

(April 30 - May 23)

2— The Front Room

THOMAS LANIGAN-SCHMIDT

The True Praxis of Doty Page, Willy Nilly & the Book of Roof, Read Daily by Savant in the Cathedral of St. Anamnesis, & the Sacred Dentures of Emma Street



Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt mines culture's margins for a sense of the ecstatic. In his work, plastic wrap, trash bags, tape, staples, pipe cleaners, coupons, magazine cut-outs, the rare rhinestone, and other found debris are forged into baroque exuberance. His creative practice is the direct correlate to the condition of the Catholic working-class from which he comes, finding, ideally, faith in the immaterial and transcending constraints through necessary ingenuity. An embedded gay consciousness, informed by theology and philosophy's moral purview, suffuses his approach—combined, in equal measure, with a drag aesthetic, of something more splendidly becoming something else. Not silver, not gold, but the performance of opulence takes place in the small theater of his pieces.

Pot-holders commemorate and diffuse the heat of things desired; place mats hold the place of memory and loss. Lasagna pans recall expedient full-family service and the domestic scale of a TV dinner tray. Tape and foil patens—plates, usually silver, which hold the Eucharist during Catholic mass—and other ritualistic forms are synonymous with prized household decorative accents.

The dense surfaces of these collages resemble Byzantine mosaics, Mid-American immigrant grottoes (made of sea shells and concrete), and the kind of ad hoc sacred objects covertly fashioned during historic periods of iconoclasm. Reflective, glittering, and iconoclast in spirit, the work's intricate idiosyncrasies and Technicolor luminosity speak plainly of sexuality, the conflict of faith and sentiment's capricious command.

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Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt was born in 1948 in Elizabeth, New Jersey and has lived and worked in New York since moving to the city at the age of 16. A self-taught protégé of Jack Smith, Charles Ludlam and other constituents of the '60's downtown counterculture, his early work was displayed in pioneering installations and drag performances in his Lower East Side apartment. He has since exhibited extensively in national and international solo and group exhibitions, including the 1984 Venice Biennale; the 1991 Whitney Biennial; the Whitney Museum's 1999 canonizing survey, *The American Century: Art and Culture 1900-2000*; at the former Holly Solomon Gallery, New York; and most recently at Pavel Zoubok Gallery, New York. His work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum and the New York Public Library. A cultural figure as well as an artist, in June of 2009, Lanigan-Schmidt was commemorated by Michelle and Barack Obama for his participation in the 1969 Stonewall Riots, on the occasion of the protests' 40th anniversary and their pivotal affect on the gay rights movement.

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Image:

Augustine, Student at Carthage, 2006

Tin foil, doily, magazine and book cut-outs, pipe cleaner, plastic bag, cellophane, fabric, tape, staples.

Courtesy of the artist and Pavel Zoubok Gallery

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