

Spolia

New work by Joe Bochynski

Curated by John Witty

SPRING/BREAK Art Show 2021

625 Madison Avenue

New York, NY

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Joe Bochynski is building a Gothic chapel in his Bushwick studio, an endeavor that sums up a central premise of his work. Lofty religious references and longstanding art historical traditions are represented with humble materials. Ceramic tiles that would otherwise be used for kitchens or bathrooms are combined with found objects to create a bricolage altarpiece and roundels inspired by the Renaissance works of the della Robbia family.



Ascensio, 2021

Mosaic bricolage on folding panels
32" x 24" x 6" (closed)

Spolia is the term used to describe architectural fragments and other venerable artefacts stolen and reused by the victors of conflicts in the ancient Mediterranean and medieval Europe. Bochynski's spolia are culled from the detritus of contemporary American life: kitsch figurines collected from thrift stores are combined with construction tiles and toys cast aside by his two daughters Nicolina and Natasha, ages 4 and 2. The traditional hierarchies of the art world are turned upside down with the everyday and the thrown away replacing specialized knowledge and elite materials.

For SPRING/BREAK Art Show 2021, Bochynski has created a new altarpiece that visitors to the exhibition can venerate in the apse of his Gothic spolia chapel. It is a meditation on the experience of loss. The triptych memorializes Bochynski's Polish immigrant grandparents, who worked as a hairdresser and a barber in Buffalo, New York. These *beati* of the Bochynski family appear alongside their patron saint, Martin de Porres. Because he trained with a barber-surgeon in late sixteenth-century Lima, this saint would become the protector of all hair stylists. Fragmented souvenir plates and pink flamingoes establish a sense of place and offer commentary on the figures seen in the altarpiece. The central figure wears a sweatshirt bedazzled with a sacred heart and wields a glue gun. She is about to use this tool to give wings to the creative visions that she pursued so avidly on the craft fair circuit of upstate New York in the 1990s.

Together with *Altarpiece* the installation for SPRING/BREAK 2021 features sixteen mosaic bricolage roundels. In Renaissance Florence, three generations of the della Robbia family created tin-glazed terracotta relief sculptures. Many of these works were roundels that were incorporated into the ornamentation of architectural facades and interiors. Inspired by the bright colors and reflective sheen

of these works, Bochynski used his preferred medium of construction tile to make his own modern roundels. Imagery quoted from art history such as the Bayeux embroidery and the drawings of Villard de Honnecourt intermingle with broken tiles and found objects to tell invented stories that are at once humorous and ominous. The juxtaposition of uniquely modern and typically American materials with sources of inspiration from centuries past expresses Bochynski's disquiet with contemporary life. The chapel installation and collection of roundels displayed in this presentation are therefore an effort at creating a place of refuge: a pilgrimage goal for world-weary aesthetic travelers.



Stranger Comes Knocking, 2021
Mosaic bricolage (tile, silicone toy, composite wood apostles) on panel
12" x 12" x 3"



Gardener's Dilemma, 2021
Mosaic bricolage (tile, figurine, salt shakers) on panel
12" x 12" x 3"



Singing For Your Supper, 2021
Mosaic bricolage (tile, trophy) on panel
12" x 12" x 4"



Ascensio, 2021
Mosaic bricolage (commemorative plates, lawn ornaments, figurines, tableware, glue gun, toys, wooden eggs, craft supplies) on folding panels
32" x 48" x 6" (open)