



Currently Hanging

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When Josh Faught was announced as this year's Betty Bowen Award winner, I asked: Who is this guy? Since 2007 he has lived and taught in Eugene, Oregon, and he has never shown any work in Seattle or Portland, as far as I know (he did show some drawings at the Helm Gallery in Tacoma, but I missed them).

Last week I interviewed him (podcast coming) and got to Seattle Art Museum to see his work, and at this point I agree with Jamey Marie Braden: breath of fresh air for realz! His work is warm and sad and lonely and expectant—political and physical. Here's *Endless Night*, the 2008 work that's installed at SAM.

At SAM the installation is a little different than here. The fighting burst of light coming from the pink candle on the old-fashioned chamberstick is not on the left, as pictured, but on an adjacent wall from the other "windows." The sorry-looking rolled-up window that stands in the corner here is next to it (Faught calls this freak flag a "failed" textile), tied with a ribbon that reads "Not Your Bag."

These windows are a series of loose afghans made of crocheted yarn dipped in indigo dye. Strings stream down their faces like rain.

They're taken from 60s/70s patterns, but this is not what the patternmakers intended. The designs have been scaled up and the afghans are wrapped around garden trellises, their sides unevenly scalloped from the poking edges of the wood. They're the size of paintings, but where painted canvases would be stapled neatly to stretchers, these wear fat scars of imperfect handstitching.

There's nostalgia here for sure: you're not just standing in front of a dark window to wait for something to happen, but remembering how it felt to stand in front of a dark window. What could have occurred? It feels like this nostalgic past might yet turn out differently.

When I interviewed Faught, we talked some about politics. About the way his work is urgently political, how it analogizes being gay in a straight world and working with fabric in the art world. How it deals with issues of sagginess and solidity in sculpture. Signs of nervous hands versus signs of mastery in craft. Most artists outsource labor to hire somebody skilled; Faught uses shaky assistants.

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He grew up in a suburb of St. Louis, a placid place haunted by suburban-style threats (toxic chemicals! sex predators!), and there's a tender acknowledgment of fear and disruption in what he makes. *Triage* (2009) is a patchwork tapestry painted with nail polish, wearing political pins and a row of self-help books in sewn pockets. *You Can't Live Scared* (2007) is a dark, webby weaving hung next to a Super-8 film of the artist trying to read an explicit personals ad while climbing, naked, into the bathtub.

I wish those were here at SAM; I'm all eyes at this point. I'm fantasizing about a Northwest queerness show already, with Faught, Jeffry Mitchell, Matthew Offenbacher, Eli Hansen... Here's a good interview with Faught by the Museum of Contemporary Craft, and some images of work he had in the recently closed show Call + Response.