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the Stranger

June 22, 2010

VISUAL ART

Change We Can Believe In

Spreading Rot, Catching Disease, and Living Toward Death at Western Bridge

by [JEN GRAVES](#)

(excerpted text)

Josh Faught's art is not easily accepted, either. He's the other artist featured now, in a solo show of crocheted and handwoven sculptures called *Procedures to Reduce Contamination and Stimulate Better Living*. A banner at the entrance addresses itself, in scrawled hot-pink spray paint, "TO ALL THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE SUFFERING FROM THIS PREVIOUSLY UNNAMED DISEASE..." Next to this banner is a smaller, blank one—bringing to mind Warhol's enigmatic "blanks," like the one in *Double Elvis* at Seattle Art Museum—and a mirror resting on the floor in which you see yourself. The disease is unknown, but judging from the show's crafty/queer materials—sequined scrapbooking stickers, French manicure press-on nails, potpourri pies, and political pins with slogans like "Someone You Know Is Gay"—its chief, systemic symptom is shame. Bleached hemp yarn, a "cleansed" substance, is the base material for this new series. That's in part a response to the fact that Faught's sculpture got moths when it was exhibited last year at SAM, he explained during his talk. "I remember when Marisa [SAM curator] called to tell me," he said. "I felt like I'd given the museum an STD."

Procedures to Reduce Contamination is based on a list of rules from a defunct bathhouse that the artist found rummaging through the Pacific Northwest Gay and Lesbian Archives in Portland. They sound like rules from an office: No food except in the break room, no lit candles, no moving of furniture. The rules are numbered and appear in gold and sequined letters, crowded at the edges of the textiles, which Faught intends as a sign of urgency, as if they've run out of room to speak. Each piece is a self-contained mess of hairy yarn, woven protuberances, glittery and shiny texts, and streaks of paint (some of which is nail polish) on top of finely woven surfaces that look like afghan blankets or feature folksy patterns like holiday wreaths.

The bathhouse and the farmhouse joined in such physical proximity brings a familiar American shiver. There's both promise and threat in the sense of encroaching formlessness, of spreading, of the erasure of reassuring separations. Change of all kinds—from the unclear shifting of political alliances to the decay that happens every second in every person—is uncomfortably popping out of Faught's and Schweder La's surfaces like a rash. Are we about to be doomed or about to be saved? It makes you want to *do* something.