

# SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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## How a Former Museum Night Guard Has Become the Toast of the Art World— and the Talk of Miami

Artist John McAllister, who worked as a night guard at New York's Metropolitan Museum for years, will be featured at two major galleries this December

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Artist John McAllister in his new, 1,400-square-foot studio which overlooks the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts.

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John McAllister studied photojournalism in college, but you'd never know it from his paintings—radiant works featuring fantastical flowers and patterns in sun-drenched hues. “I can’t remember a time in my life I wasn’t painting, but I had this idea that you couldn’t be taught to paint,” he recalls thinking as an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin. “Then I realized I was missing out by not studying it. I also realized I was a terrible photographer.” While his early pieces relied on real-life events (fires, for instance), McAllister soon found even more captivating inspiration in the early-modernist still lifes and landscapes he admired in museums—especially New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, where, as a night guard from 2000 to 2004, after college, he had plenty of time to look at masterpieces. His favorite works, by Post-Impressionists such as Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse, and Édouard Vuillard, captured “frivolity, hedonism, and pleasure,” he explains. “Instead of making pretty pictures about something serious, I realized I could be serious about making pretty pictures.”



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A native of Louisiana, McAllister has lived a fairly itinerant life, hopscotching from Austin to Manhattan to Los Angeles and back to Brooklyn. Two years ago he and his family put down real roots in Florence, Massachusetts, a faded industrial town near the artsy enclave of Northampton. Now in his largest studio to date, a 1,400-square-foot factory space overlooking the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, he is able to create his sybaritic scenes of botanicals and interiors on an increasingly grand scale, sometimes on canvases as large as 14 by six feet. His new paintings are on view, from December 1–4, in a solo booth for James Fuentes Gallery at the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) fair in Miami Beach, as well as in a solo show, through December, at Berlin's Wentrup Gallery.



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These exhibitions speak to McAllister's growing international appeal. His paintings are in the collections of German princess Gloria von Thurn und Taxis, Puerto Rican psychiatrist/art patron César Reyes, and Canadian fashion maven Joe Mimran (of Club Monaco and Joe Fresh fame). Mimran was instantly attracted to the way McAllister combines decorative patterns with electrifying colors. "There's an old-world, romantic style to him," Mimran says. "It's just charming."

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