

Clive Head: The Crossing



Studio Conversation with Clive Head

RB. *When did you begin this new body of work?*

CH. At the beginning of the summer last year. There are now 9 paintings in progress and I have begun to work large again.

I have continued to make drawings throughout this period, and regard some of them as belonging to this new series.

RB. *How do you decide which drawings to include?*

CH. There are those drawings which I made in the garden which really initiated this project, and studio-based drawings where I am inventing much in the same way as I do when I paint. It's called *The Crossing*, which I envisage as a pictorial state where ordinary life is transcended. Not all drawings that I make have that status. I continue to engage with the world directly through drawing but that is something quite different from this work.

RB. *So there is a Surrealist thread here?*

CH. In some respects. The subjects are fantastical, maybe even dream like. My main concern is with the pictorial means to create that extraordinary reality. Space and time function differently. It's not just the image that cuts through rational norms.

RB. *So would you describe these as realist paintings, or have you moved on so far from your work as a realist painter that we shouldn't use that term?*

CH. The challenge is to find a way of making sense of my reality. That's ongoing, but I know that I can't fall back on known means to represent reality. I must find my own means, my own algorithms. I stopped using the camera a few years ago. Even before then, I was always aware of the need to circumvent the way a photograph denotes reality. In the end, I concluded that photography is just incompatible with painting, and really has little to do with my understanding of the world. How I paint now seems to be more honest, more truthful, and more inclusive of everything that I am.

RB. *Why are those drawings made in the garden last summer important? They remind me of Ruskin's drawings and mantra to work directly from nature.*

CH. Because, through drawing the complexity of nature I discover all these fractal rhythms. I discover not only a web of lines and marks that make sense of all that I have witnessed, and of course the subject is constantly changing, but I also find a world of memories and imagined imagery. I draw what is out there, but also what is inside. It's that pictorial web that I can use in the studio. Some of these paintings have begun from lines taken from the garden drawings. I often invert the drawing to remove any literal references to the original subject. The drawings are a portal into an extraordinary painted world of infinite possibilities. My ties to the natural world, through the garden or the life model have nothing to do with wanting to depict these subjects but to find a framework which enables me to paint.

RB. *Framework as a process or a physical structure?*

CH. Both, and one feeds the other. The outcome that you see here is the consequence of that strategy.

RB. *That framework is obvious when I look at your drawings and paintings. There's a very distinctive assemblage of marks, lines and in your paintings, really vivid patches of colour set against each other. It's very direct, complex and strikes me as both considered and intuitive. As a visible structure it seems to be at odds with the conventions of figuration or representational art that I might expect to find. There's no fathomable reason why we should identify the subjects as clearly as we do in your work.*

CH. But that's what I have come to realise what painting is, as opposed to imaging or illustration. I create a material structure with the paint out of which I find motifs, narratives, myself. I always wanted to be a painter, but you have to throw away all those crutches, methods, imports from outside the studio to really paint. You must be true to painting.

RB. *I see the turning point in your development not back in 2013, when you started introducing double images and moved towards layering multiple images, but in 2018, when you gave up the camera or bringing any models into the studio.*

CH. That was the biggest leap. I knew I had to do that but at the same time I had no idea if I could find a way of painting that would be authoritative. It had to be visionary, believable and not academic. I always had in the back of my mind an understanding that painters like Boucher, later in life, had no need for models or preparatory drawings made from life. He could just paint, and it's 100% how he envisages what the world should be on the other side of the picture plane. It's pure painting, and it's utterly convincing.

RB. *So how are these new paintings distinguished from previous series that you have made since 2018. From the Indian Summer Series for example?*

CH. They are fuller, and perhaps they are less overtly modernist. Those large paintings from 2018 and 2019 have a more modernist fracture, emphasis on line and a reduced palette.

RB. *You were thinking about De Kooning, Gorky, Picasso?*

CH. More so perhaps, but those painters belong to a long thread that goes back to Titian, and in these new pieces I am less consciously making "modern" paintings and just letting them be the way they need to be. The Italians toyed with the idea of the trans-avant-garde which interests me, but I probably find a more convincing manifestation of this amongst the School of London painters. In hindsight, I see that the years when I was showing at Marlborough were important in this respect. Painters like Kitaj were so rounded.

RB. *And why The Crossing? Are you crossing over into an idealised place? They are all magical landscapes.*

CH. An idealised place, yes, begun in this world and, through the process of painting, gradually finding this new state of being. There is a magical realism about these paintings, an intensity, which I think is unique to this series, and then of course there is that magical state where the forms morph into new motifs. The possibilities for generating new motifs are endless if I get the brush marks in the right order.

RB. *The titles make references to Classical mythology, Shakespeare, the Bible. But you wouldn't regard these as history paintings?*

CH. No, well not in a traditional sense, but maybe my history. For the most part, I have no idea what narratives will emerge, but it will all be rooted in something that I have encountered. Maybe from a book that I have read, or a place I have visited, a memory from childhood, or even a popular film. There's no attempt to illustrate a theme, and the paintings cut across lots of different narratives. Perhaps the titles are a prod to the viewer to look more closely and to get inside the painting to spend a little time exploring it.

RB. *The series is in progress. You are now completing a second large painting. Will there be more?*

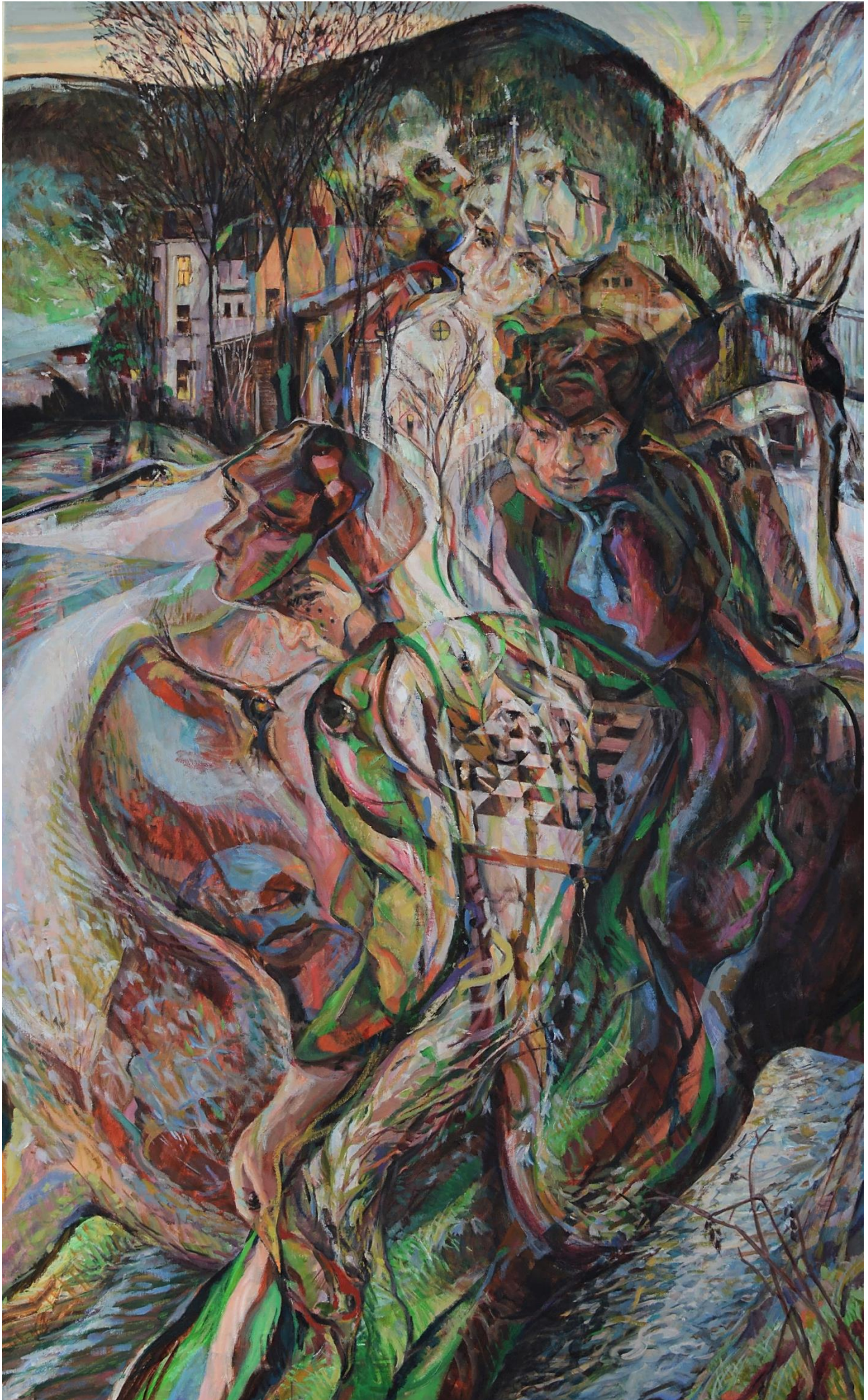
CH. Yes. The second painting is a pendant to *Pasiphae's Crib*. It's a winter painting of Northern folklore, quite the opposite of those Minoan narratives set in a Mediterranean summer, and it's also a portrait of my daughter (*Bonnie*

White Queen). There is a third large canvas underway. I have turned the drawing *Medway Galatea* on its side to start this as there are lots of good rhythms to open something. It's beginning to take shape (*Trespass in Lemon*). It's important to keep everything open. Perhaps the smaller works are complete now, but they have all been reworked many times. This project, this cycle of painting should all come to conclusion as one.

Large Paintings



Work in Progress, *Trespass in Lemon* oil on canvas 64½ x 75 inches



Bonnie White Queen 2022 oil on canvas 76¼ x 47 inches



Pasiphae's Crib 2022 oil on canvas 78¼ x 57½ inches

Easel Paintings



The Egger of Bethel 2021 oil on canvas 28 x 42 inches



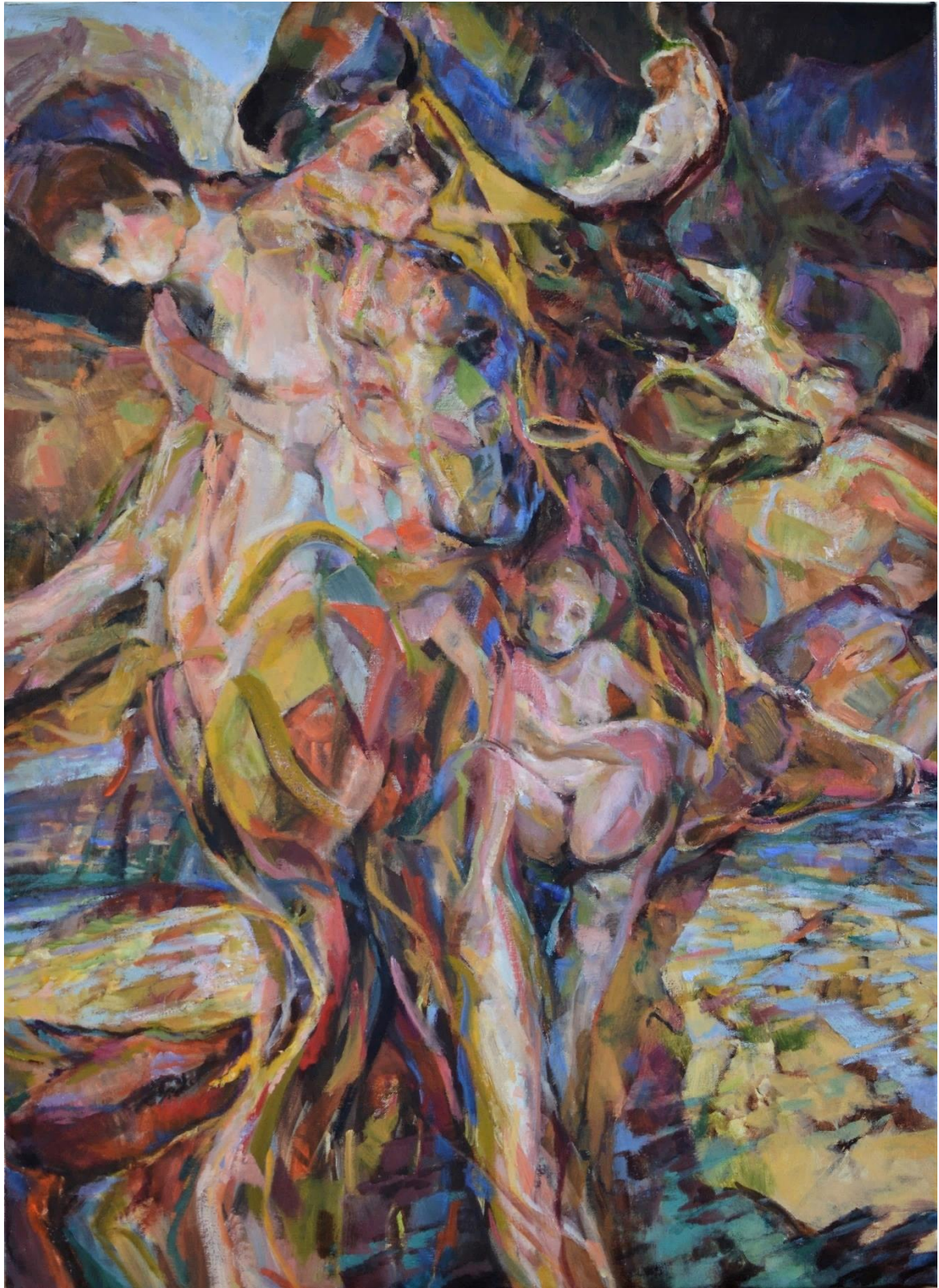
Will of Oberon 2021 oil on canvas 30¾ x 50 inches



Of Stone and Hollow Earth 2021 oil on canvas 35 x 29½ inches



Perdix and the Pilot 2021 oil on canvas 48½ x 37 inches



Trespass (Der Blaue Reiter) 2021 oil on canvas 33 x 24 inches



By a Pilgrims' Way 2021 oil on canvas 30 x 33 inches

Drawings



The Crossing 2021 graphite on paper 23 ½ x 33 inches

The Forest 2021 graphite on paper 23 ½ x 33 inches

Zoomorphic Landscape with Hemlock 2021 graphite on paper 23 ½ x 33 inches

Zoomorphic Landscape 2021 graphite on paper 23 ½ x 33 inches



Daedalus Scarp 2021 graphite on paper 33 x 23 ½ inches



The Marys of Long Friday 2021 graphite on paper 33 ¼ x 23 ½ inches



Pasiphae's Crib 2021 graphite on paper 36 ½ x 26 ½ inches



And a Child's Voice Breaks the Silence 2021 graphite on paper 28 x 18 ¼ inches



Medway Galatea 2021 graphite on paper 32 ½ x 24 ½ inches



When The Boat Comes In 2022 graphite on paper 22 x 29 ½ inches

CLIVE HEAD Bn 1965 Maidstone, Kent, England
Currently lives and Works in Gristhorpe, North Yorkshire, England

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1991 Monuments to the Moment; Paintings of the Urban Landscape, Woodlands Art Gallery, London
1995 Silent Happenings, Elizabethan Gallery, Wakefield
1999 Clive Head, Blains Fine Art, London
2001 Clive Head, Recent Paintings, Blains Fine Art, London
2002 International Cityscapes, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York
2005 Clive Head, New Paintings, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
View of London from Buckingham Palace. Commission to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of HM The Queen, Museum of London
2007 Clive Head: New Paintings, Marlborough Fine Art, London
2010 Clive Head, Modern Perspectives, National Gallery, London
2012 From Victoria to Arcadia, Dulwich Picture Gallery and Marlborough Fine Art
2017 Zoetic-Realism, Hollis Taggart Galleries, New York
2019 Clive Head, From an Indian Summer and Other Seasons, Waterhouse and Dodd, London
2020 Constellations, Pellas Gallery, Boston, Mass.
2021 The Parlour Paintings, Landau Fine Art, Montreal
-Pontone Gallery, London

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 Contemporary Realism, Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery (touring)
1991-92 Treadwell Gallery at Marcus and Marcus Gallery, Amsterdam
1991-94 Treadwell Gallery at Galerie Goetz, Basel
1996 Making a Mark, The Discerning Eye, Mall Galleries, London
Trojan, Paton Gallery, London
1997 Talent, Allan Stone Gallery, New York
2000 Urban Realism, Blains Fine Art, London
2001 Near and Far, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
Great Britain! UK in NY, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York
2002 Art Chicago, Louis K. Meisel Gallery
Photorealism at the Millennium, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
2003 Exactitude, Plus One Plus Two Gallery, London (curated by Clive Head)
Iperrealisti, Chiostro del Bramante, Rome
Realism, Flowers East Gallery, London
2004 The New Photorealists, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
Nine Real Painters, Flowers Central, London
Blow Up, New Painting and Photoreality, St. Paul's Gallery, Birmingham
Some Photorealism, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
The Prague Project, Roberson Museum and Science Centre, NY
The Big Picture, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York
2005 Art Basel, Marlborough Stand
Moscow Fine Art Fair, Marlborough Stand
2006 TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Large Urban Landscapes, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
Summer Exhibition, Marlborough Fine Art, London
Vienna Fair, Vienna, Marlborough Fine Art, London
The Reality Show, Peninsular Fine Arts Centre, Virginia
2007 TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Art Basel, Marlborough Stand
2008 TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Art Basel, Marlborough Stand
Scarborough Realists Now, Scarborough Art Gallery, UK
2009 New Photo-Realism Painting in the Digital Age, Arthur M. Berger Gallery-
Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY
TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Art Basel, Marlborough Stand
Summer Exhibition, Marlborough Fine Art, London
Art International Zurich, Perstere Contemporary Fine Art
2010 Winter Exhibition, Marlborough Fine Art, London
TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Art Basel, Marlborough Stand.
Realism: from Courbet to Duane Hanson, Kunsthal Rotterdam
Art Brussels, Marlborough Stand

2011 Art Singapore, Marlborough Stand
Accrochage, Marlborough Fine Art, London
2012 TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Masterpiece London, Marlborough Stand
Beyond Photorealism, Galerie de Bellefeuille, Montreal
2013 Women- Love and Life. Collection Klocker, Wilhelm Lehbruck
Museum, Duisburg, Germany
Photorealism: 50 Years of Hyperrealistic Painting, Kunsthalle
Tubingen, Germany
-Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
-Moderne Galerie-Saarlandmuseum, Saarbrücken, Germany
-Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, UK
TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Summer Exhibition Royal Academy of Arts, London
2014 Reality: Modern and Contemporary British Painting, Sainsbury
Centre for Visual Art, Norwich, UK
TEFAF Maastricht, Marlborough Stand
Photorealism: 50 Years of Hyperrealistic Painting, Museo de Bellas
Artes, Bilbao
2015 Reality: Modern and Contemporary British Painting, Walker Art
Gallery, Liverpool
Art Basel, Landau Stand
Art Basel Miami Beach, Landau Stand
Art Toronto, Landau Stand
2016 Photorealism: 50 Years of Hyperrealistic Painting, Art Museum of
Estonia, Tallinn
-Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels
-Osthaus-Museum Hagen, Germany
TEFAF Maastricht, Landau Stand
Art Basel, Landau Stand
FIAC, Landau Stand, Paris
Art Basel Miami Beach, Landau Stand
2017 Photorealism: 50 Years of Hyperrealistic Painting, Kunsthal
Rotterdam
-Tampa Museum of Art, Florida
The Europeans, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York
TEFAF Maastricht, Landau Stand
Art Basel, Landau Stand
FIAC, Landau Stand, Paris
Art Basel Miami Beach, Landau Stand
Art Miami, Hollis Taggart Stand
2019 Spring Show - Contemporary Artists, Waterhouse and Dodd, NY
Masterpiece London, Waterhouse and Dodd Stand
Art Miami, Waterhouse and Dodd Stand
2020 Art London, Waterhouse and Dodd Stand
2020 Figure as Form, Hollis Taggart, New York

NOTABLE PUBLIC/PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Imperial College London
Victoria and Albert Museum
Museum of London
Maria Lucia and Ingo Klöcker Collection
David Ross Collection
William Pears Group
Barclays PLC
Minneapolis Art Museum
Parrish Art Museum
Duke of Beaufort
Skip and Linda Law Collection
Louis K Meisel
Linden Nelson
Marcus Tellenbach Collection
Robert and Alice Landau
Sylvester Stallone
Steve Martin
Jools Holland
Pellas Family Collection

