical escapist visions which were in part like a Manga cartoon and at the same time like Monet's pond bursting with lilies.

Less convincing were the paintings by Eddie Martinez which were so badly painted as to be derisible. His "Feast" is compared in the gallery brochure to Da Vinci's historically celebrated Last Supper. I would compare it to the dirty dining table at the end of a meal when my toddler nephews have been to stay. I was equally dismayed by Denis Tarasov's photographs of tombstones in graveyards in Russia and Ukraine, not because of the photography itself, but because of the hideously tacky gravestone pictures which they captured – huge granite tombs decorated with intricately carved photographic likenesses of the individuals buried beneath them, looking so vulgar that to even place such visions in a freshly painted white gallery in the centre of London's Chelsea felt like dumping a Lidl in the middle of Harrods. That's not to say they weren't interesting – one shouldn't be surprised that this level of vulgarity would come out of a country which has backdated its laws in relation to homosexuality by at least a century of moralistic retardation.

But I digress. From its low points to its very high, Body Language is well worth a visit for its sheer diversity of art – there really is something for everyone, and it's free too, so what's to lose? For me, the show demonstrates that painting is very much back in fashion and that the age of nonsense gimmicky installations is largely dead, which can only be good news if the 21st century is ever going to make any kind of decisive mark on art history. Not only that but the Saatchi gallery is, as ever, a brilliant cultural location whose highlights also include a show of emerging British talent, a gallery of limited edition prints which are for sale, a spangly new gift shop which is around 6 times the size of what it used to be (Iberico ham sculptures sadly not for sale – but there's always Iberica restaurant in Marylebone as a very good consolation prize – and there you even get to eat it).

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Sean Horton  
(presents)

October 2013

## The Dystopian Turn: Michael Cline's Portraits of America as a Still Life

By Christian Viveros-Faune

There are artists who advance by anachronism rather than by innovation. One such artist is the painter Michael Cline. A creator of five-and-dime streetscapes of hobos, skateboarders, and beat cops—as well as the current batch of raucous still-lives that make up this exhibition—his screwball social realist aesthetic comes together not just through bizarre juxtaposition, but also thanks to a genuinely perverse love of the funky and the strange. Every inch a studio painter, Cline also belongs to a long line of Frankenstein-fanciers, picture recyclers, and visual saboteurs. In a time that has scrapped its faith in progress, few artists appear better prepared to deal with today's recurrent themes of disillusionment, information overload, and image glut.

In just a few years, Cline has established a magpie's reputation for liberally mixing high and low styles, as well as for developing a remarkably original approach toward contemporary figuration that harkens back to painting's earliest sources. His modeling, for instance, suggests not the expected naturalism inaugurated by Giotto, but the jangler forms of pre-Renaissance painters like Cimabue. Instead of using geometric perspective, the Cape Canaveral-born artist builds his compositions like a medieval iconographer, often stacking images one atop the other. Rather than blindly celebrate conventionally acceptable themes (like pop culture, technological connectivity, or even the advancement of his age-old medium), Cline regularly embraces—with the strength of a hard-bitten non-conformist—the visually suspect, the weird, and the fundamentally lowbrow.

A cross between Grimm's Fairy Tales and Chuck Klosterman's *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs*, Cline's picture world resembles what a flea market might look like on bath salts—loads of thumb-worn and dog-eared modern and vintage visuals visioned alongside free-floating eyes, faces, and limbs. Among the more normal bits incorporated as painted elements into his latest group of canvases are the following: magazine advertisements, yard sale memorabilia, cabbage-shaped houseplants, *The Berenstain Bears*, and the kind of morbid symbolism that historically characterize Dutch still-lives. Cline marshals all of these motifs into homespun visual parables. Additionally, the artist enlists his own set of wide ranging cultural influences—they veer wildly from Vermeer to Robert Henri, from *Leaves of Grass* to *The Village Voice's* back page classifieds—to arrive at what amounts to a 21st century version of painterly Ashcan entropy.

Cline's recent pictures constitute a vision of America's allegorized cultural and social decay—from its recent economic slump to its attendant detritus (think government shutdowns, bankrupt cities, and the TV show *Storage Wars*). Consisting of collapsed or jerry-rigged structures that symbolize the teetering State of the Union, Cline's misbegotten contraptions also serve as signposts for this artist's antic Little Tramp aesthetic. Painted in a mixture of supermarket colors (cerise, terra cotta, kudzu green), somber blacks (the favorite background color for the classical still life), and wood-hued browns, Cline's compositions both update tradition and distress current artistic convention. The result is a set of pictures that attach themselves firmly on both the retina and the limbic system. Few paintings today feel as vibrant or as disturbingly true to life as this artist's cornucopia-like accretions of shopworn and mismatched Americana gone to seed.

A self-declared storyteller, Cline's most recent set of stories-as-canvases involves the age-old genre of vanitas painting. A kind of still-life that flourished in the Netherlands in the 17th century, this once popular type of brush and cloth work made a point of portraying terminally symbolic categories of objects—skulls, fruit, landed



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seafood, dying flowers, smoke, hourglasses—as representative of the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death. In Cline’s hands, the moralizing Calvinist conceit animating these period paintings turns contemporary and open-ended, producing visual fireworks, art historical colloquies, and timely social, political, and cultural commentary. Taken down from the museum shelf, what had previously been canonical is brought kicking back to life; what once looked stuffily European acquires the expansive American character of Zap Comix and Paul Bunyan’s ox.

Take the painting *American Oort Cloud*, for example. A picture-window arrangement of trompe l’oeil ephemera framed by a set of precisely painted two-by-fours, Cline’s canvas spills out rafts of images past and present while hovering, as the artist might put it, significantly “out of time.” Though the work contains, to paraphrase Walt Whitman, multitudes of associations—among its myriad details are cut flowers, a locust, several plants, a hand holding a cigarette, a painted cardboard placard featuring the number “1914,” and a Pieter Claesz-style reflection in a light bulb (intimating that the painting hides as much as it reveals)—the canvas’ cumulative effect is to be highly meaningful without being reducible to a single period or a single message. This is painting built to last as a stubborn enigma. To employ structuralist lingo, the canvas embodies the postmodern trinity: utterly self-contained, it deploys at once sign, signifier, and signified.

Ditto for all of Cline’s paintings and their deliberately capacious symbolism. Rather than stand in for specific slogans or ideas, *Oort Cloud* (the term refers to an ancient hypothetical cloud of comets orbiting the sun) and other paintings such as *Ashcan*, *SubNot* and *Arranged Portrait*, create what the artist once called “moments of perfect energy”—instances in which certain configurations of image, shape and color provoke intense feelings of strangeness, disjunction or disquiet, as well as ambiguous polemics about the world’s twisted ways. In these latest works, Cline chose to harness the vehicle of nature morte—the more fatalistic Romance language name given to the genre—to paint portraits of America as a still-life. Metaphors for a great period of transition and tumult in the American landscape, his new paintings not only dazzle as feats of figurative and metaphorical invention, they also illustrate a basic truth about great art: like an odd feeling, it’s visual genius often advances on crucial ideas before language gets around to explaining them.

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**FAD** — magazine

March 2011

## Michael Cline Arcadia at Marc Jancou New York

By Mark Westall



This is Michael Cline's second solo show with the gallery, Arcadia.

In this most recent series, the imagery centers largely on the domestic and is executed in a careful and precise way. His paintings, drawings, and sculpture describe mysterious scenes of work and play. As such, we are privy to private moments and ambiguous narratives decidedly more strange than their straightforward presentation might suggest. Free from the constraint of public life, Cline's characters seek the knowledge of their true natures, engage in games, organize their affairs, and reflect on memories. Surrounded by objects of comfort and habituation, they inhabit a dreamy world of both quiet introspection and busy work.

Born in 1973 in Florida, Michael Cline lives and works in New York. He received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and his BA from the University of North Florida. Solo exhibitions include Galleria Il Capricorno, Venice; BFAS Blondeau Fine Art Services, Geneva; Daniel Reich Gallery, New York; Me.di.um, St. Barthelemy; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; and The Wrong Gallery, New York. Group exhibitions include MACRO Museum, Rome; Deste Foundation, Athens; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; Guild and Greyshkul, New York; David Zwirner, New York; and Lehmann Maupin, New York. In December of 2010, Cline curated a group exhibition entitled Private Future at Marc Jancou Contemporary, which included work by Kerry James Marshall, Erik Parker, and Jim Shaw amongst others.

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## Art in America

September 2009

### **Michael Cline Tells the Parable of His Painting**

By Art in America Staff

Oil and pastel paintings by New York-based artist Michael Cline include a great deal a narrative about the arcane, the sickly, and the chaotic in Americana. His concurrent exhibitions at Daniel Reich Gallery and Marc Jancou Contemporary coincide with the release of a book, with essays by Kathy Grayson and an interview by Matthew Higgs. For our “Decoding Images” section, Art in America has asked Cline to take apart one painting for us.

Says the artist, “I consider myself a storyteller. I think to make art, is to tell stories, regardless of what you end up with. Whether they be religious illustration, institutional critique, or highlighting some sort of undervalued or unexpected thing that artists tend to do, artists are telling stories. So yes, narratives are imagined. And yes, I do think something fable-like appears from time to time—but I think more often my paintings take on the character of parable.”



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**CV**

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## MICHAEL CLINE

Born in 1973 in Cape Canaveral, FL, US  
Lives and works in New York, NY, US

## EDUCATION

2003 MFA School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL, US  
2001 BA University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL, US

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022 *Above and Below*, Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, BE

2021 *Back Steps*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2019 Chalet Marc Jancou, Rossiniere, CH  
*Here After*, James Fuentes, New York, NY, US

2017 *Corporation Pudding*, Horton Gallery, New York, NY, US

2015 *Psychic Driving*, Retrospective Gallery, Hudson, NY, US

2013 *Corporation Pudding*, Horton Gallery, New York, NY, US

2011 *Arcadia*, Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York, NY, US

2010 Blondeau Fine Arts Services, Geneva, CH

2009 *Fifth Column*, March Jancou Fine Arts, New York, NY, US  
*Pre-code*, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, NY, US

2008 *Michael Cline*, Galleria Il Capricorno, Venice, IT

2007 *Dear K*, Galleria Il Capricorno, Venice, IT  
*Folks*, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, NY, US

2006 *Michael Cline*, Medium, BL

2005 *A Day Without Yesterday*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US  
*The Box*, Wrong Gallery, New York, NY, US  
Galleria Marta Cervera, Madrid, ES  
*Put the Solutions Away*, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, NY, US

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## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Friend Zone*, curated by Vaughn Spann, Half Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2020 *Life Still*, virtual exhibition curated by Jonathan Travis
- 2019 *Big Painting*, Patrick Parrish Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2018 *Black Mirror: Art as a Social Satire*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
- 2016 *Home Sweet Home*, Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY, US  
*Imagine*, Brand New Gallery, Milan, IT
- 2013 *Paper*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK  
*Body Language*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK  
*Nearby*, DC Moore Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2012 *I Know This But You Feel Different*, Marc Jancou Contemporary,  
New York, NY, US
- 2011 *Summer Group Show: Recent Work by Gallery Artists*, Marc Jancou  
Contemporary, New York, NY, US
- 2010 *Private Future*, curated by Michael Cline, Marc Jancou Contemporary,  
New York, NY, US  
*Rive Gauche/Rive Droite*, curated by Marc Jancou Contemporary, Paris, FR  
*Little Worlds - Hernan Bas, Michael Cline, Jules De Balincourt, Scott Reeder*,  
Luce Gallery, Turin, IT
- 2009 *New York Minute*, curated by Kathy Grayson, Museum of Contemporary Art  
Rome, IT  
*Play*, curated by Nikola Cernetic, Monica De Cardenas, Milan, IT
- 2008 *In Geneva No One Can Hear You Scream*, curated by Marc Jancou, Blondeau  
Fine Art Services, Geneva, CH
- 2006 *Panic Room - Works from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, curated by Jeffrey  
Deitch and Kathy Grayson, Deste Foundation, Athens, GR
- 2005 *Dirty Pigeons*, 96 Gillespie, London, UK  
*Little Odysseys*, curated by Nicelle Beauchene, Marianne Boesky Gallery,  
New York, NY, US  
*The General's Jamboree*, Guild and Greyshkul, New York, NY, US
- 2004 *Happy Days are Here Again*, curated by Andre Schlechtriem, David Zwirner,  
New York, NY, US  
*California Earthquakes*, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, NY, US  
*Worthless Protg*, Suburban Gallery, Chicago, IL, US  
*Rope Climb*, curated by Kathryn Hixson and Sandra Dillon, Schopf Gallery on  
Lake, Chicago, IL, US  
*Armory Show 2004*, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York, NY, US



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## PUBLICATIONS

Grayson, Kathy & Matthew Higgs, "Michael Cline," Published by JRPIRingier

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, US

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, US

François Pinault Foundation, Venice, IT

Saatchi Collection, London, UK

Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania, AU

Deste Foundation, Athens, GR

Norman Museum of Contemporary Art, KS, US

Progressive Art Collection, Cleveland, OH, US