

# CHRISTOPHER CLAMP





# Christopher Clamp

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## *Stories In Stillness*

**Hoyt Center for the Arts**

May 23 - July 29, 2017

**Jerald Melberg Gallery**

September 16 - October 28, 2017

*Introduction by Jerald Melberg*

*Essay by Lauren Piemont*

***JERALD MELBERG***  
**GALLERY**

625 South Sharon Amity Road

Charlotte, NC 28211

704.365.3000

[gallery@jeraldmelberg.com](mailto:gallery@jeraldmelberg.com)

[www.jeraldmelberg.com](http://www.jeraldmelberg.com)



## Stories In Stillness

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Christopher Clamp is an artist who expertly weaves childhood memories of his grandfather's antique belongings into his paintings to construct his own unique style and voice. It is impossible to write about Clamp's work without discussing his deft ability to realistically render these belongings, as well as other objects of interest, in oil paint. It is also hard to ignore the sentimental value he conveys through these antique artifacts, using them to conjure up days we either knew or wish we did. The spare environments in which he situates his subjects communicate a deep reverence and respect for the items he chooses to represent, whether the item is a bottle of insecticide, an old fashioned toy, or a lone set of keys which once hung from a nail in his grandfather's kitchen. This elevates his subjects above the everyday, distancing them from pure kitsch, and carrying them into portrait-like territory. While these elements undoubtedly make his work special and incredibly alluring, they are only points of entry for viewers looking to delve more deeply into his work.

When we look closely, we find subtle clues that suggest Clamp's work is farther reaching than just atmospheric still life, and it is precisely this subtlety that serves as the driving force in all his paintings. Sometimes this force comes directly from the title of the paintings themselves. *Pride* (2016), for instance, features an old Humpty Dumpty pull toy perched precariously on a couple of stacked bricks. Visually, viewers find all the familiar "Clampisms"--a beautifully painted, vintage object situated in a simple, yet distressed-looking environment, indicative of the past and possessing a degree of loneliness. Taken with the title *Pride*, however, we are

reminded of Humpty Dumpty's nursery rhyme saga, which may set our minds racing with thoughts of other "great falls" in history, politics, or our own personal lives brought on by inflated egos or carelessness. *Empathy* (2016) has a similar effect, evoking the trials of the Trix rabbit and his eternal quest for a taste of cereal. This stirs feelings or memories of compassion or deprivation. Additionally, a pair of X-Ray glasses entitled *Foresight* (2016) may resonate with the common desire to be able to see through time and space for one's own benefit, survival, enlightenment, or entertainment.



*Pride*

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Paintings such as *Union* (2016-17) or *Duality* (2017) leave a more somber, momentous impression on viewers because they do not contain any childhood relics and the compositions are slightly more crowded. *Union*, with its Morton salt containers ringed by their own contents and watched over by a delicate butterfly, can be read as an illustration of protection that comes from within, without, or from spirits above. Conversely, *Duality*, with its two butterflies linked together by a single cocoon, might convey a message of transformation, convergence, or collaborative creation between two separate entities. Ultimately, the meanings viewers can make of either of these paintings are infinite, which is incredibly stimulating, both visually and intellectually.

*Aria* (2016) and *Birdcage* (2016) make use of that which is missing from the picture plane to create a sense of mystery, intrigue, and imagination. In *Aria*, viewers see a toy accordion with a Monarch butterfly fluttering above it. Though no one is playing the accordion, the dancing butterfly and musically-inspired title might cause a tune to enter the mind of the viewer. This makes *Aria* very whimsical, with

the potential to become both interactive and highly personal. *Birdcage*, on the other hand, conveys a more foreboding scene. Viewers see a box for a drinking bird and two feathers, one of which is floating in the atmosphere and the other of which has landed in the foreground. This spurs questions about what might have happened in the preceding moments. Was a bird snatched up by a predator? Did the bird escape its cage to fly to a more natural habitat? It is unclear, but the dynamism of *Birdcage* definitely provides endless narrative possibilities.

It is important to recognize that Clamp's intent is not to be prescriptive. The paintings are certainly aesthetically and technically strong enough to stand on their own without any added content, though the alluring auras they possess undeniably invite further attention. The real beauty here is that with no more than Clamp's gentle nudging, any significance ascribed to the work is done by the viewer in the manner of his or her choosing. It is as if he's left these objects and arrangements unattended on a surface for any of us to pick up, turn over, and take for our own, or simply leave untouched.

Lauren Piemont



**ARIA** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
20 x 16 inches

CC



**BIRDCAGE** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
20 x 16 inches



**DUALITY** 2017  
Oil on Panel  
12 x 24 inches



**UNION** 2016-2017  
Oil on Panel  
30 x 24 inches



**PASSAGE** 2015-2016  
Oil on Panel  
12 x 9 inches



**BACKUP** 2012  
Oil on Panel  
18 x 24 inches



**SECURITY** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
18 x 24 inches

**BADGE** 2017  
Oil on Panel  
6 x 12 inches



**EMPATHY** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
6 x 12 inches





**PRIDE** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
18 x 24 inches



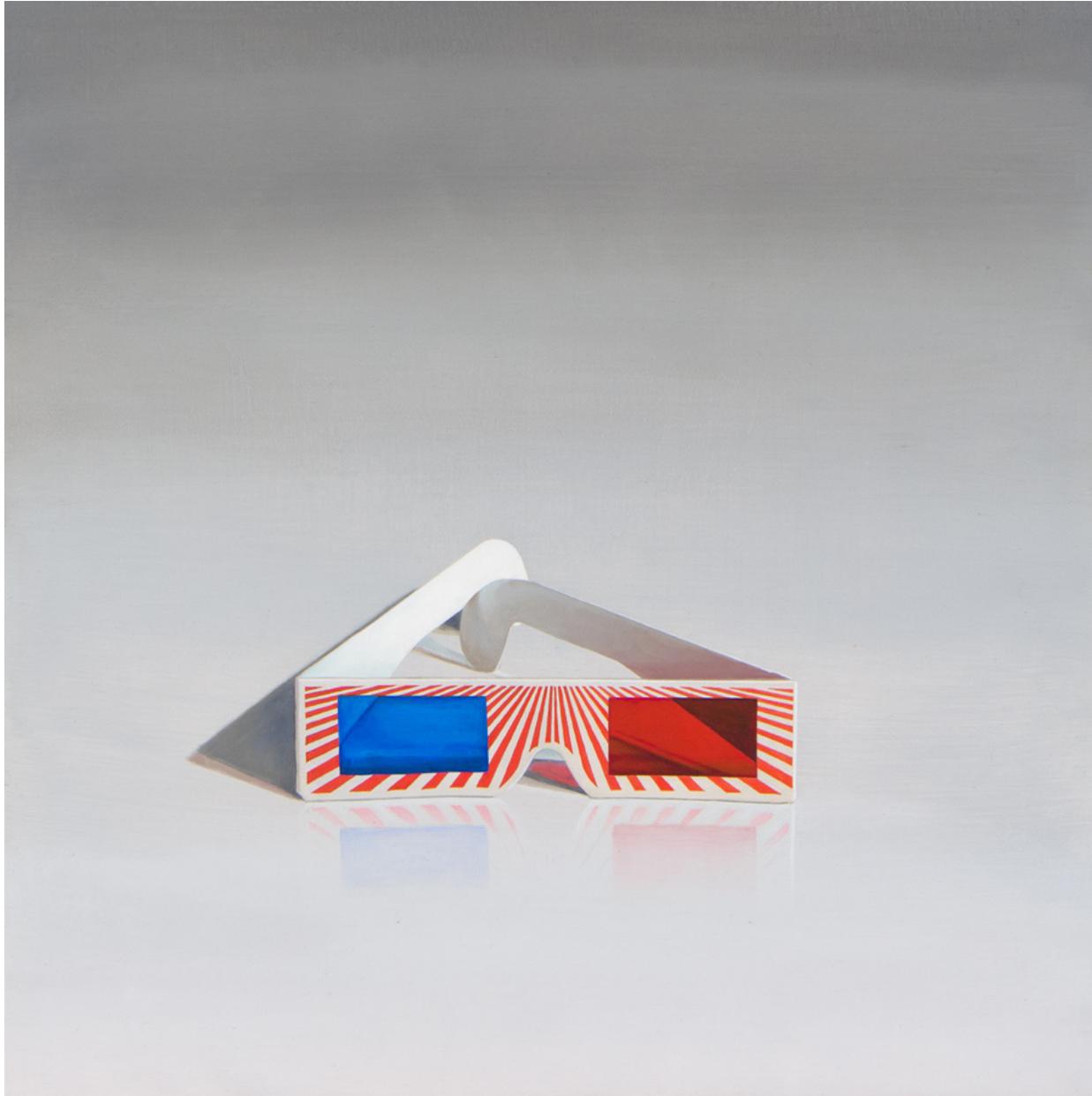
QUEENIE 2012  
Oil on Linen  
30 x 26 inches



**JULIET** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
10 x 8 inches



ROMEO 2017  
Oil on Panel  
10 x 8 inches



**HINDSIGHT** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
12 x 12 inches



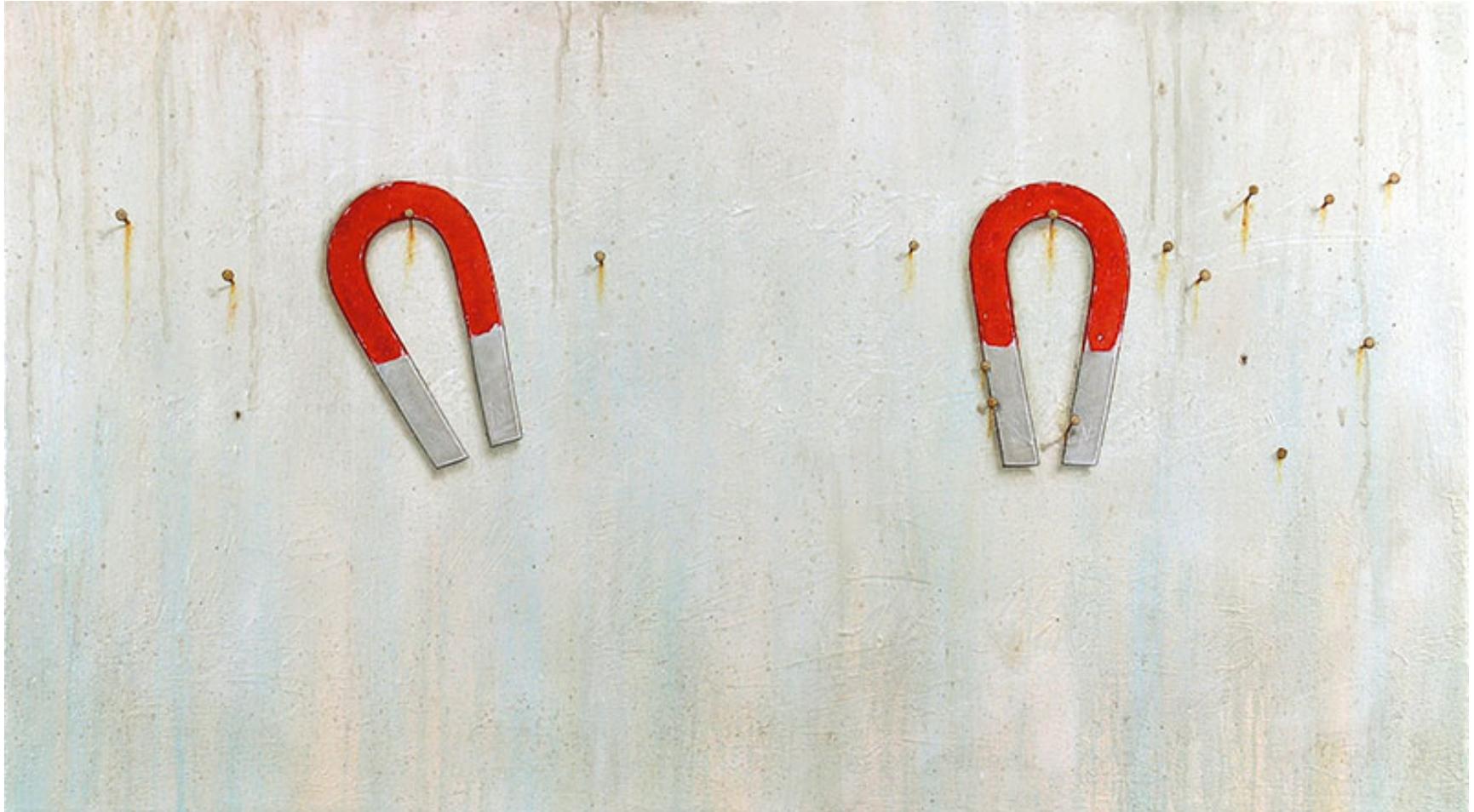
**FORESIGHT** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
12 x 12 inches



WITNESS 2008  
Oil on Panel  
18 x 24 inches



PASTIME 2012  
Oil on Panel  
18 x 24 inches



**ATTRACTION** 2005-2006  
Oil on Canvas  
18 x 32 inches



**MILK MONEY** 2008  
Oil on Panel  
16 x 20 inches



NEST I 2016  
Oil on Panel  
5 x 7 inches



**NEST II** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
5 x 7 inches



**NEST III** 2016  
Oil on Panel  
5 x 7 inches



NEST IV 2016  
Oil on Panel  
5 x 7 inches



NEST V 2016  
Oil on Panel  
10 x 8 inches

# Christopher Clamp

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b. 1979, Lexington, SC

## EDUCATION

2001 B.F.A, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2017 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Hoyt Center for the Arts, Newcastle, PA

2012 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC

2007 Sumter County Gallery of Art, Sumter, SC

2006 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC

2002 Jeane Rauche Gallery, Gaston College, South Dallas, NC

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2017 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC

2016 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC

2014 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC

2013 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
High Point University, High Point, NC  
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH  
Art Miami, Miami, FL

2012 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC

2011 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC

2010 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Art Chicago, Chicago, IL

2009 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Art Chicago, Chicago, IL  
Art Miami, Miami, FL  
Los Angeles Art Show, Los Angeles, CA  
PalmBeach3, Palm Beach, FL

2008 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Art Chicago, Chicago, IL  
Art Miami, Miami, FL  
Los Angeles Art Show, Los Angeles, CA  
PalmBeach3, Palm Beach, FL

2007 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Art Chicago, Chicago, IL  
Art Miami, Miami, FL  
Los Angeles Art Show, Los Angeles, CA  
USArtists, Philadelphia, PA

2006 Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, NC  
Art Miami, Miami, FL  
Los Angeles Art Show, Los Angeles, CA  
Palm Beach Contemporary, Palm Beach, FL  
Art Chicago, Chicago, IL

2005 Arnot Museum, Elmira, NY  
Emerging Artists, Scottsdale, AZ

2004 Center of the Earth, Charlotte, NC  
Gallery 5, Rock Hill, SC

- 2003 J. Cacciola Gallery, New York, NY  
Hodges Taylor Gallery, Charlotte, NC
- 2002 City Art Gallery, Columbia, SC
- 2001 The Spartanburg County Museum of Art, Spartanburg, SC  
South Carolina Triennial Exhibition, South Carolina State  
Museum, Columbia, SC  
Spratt Burroughs Gallery, York, SC
- 2000 Museum of York County, Rock Hill, SC  
Rutledge Galleries, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

**SELECTED COLLECTIONS**

- Museum of York County, Rock Hill, SC
- Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC
- Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties, SC
- Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, GA
- American Tire Corporation, Huntersville, NC



**STRIPES** 2017  
Oil on Panel  
3 x 5 inches



**DAMSEL** 2017  
Oil on Panel  
3 x 5 inches



Chris Clamp's studio, Charlotte, NC

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

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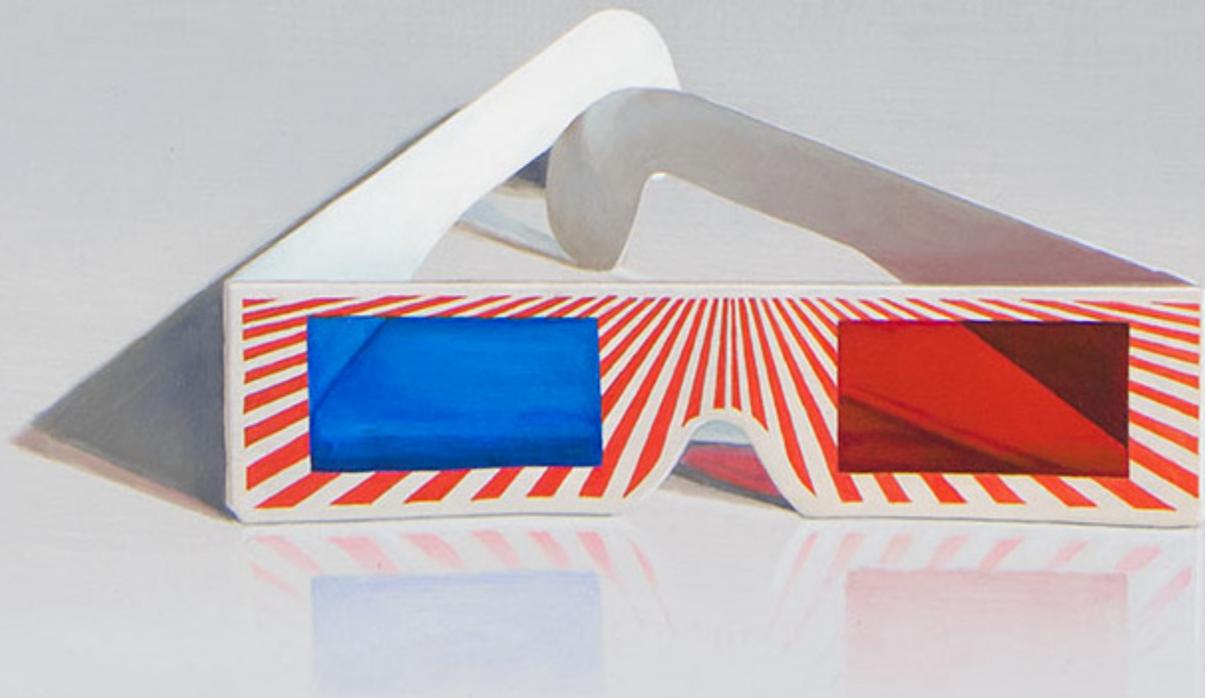
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*JERALD MELBERG*  
GALLERY