

# **BYZANTINE PARALLELS**

## **THOMAS LANIGAN-SCHMIDT**

**April 10–May 22, 2021**

Parker Gallery is proud to present *Byzantine Parallels*, the first solo exhibition on the West Coast by the pioneering New York-based artist Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt. The exhibition includes a section of panels from the artist's *Byzantine Neo-Platonic Rectangle* series (1986-1993), as originally installed at the legendary Holly Solomon Gallery in 1993. Early sculptures, together with works from the last few years will be on view, providing rich examples from the artist's uncompromising and radical practice spanning over 50 years. This exhibition is conceived in collaboration with Pavel Zoubok Fine Art, New York.

Known for his extraordinary creations in foil, plastic, and glitter—decidedly anti-monumental, homespun materials—the artist's intricate and unabashedly hand-made works are equally informed by his working class, Catholic upbringing and his gay identity. A teenage runaway from New Jersey, Lanigan-Schmidt found community with the street kids and patrons of the Stonewall Inn in the West Village, actively participating in the Stonewall riots of 1969 and later forming influential friendships with fellow art world luminaries Jack Smith, Henry Geldzahler and Charles Ludlam.

An awareness of contemporary practices and art criticism provided Lanigan-Schmidt with the necessary tools to pursue his own, idiosyncratic artistic path. Combining mythological and biblical sources with childhood memories, he has continued to carve out a singular aesthetic of densely layered multimedia constructions that relish in their colloquial extravagance, while remaining deeply spiritual at their core.

As curator Dan Cameron notes, “By the early 1970s, Tommy...was becoming disenchanted with the idea of the artist as a professional figure, preferring to think of himself as one who has a spiritual vocation that happens to make beautiful things by hand.”<sup>1</sup> In a later essay on the artist, Cameron writes, “Lanigan-Schmidt's work was unabashedly Catholic in its references, and it seemed fully invested in the notion that art should emerge less from dueling schools of continental thought than from the artist's personal psychic repertoire of tics, quirks, secrets and obsessions.”<sup>2</sup>

The exhibition's title is taken from Clement Greenberg's essay in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*—an influential text for the artist, which also served as the influence for his *Byzantine Neo-Platonic Rectangle* series, transcendent panels of “stained glass” in full color, achieved through sophisticated patterning.

<sup>1</sup> Dan Cameron, "A Quality of Faith: Notes on the Art of Thomas Lanigan Schmidt," in *Thomas Lanigan Schmidt: Placemats & Potholders (Memory and Desire)*. Exh. cat. (New York: Pavel Zoubok Gallery, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Cameron, "The Least Shall Be Greatest," *Howl! Archive Publishing Editions* (Volume 1, No. 270), p. 106.

**Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt (b. 1948 in Elizabeth, NJ) lives and works in New York, NY. The artist has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including a critically acclaimed retrospective at MoMA PS1 in 2012, curated by Peter Eleey. The artist was represented by Holly Solomon from 1975 to 1998, mounting nine solo exhibitions with the gallery during that time. Recent solo exhibitions include *Tenemental: With Sighs Too Deep for Words*, Howl! Happening, New York (2018); *Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt: Mysterium Tremendum*, Rockland Art Center, NY (2013); and *Ecce Homo: Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt & The Art of Rebellion*, Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NY (2013). His work has been included in many significant group exhibitions, including *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1950-2000*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1999), the 1980 and 1984 Venice Biennales, and the 1991 Whitney Biennial. In 2009, the artist was invited to the White House by President Barack Obama to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, a watershed moment for the Gay Rights Movement. Ten years later, his work graced the cover of *Artforum*, commemorating the Stonewall Riot's fiftieth anniversary. In addition to his numerous teaching positions over the years, Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt has served on the governing board of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine since 1992.**

**The artist's work is represented in major public collections worldwide, including the Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley, CA; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Groninger Museum, The Netherlands; Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen, Germany; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.**