

AMERICAN  
*art*  
COLLECTOR



BRIAN MCCLEAR

# Double Takes

For artist Brian McClear, painting still life and portraiture—often working on both concurrently—is a fascinating pleasure. His portraits explore the relationship a person has with their tattoos, while his still life subject matter pairs found objects to create playful stories, social commentary and stunning visual effects.

Opening in early June, McClear's show *Double Takes: Parings and Portraits* features at least 16 new, large-scale paintings hosted at Alofft Gallery in Litchfield, Connecticut. "Brian's work is as beautiful as it is thought-provoking," says Craig Connolly, Alofft Gallery director. "His use of humor, irony and nostalgia facilitates a novel and terribly poignant commentary

on the human experience."

In works like *Hand of the Father* and *Riki*, McClear demonstrates his talents in painting the human figure and their elaborate tattoo art. "I love the idea that people are collecting this tattoo artwork for all kinds of reasons," says McClear. "Some people view their tattoos as a collection, like art for your house, but in this instance, people are the canvas. Some are even on waiting lists to collect a tattoo from a particular artist. But it runs the gamut—other people are simply wanting to commemorate a happy moment or maybe a tragedy."

McClear takes photos of his tattooed subjects to use as reference for his paint-

ings later, but takes the opportunity to get know them and the stories behind the tattoos. Afterall, "the paintings are more about the person than the tattoos," he says.

For *Hand of the Father*, depicting a heavily tattooed male figure, the artist discovered that the model's tattoos were all made by his father, hence the title. "He was an old school tattoo artist," McClear says, "and I got to know a lot about him [and my model]."

As for his still life series, McClear will take found objects and arrange them to paint from life. He will also play with themes, humor and stories in these pieces, but prefers that the viewer come up with their own interpretation or connect with a painting for their own reasons. In *Closet*



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1  
*Hand of the Father*, oil on canvas, 60 x 40"

2  
The artist with his piece *Riki*, oil on canvas, 60 x 40"

3  
*Closet Doors*, oil on canvas, 48 x 48"

4  
*Broken Glass*, oil on canvas, 30 x 30"



*Doors*, showing a collection of door knobs and locks atop a wooden chest, McClear explains that he found these items placed on a curb outside a neighbor's house, set for the trash. "When I set up the painting, I was thinking about people moving on and changing attitudes," he says. "There are also so many things being discarded these days."

In *Broken Glass*, the artist dives a bit deeper into social and political commentary. The scene features an old fire alarm placed behind a folded American flag, with broken glass scattered around. "For me, the idea is that the alarm has already been pulled, the glass broken and something has already happened," McClear says. "These are some troubling times."

Speaking more to his process and technique, McClear explains that he will bounce between his still life and portrait paintings, keeping scenes realistic but with some visible gestures and mark-making. "If I'm not sure where I want to go with a painting, instead of laboring, I'll go to something else," he says. "This keeps things fresh for me."

*Double Takes: Parings and Portraits* runs from June 2 through July 2, with an opening reception on June 3 from 5 to 8 p.m. ●

**Alofft Gallery**, 41 West Street • Litchfield, CT 06759 •  
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