

HOLLIS TAGGART

Hollis Taggart Presents First Major US Solo Show of Pioneering Artist and Arts Educator Brett Taylor, Founder of the Aegean School of Fine Arts

***Icarus* On View September 14 – October 14, 2023**

August 23, 2023 – Hollis Taggart is pleased to present *Icarus*, the first ever major exhibition devoted to the artist Brett Taylor in the United States. Featuring around a dozen paintings from the 1960s and 70s, the exhibition celebrates Taylor's distinctive visual language and imaginative approach to capturing his surroundings on the Greek island of Paros, where he established the Aegean School of Fine Arts in 1966. Influenced by Greek culture as well as the Mediterranean-inspired artists before him, Taylor immersed himself in the climate and lifestyle of his adopted homeland. Despite his impact on hundreds of students and founding a school that still operates today, Taylor's work remains largely unknown. *Icarus*, on view on the second floor of Hollis Taggart from September 14 through October 14, aims to introduce audiences to this pioneering visual artist whose life was cut tragically short at age forty. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, September 14, from 5-8PM.

Brett Taylor (1943-1983) developed his innovative approach to painting—merging storytelling, surrealism, and figurative abstraction—while a student at the Tyler School of Art in the 1960s. Described by his friend and fellow arts teacher Wynn Parks as “one of the far-flung children of the sixties,” Taylor moved to Greece while still a master's student, following in the footsteps of centuries of artists, poets, and writers who sought inspiration from Greek mythology, culture, and landscape. Settling on the island of Paros, Taylor opened the Aegean School of Fine Arts – known today as the Aegean Center – in 1966, at the young age of twenty-three. Taylor's charisma, passion for teaching, and multidisciplinary approach to arts education – as well as the fact that the school had no entrance requirements or grades – led to the school's popularity among a generation eager for new experiences and freedom from the confines of tradition.

Taylor's frenetic paintings reflect his spontaneous and exuberant approach to life as well as the energy and environs of the Aegean. Fragments of nature – a wave in the sea, the sparkle of the sun, a cloud in the sky, a solitary tree – are peppered throughout Taylor's canvases, interspersed with figures of lovers and squiggles that at times almost resemble musical notes. As noted by the artist's friend and art historian Frank Galuszka, “the shocking Aegean light not only isolates and flattens forms, it confuses the perception of distances.” Taylor's approach to capturing this light combined with his Cubist fracturing of space results in intoxicating works that feel surprisingly contemporary despite the evident influence of his predecessors such as Matisse, Braque, and Picasso.

Whether it is because his life was removed from the capitals of the twentieth-century art world or because it was cut short by alcoholism at age forty, Taylor's work has not been the subject of many exhibitions or scholarly attention. “We are pleased to bring this visionary artist's extraordinary oeuvre to light,” said Hollis Taggart. “It has always been our gallery's mission to restore attention, both academically and commercially, to artists who have fallen under public notice. We are delighted to be part of a larger effort to re-establish interest in Brett Taylor's life and work.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue containing essays by art historians Peter Hastings Falk and Wynn Parks as well as archival material. It is the most comprehensive publication about the artist published to date.

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has

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sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, market trends and opportunities.

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