

In Art News

Urgency Emergency: Josh Faught

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by [Jen Graves](#)

Across from the elevators at Seattle Art Museum are three lone windows looking out onto a darkening night. On the rightmost windowsill, one fighting burst of light comes from a pink candle on an old-fashioned chamberstick. Standing next to the window is a sad-looking rolled-up window tied with a ribbon that reads "**Not Your Bag.**" (Me?)

The windows are a series of afghans made of crocheted yarn dipped in indigo dye, and strings stream down their faces like rain. They are taken from patterns, but this is not what the patternmakers intended. The designs have been scaled up and the finished products are wrapped awkwardly 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 hand stitching**. This work of art is called *Endless Night* (2008), and it's warm and lonely and expectant, not just offering the chance at standing in front of a dark window to wait for something to happen, but capturing just how you feel when you remember yourself there. What could have occurred? The nostalgic past might yet turn out differently.

The artist is Josh Faught. He studied art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, since 2007 has taught art at the University of Oregon in Eugene, and is this year's winner of Seattle Art Museum's Betty Bowen Award for an outstanding Northwest artist, which comes with a cash prize of \$15,000 and a yearlong display. *Endless Night* is what's displayed at the museum, and it **pulls me in until I'm falling**, making me want to see much more of Faught's work.

"It's not like I don't need to protest because I make this work," he says in a phone interview. We're talking 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.

He grew up in a suburb of Saint 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; I'm all eyes. I'm fantasizing about a Northwest queerness show already, with Faught, Jeffrey Mitchell, Matthew Offenbacher, Eli Hansen... ★