

GAVLAK

ANTHONY SONNENBERG

Cannons Buried in Flowers

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May 20 - July 1, 2023
GAVLAK Los Angeles

When folks individually and collectively defy the limiting sex and gender roles prescribed by prejudicial societies to enact authentic self-expression, their queerness is resistant and performative. But can objects be queer? The answer—a resounding yes—can be found in Anthony Sonnenberg’s solo exhibition *Cannons Buried in Flowers* at GAVLAK Los Angeles, on view from May 20 - July 1, 2023.

Anthony Sonnenberg’s newest body of sculptures follows the development of unique processes, passions, and investigations undertaken over the past decade. Sonnenberg builds clay structures that he covers with silk flowers, porcelain tchotchkes, and yards of textile trimmings. Spraying on layers of liquid ceramic slip, he obscures finer details of the objects, and consolidates his sculptures structurally and formally. Through glazing and subsequent re-firings, Sonnenberg offers a variety of matte, glassy, and lustrous finishes and range from mauve and chartreuse to frosty blue and rusty pink. Sonnenberg’s sculptures are filled with texture and event.

Personal Monument With Pipe (2023) unites melancholy and celebratory sensations. The sculpture stands three feet tall, and mirrors the shape of a gravestone. Sonnenberg has adorned it with flowers, frills, and figurines of angels and teddy bears. As its title infers, the sculpture’s pipe turns it into a bong. With his utilitarian anti-monument to impermanence, mourning and memory, Sonnenberg establishes a productively tense orchestration between camp, aesthetics, and affect.

This exhibition’s title is a reference to Fryderyk Chopin, whose compositions were called “cannons buried in flowers” by the composer Robert Schumann, who recognized the ways Chopin embedded Polish folk song traditions in his Romantic music, stirring national sentiments in the aftermath of a war that left many Poles exiled. Sonnenberg appreciates such drama and coded meanings, as they’re present in his work too. Sonnenberg’s openly hidden messages operate as “safe harbors, opportunities to build community, and a refuge.”

Sonnenberg’s artworks also mark the artist’s personal journey with homosexuality and his experiences as a fat-bodied man. He reckons the pleasures of standing out against those of fitting in, and challenges normative standards of desirability. This potential for emotive content and discovery is surfaced in his ceramics through what Sonnenberg calls “soft power.” Challenging the status quo in the art world entrenched

hierarchies, designations like art, craft, and design offer contexts through which artworks may be approached and appreciated; they can also feel like limitations. Sonnenberg contends that designating objects as decorative has long been a form of denigration in the visual arts. In recent art history, the term gets deployed to describe artworks as frivolous or lacking seriousness. “Used pejoratively, the term ‘decorative’ is especially marginalizing,” he says. Recognizing that the right to self-determination is a shining goal for queer folks, might we not cast an equally generous eye over objects, allowing them to exist in all of their uniqueness and contradictions.

The apparent pleasure Anthony Sonnenberg takes in creating works that magnify and celebrate queer identity is resoundingly evident in *Cannons Buried in Flowers*: His sculptures drip with flora, take pride in their difference, and are deeply imbued with queer feeling.

Dean Daderko
May 2021

ANTHONY SONNENBERG

b. 1986, Graham TX

Lives and works in Fayetteville, AR

Anthony Sonnenberg works reside in the permanent collections of the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Bentonville, AR and the Archie Bray Permanent Collection, Helena, MT. Recent solo exhibitions include presentations for the Art Museum of South East Texas, Beaumont, TX (2018); the Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX (2015); and the Old Jail Art Center, Albany, TX. His work was featured in recent group exhibitions including the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH (2020); the Fuller Craft Museum, Houston, TX (2019); the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX (2019); the Institute of Contemporary Art at MeCA, Portland, ME (2017); and the Texas Biennial, Austin, TX (2011).



Portrait of the artist Anthony Sonnenberg



Installation view: *Cannons Buried in Flowers*, 2023
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Anthony Sonnenberg

Gold Vase (Godstar), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze, gold luster

12 1/2 x 7 x 6 in

31.8 x 17.8 x 15.2 cm





Anthony Sonnenberg

Personal Monument with Pipe (Will You Always Be There?), 2022

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

33 x 23 x 9 in

83.8 x 58.4 x 22.9 cm





Anthony Sonnenberg

The Bunny Vase, 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

21 x 17 x 14 in

53.3 x 43.2 x 35.6 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Three- Prong Candelabra (Fly Away Some Day), 2022

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

23 x 10 x 10 in

58.4 x 25.4 x 25.4 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Four Prong Candelabra (In Your Wildest Dreams), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

21 x 9 x 9 in

53.3 x 22.9 x 22.9 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg
Atropes Daisy Chain (for F.G.T.), 2023
Porcelain, glaze, steel, glass
144 x 5 x 5 in
365.76 x 12.7 x 12.7 cm



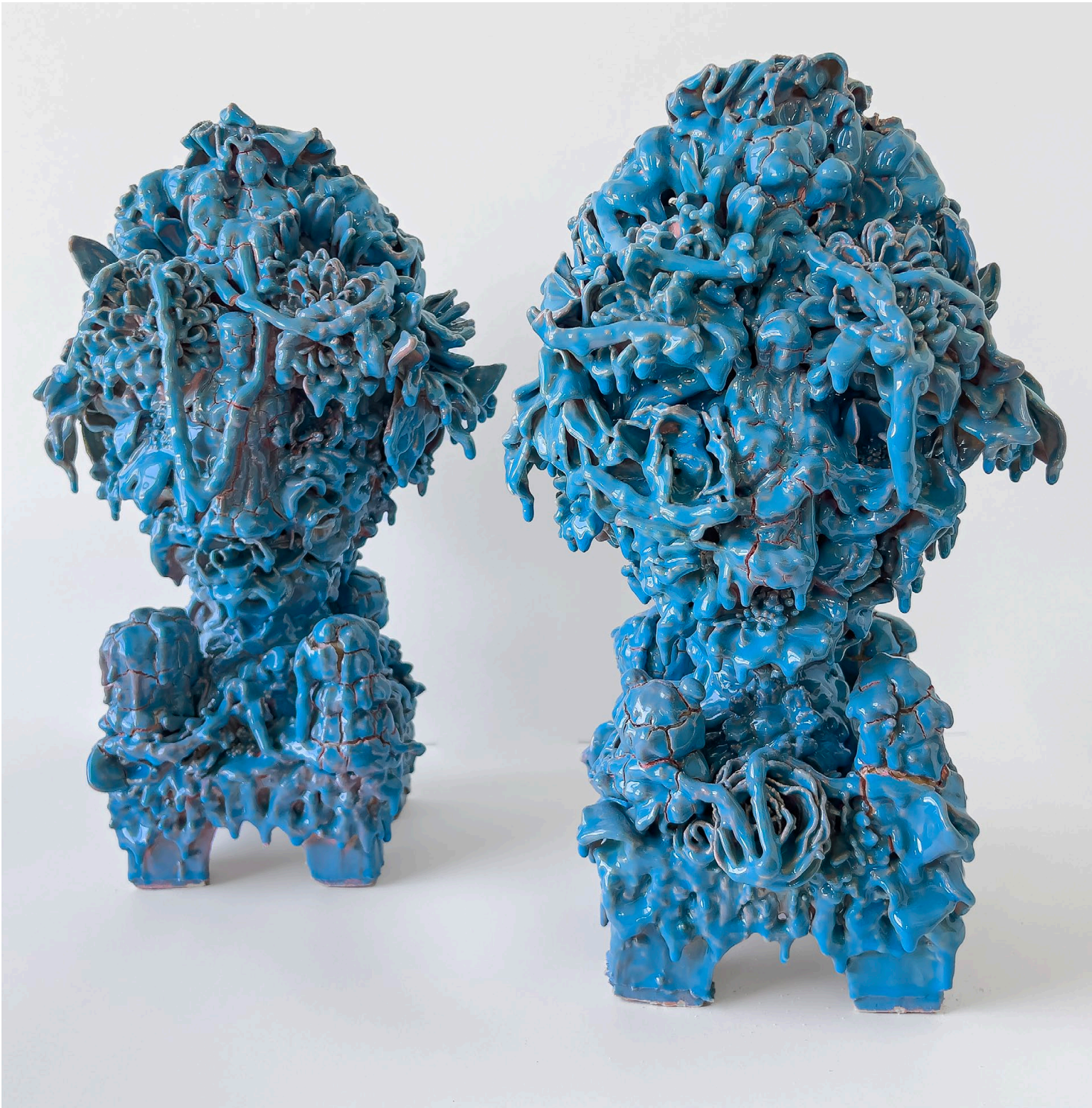
Anthony Sonnenberg

Pair of Wall Sconces, 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze, gold luster

17 1/2 x 12 x 7 in

44.5 x 30.5 x 17.8 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg
Pair of Cassolettes (Feel It All Over), 2023
Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze
16 x 10 x 6 in
40.6 x 25.4 x 15.2 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Candelabra (To Hell and Back), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

17 1/2 x 14 x 8 in

44.5 x 35.6 x 20.3 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Small Blue Candelabra (A Special Treat), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze, gold luster

13 1/2 x 11 x 12 in

34.3 x 27.9 x 30.5 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Double Prong Candelabra (Lovey Dovey Lovely One), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze, gold luster

20 x 10 x 8 in

50.8 x 25.4 x 20.3 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Three- Prong Candelabra (Fly Away Some Day), 2022

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

23 x 10 x 10 in

58.4 x 25.4 x 25.4 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Pair of Candelabras (No Way to Control It), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

16 x 10 x 6 in

40.6 x 25.4 x 15.2 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Vase (Until You See Stars), 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes, glaze

13 1/2 x 12 x 11 in

34.3 x 30.5 x 27.9 cm



Anthony Sonnenberg

Double-tier polka-dot Chandelier (Ode to Peak Bottom Culture),
2021 - 2023

Porcelain over stoneware and found ceramic tchotchkes,
glaze, steel, electric lights

40 x 27 x 27 in

101.6 x 68.6 x 68.6 cm



CURRICULUM VITAE

ANTHONY SONNENBERG

b. 1986, Graham, TX

Lives and works in Fayetteville, AR

EDUCATION

- 2012 University of Washington, Seattle WA, M.F.A. - Sculpture
- 2009 University of Texas, Austin TX, B.A. Art Studio with an emphasis in Italian and Art History
- 2007 University of Texas Study Abroad Program, Castilion Fiorentino, Italy Summer 2007

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Make Me Feel Mighty Real, Wingate Museum of Art, Hendrix College, Conway, AR
- 2021 I'm Going to Dance the Way I Feel, Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, FL
GAVLAK, Palm Beach, FL
- 2019 In Times Like These - Conduit Gallery, Dallas TX
- 2018 Still Stage, Set Life - Art Museum of South East Texas, Beaumont, TX
- 2017 Let Your Flowers Grow - Conduit Gallery, Dallas TX
- 2016 Apollo and Dionysus - Art Palace Gallery, Houston TX
- 2015 Fat Equals Flavor - Conduit Gallery, Dallas TX
With Wild Abandon - Lawndale Art Center, Houston TX
- 2013 Time After Time After Time – The Old Jail Art Center, Albany TX
- 2012 Still Lives – Vignettes, Seattle, WA
All That Glitters – CMA Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 2010 Beauty is Not Benign – Co-lab Projects, Austin, TX
- 2009 Let the Golden Age Begin – Old Post Office Museum and Art Center, Graham TX

SELECTED LIVE PERFORMANCES

- 2013 Captain Dirty Bear and his Dirty Cub Cadets Contemplate the Impossibility of Permanence in the Physical World - New and Greatest Hits
Selected Work by Texas Biennial Artists 2005-2011, Big Medium, Austin, TX
- 2011 Captain Dirty Bear Ask a Question – Seattle Art Museum, Seattle WA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 Ceramics Now, Gallerie Italienne, Paris, France
Fairyland - Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, FL
Magic Touch - Dinner Gallery, New York, NY
- 2020 Radical Tradition: American Quilts and Social Change - The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo OH
State of the Arts 2020 - The Momentary, Bentonville, AR
The Backbone of Things - Te Auaha, Wellington, NZ
- 2019 Inaugural Exhibition - Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles CA
Solid Gold: Fuller at Fifty - Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton MA
Stonewall 50 - Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston TX
- 2018 Melting Point: Movements in Contemporary Clay, Craft Contemporary, Los Angeles CA
Rough Trade - Allegheny College Art Gallery, Meadville PA
In Residence - Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Houston TX
You Say Radical! I Say Feminist! - Archer Gallery @ Clark College, Vancouver WA
Inaugural Group Exhibition - GAVLAK Gallery Palm Beach, Palm Beach FL
- 2017 Confabulations of Millenia, Institute of Contemporary Art @ MeCA, Portland ME
Morph - Asya Geisberg Gallery, New York NY
- 2016 Double Digits: Lawndale's Artist Studio Program, 10 Years and Counting, Lawndale Art Center, Houston TX

- 2014 Natural Beauties: Jewelry from Art Nouveau to Now, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT
VANITAS (eat, drink and be merry), Hedreen Gallery at Seattle University, Seattle WA
Open Archive, Red Arrow Contemporary, Dallas, TX
- 2013 The Obsessive Unknown Origins of Grotesques Irregularity, LxWxH Gallery, Seattle WA
Nouveau Baroque – Gallery Fukai, Vancouver B.C. ONN/OF Light Festival
- 2011 The 2011 Texas Biennial -- Austin TX
-Curator: Virginia Rutledge, Independent Curator and Art Historian

COLLABORATIONS, TWO & THREE PERSON

- 2019 Zina Al-Shukri – Paolo Arao – Anthony Sonnenberg, Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Fransisco CA
- 2014 Pulliam Fine Arts presents: Anthony Sonnenberg and Saya Moriyasu - The Window Project, PDX Contemporary, Portland OR
- 2013 Self - with Rodrigo Valenzuela – 4Culture Gallery – Seattle WA
- 2012 Sticks and Stones – SOIL Gallery, Seattle WA
Best Not To Be - with Graham Downing – 2012 City Arts Festival – Seattle, WA

COLLECTIONS

Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Bentonville AR
The Archie Bray Permanent Collection, Helena, MT
Fidelity Investment Corporate Collection

TEACHING

- 2021 Adjunct Professor, Ceramics, Hendrix College, Conway AR
- 2019 Instructor - Summer Course @ Ox-Bow School of Art and Artist Residencies, Saugatuck MI

- 2018-2021 Present Visiting Assistant Professor in Ceramics, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville AR
- 2017 Instructor - Glassel School of Art @ MFAH, Houston TX - Ceramic
- 2015-2017 Adjunct Professor - Lone Star College, Kingwood TX
- 2011-2012 Instructor of Record- University of Washington, Seattle WA - Ceramic and 3D Foundations

GUEST LECTURER

- 2021 Panel Member, “Trends in Materiality: Ephemeral Clay “
Panel Discussion, part of Contemporary Clay 2021 at Wester Carolina University
Maryland Institute of Contemporary Art, Baltimore MD
University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington TX
Baylor University, Waco, TX
- 2020 Eastern Pribble Lecture Series, Pratt MWP College of Art and Design, Brooklyn and Utica NY
- 2018 California State University, Long Beach
University of Texas, Austin TX
South West School of Art, San Antonio TX
- 2017 Maine College of Art, Portland ME
- 2013 University of Texas @ Austin
Pilchuck Glass School
Oregon College of Arts and Crafts
- 2012 Cornish College of the Arts

RESIDENCIES

- 2021 Windgate Museum Of Art Inaugural Artist-In-Residence, Conway AR
- 2019 Inverse Performance Residency, Questa College, San Luis Obispo, CA
- 2018 CSULB-CCC Summer Resident Artist, California State University, Long Beach, CA
- 2017 Ox-Bow School of artists and artist’s residencies, Saugatuck MI
Yaddo Artist Residency

- 2016 Resident at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft,
Houston, TX 2015-16
Resident in the Lawndale Artists Studio Program, Houston,
TX
- 2014 Artist in Resident at Sculpture Space, Utica NY
Summer Resident at Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic
Arts, Helena MT
- 2012 Emerging Artist in Residence at Pilchuck Glass School,
Stanwood WA
- 2008 Summer Resident at Ox-Bow School of artists and artist's
residencies, Saugatuck MI

GRANTS/FELLOWSHIPS/AWARDS

- 2014 RPF Grant - The New Foundation - Seattle WA
- 2013 Finalist, Betty Bowen Award, Seattle Art Museum
- 2011 People's Choice Award - The 2011 Juried Exhibition, Punch
Gallery, Seattle WA

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For further information please contact

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