

SPOILS OF WAR

Hector Rene's classical artillery

I'VE SERVED in the military since 2007 and now I'm a sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserve. During my time in Iraq, my camera became an extension of me; I obsessively photographed everything I saw and later used that work to apply to the School of Visual Arts in New York, where I studied photography under the G.I. Bill. I spent a lot of time looking at Dutch and Flemish still lifes from the 16th and 17th century, as well as classical portraits, and became interested in art history's narrative of power and affluence. The military objects in my work are borrowed from other veterans, remnants of their service. Although they may seem foreign, they are as banal to veterans as paintbrushes are to an artist.

—As told to Sara Cravatts

