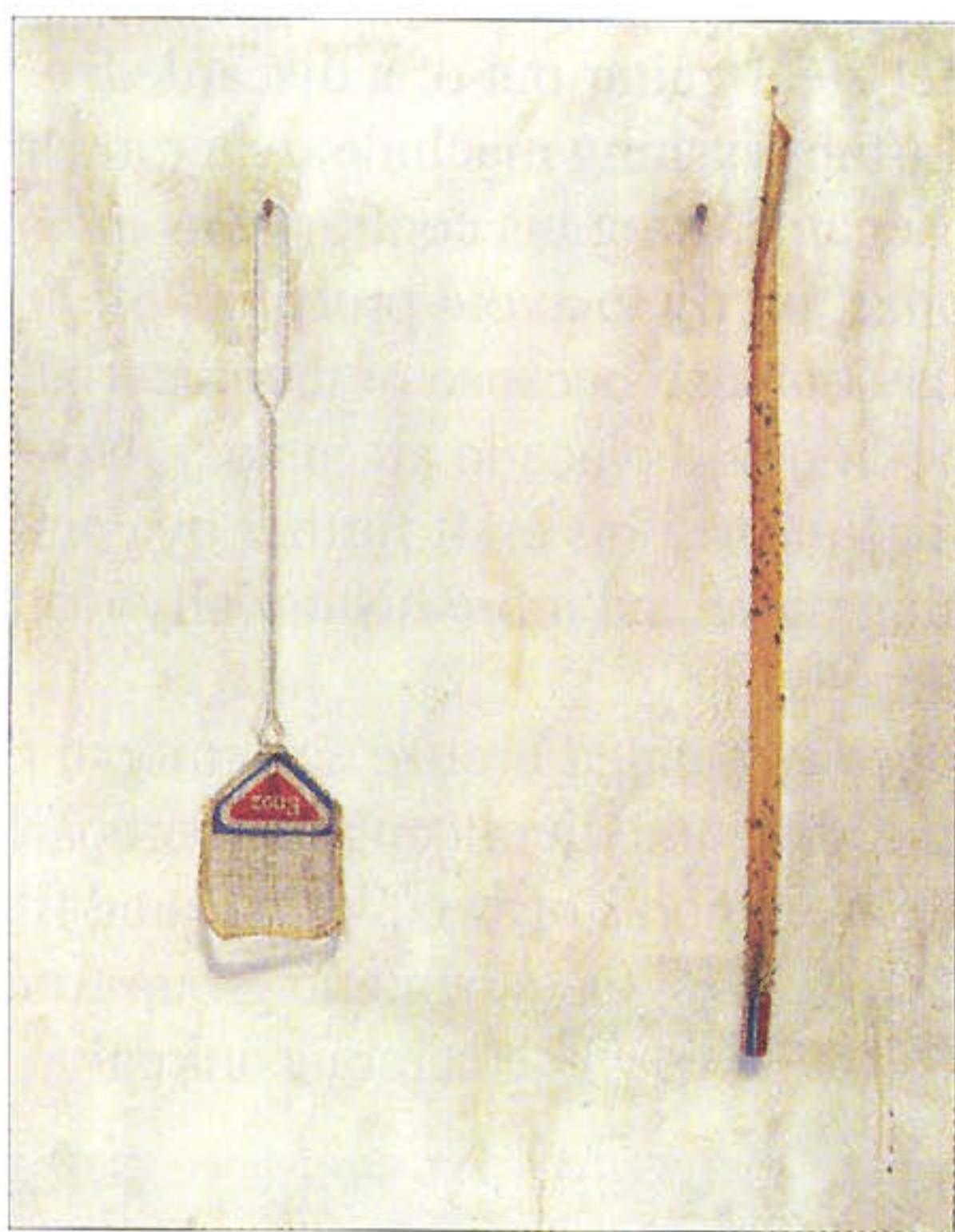


Christopher Clamp

Jerald Melberg

Charlotte, North Carolina

Christopher Clamp believes in the power of everyday objects to stir emotions. For the affecting oil paintings in “Commonplace Treasures,” a collection



Christopher Clamp, *Finding Love in Acts of Desperation*, 2002, oil on canvas, 36" x 29".

Jerald Melberg.

of narrative still lifes, the Charlotte-based artist draws freely from childhood memories and feelings of dislocation and loneliness.

The images seem innocent at first. In one, a flyswatter and a coil of flypaper hang on a wall. But in the South, flyswatters are traditional instruments of corporal punishment, and there are a multitude of dead flies clinging to the sticky coil. As is often the case in Clamp's paintings, the viewer's uneasy feelings were brought into focus by the title: *Finding Love in Acts of Desperation* (2002). In *The Homecoming* (2002), Clamp depicts a toy barn placed on two decaying bricks. Crusted with mortar, the bricks seem to signify loss, in contrast to the security offered by the bright toy barn. *Fragile* (2005) shows a bird's nest resting on a cardboard box for a hunting slingshot, with stones and a single blue egg nearby. The image poignantly recalls the delicacy and easy acts of destruction of childhood.

Clamp augments these works with what might be called ghost words. Using the end of a brush, he incises letters into the paintings' richly textured backgrounds. These fragments do not spell anything, but they add a layer of meaning, as if representing a story struggling to get out.

—**Richard Maschal**