

CLARENCE MAJOR

Consider

Dearly beloved, if you like, call this an allegory.
One is implicated when one picks up the brush.
A subjective and eminently modern question:
Problem of subject matter!
Start up the ladder or start anywhere.
Consider the girl with bed-head hair.

Consider the Apocalypse in smoke.
Consider Tanner at his easel.
Consider the solicitous suitor.
On his knees before the vivacious girl!
She loves the Russian Ballet—nineteenth century
version.
Consider her humor and zest.

Consider the girl wearing a gold-trimmed cloak:
Consider the left eye bigger than the right!
Consider Cezanne's freshly cut carrot.
He says it can start a revolution.
Revolution means rotation—progress in an orbit.
Find an orbit in an apple, in a roundabout.

Or in that mahogany tea table!
Consider Bonnard's mistress, Renee:
Consider the grief of Renee—dead in a hotel room.
Or consider a bar full of rowdy men drinking beer.
You are implicated from the start.
So you must make progress in that orbit!

Clarence Major is a prizewinning poet, painter, and fiction writer. As a finalist for the National Book Award, he won a Bronze Medal for his book *Configurations: New and Selected Poems 1958–1998*. He is the recipient of the Western States Book Award, the National Council on the Arts Grant, a New York Cultural Foundation Award, the Stephen Henderson Poetry Award for Outstanding Achievement, and the 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award in the Fine Arts presented by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. He is distinguished professor emeritus at the University of California, Davis.

BO BARTLETT

Oligarchy, 2016
oil on linen, 120 x 88 in.



COURTESY THE ARTIST