

MoMA PS1 PRESENTS RETROSPECTIVE OF THOMAS LANIGAN-SCHMIDT

Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt: Tender Love Among the Junk
November 18, 2012–April 1, 2013
2nd Floor, MoMA PS1

(Long Island City, NY—November 18, 2012) MoMA PS1 presents the largest survey to date of Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt (American, b. 1948), comprising 85 works dating from 1967 to 2005, including two of the artist's seminal installation environments, which the artist re-created onsite at MoMA PS1. Organized by MoMA PS1 Curator Peter Eleey, *Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt: Tender Love Among the Junk* is on view on the 2nd floor of MoMA PS1 through April 1, 2013.

Lanigan-Schmidt's mixed-media constructions, collages, and installations are marked by a trashy opulence concocted from household items, street-scavenged detritus, and dollar stores. Creating Byzantine decorations and medieval icons from plastic wrap, cellophane, aluminum foil, nail polish, tinsel, and glitter, Lanigan-Schmidt pioneered a maximalist aesthetic that comingled gay sexuality, class struggle, and religious faith. He bucked the reductive tastes of Conceptualism and Minimalism that dominated his youth, mingling high with low, and sacred with profane, to create a radically decorative practice that, despite its influence, has stubbornly resisted assimilation into the history of American art.

In the late 1960s, Lanigan-Schmidt departed the working-class immigrant Catholic and Greek Orthodox confines of Linden, New Jersey, for the East Village, where he initially made his art out amid the trash of the street. Shortly thereafter, he began creating fantastical installations in his two-room apartment on East 4th Street. Often dressed in drag, Lanigan-Schmidt toured friends and visitors through elaborately ornamented environments such as *The Sacristy of the Hamptons* (1969) and *The Gilded Summer Palace of Czarina Tatlina* (1969-1970), which featured foil renditions of relics, regal paraphernalia and liturgical objects alongside sculptures of glittering rats and bedbugs. As a teenage runaway arriving in New York, Lanigan-Schmidt quickly found a community. In June of 1969, he was present at the Stonewall riots in Greenwich Village, the series of spontaneous and violent demonstrations against a police raid of a gay bar that ignited the contemporary gay rights movement; he remains among the few surviving veterans of the event. He met the influential curator Henry Geldzahler, as well as the theater artists Jack Smith and Charles Ludlam, who together came to serve as mentors and friends.

Describing Lanigan-Schmidt's "new orthodoxy of Queer Catholicism," Ludlam summarized the artist's aesthetic as a reflection of his "taste for botanicas, gypsy storefronts and Puerto Rican boys [combined] with the grandeur that was Rome... the grandeur that was St. Petersburg. ... a genre more queer than Mexican folk art and a thousand times more detailed than Macy's Christmas windows." For more than four decades, Lanigan-Schmidt has mined his surroundings, taking as much from the kitchen drawer as from the church altar and the drag queen make-up kit. Dissolving the boundaries between folk art, fine art, and kitsch, he conflates the value of his modest materials with the marginal respect he feels is accorded to those of his class background and sexual identity. "To survive," he insists, "those on the bottom must transform these materials into one art form or another to express self-worth in a society that considers them almost worthless." According to his "theology of glitter and poverty," the artist notes, "it is not the gold but the glow that counts," and in the right light you can glimpse redemption among the junk.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt (American; b. Elizabeth, NJ, 1948) lives and works in New York City. He has been exhibiting his work since the late 1960s (in galleries since 1973), and has presented his work at institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Queens Museum of Art, both in New York; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; University Museum, University of California at Berkeley, CA; Groninger Museum, Gronigen, The Netherlands; and the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany. He participated in the International Pavilion of the 41st Venice Biennale (1984) and the United States pavilion in the 39th Venice Biennale (1980). Lanigan-Schmidt's work is represented in various public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt: Tender Love Among the Junk is organized by Peter Eeley, Curator, MoMA PS1, with Jocelyn Miller, Curatorial Assistant.

The exhibition is made possible by the MoMA PS1 Annual Exhibition Fund.

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For downloadable high-resolution images, register at MoMA.org/press.
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Hours:

MoMA PS1 is open from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Thursday through Monday. It is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. artbook@MoMA PS1 is open from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Thursday through Sunday.

Admission:

\$10 suggested donation; \$5 for students and senior citizens; free for MoMA members and MoMA admission ticket holders. The MoMA ticket must be presented at MoMA PS1 within thirty days of date on ticket and is not valid during Warm Up or other MoMA PS1 events or benefits.

Directions:

MoMA PS1 is located at 22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Ave in Long Island City, Queens, across the Queensboro Bridge from midtown Manhattan and is easily accessible by bus and subway. Traveling by subway, take either the E or M to Court Square-23 Street; the 7 to 45 Road-Courthouse Square; or the G to Court Sq or 21 St-Van Alst. By bus, take the Q67 to Jackson and 46th Ave or the B62 to 46th Ave.

MoMA PS1 Background:

MoMA PS1 is one of the largest and oldest organizations in the United States devoted to contemporary art. Established in 1976 by Alanna Heiss, MoMA PS1 originated from The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, a not-for-profit organization founded five years prior with the mission of turning abandoned, underutilized buildings in New York City into artist studios and exhibition spaces. P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, as it then was known, became an affiliate of The Museum of Modern Art in 2000.

Support:

Operations and programs of MoMA PS1 are supported by the MoMA PS1 Board of Directors; the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; Helen M. Marshall, Queens Borough President; Council Member James Van Bramer; The Council of

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