

TURLEY GALLERY

The Drawing Room

Andy Šlemenda

Himmelsbrief

August 5–August 27, 2023

Opening reception Saturday, August 5, 3–5 PM



Andy Šlemenda, *Oh What a Tangled Web We Weave*, 2023, matchstick cross, fishnet stockings, orb-weaver spider, wood panel, paint, and hardware, 18 x 18 inches

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Andy Šlemenda presents a new body of work in The Drawing Room, further exploring what “home” means and how we find this space and/or concept within ourselves. This is Andy’s first exhibition with the gallery.

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My work interrogates how we locate “home”: within our bodies corporeally, within a group culturally, or within a place geographically. This quest for “home” is propelled by my own origin story emerging from rural Appalachian Pennsylvania. A region sardonically referred to as “Pennsylvucky” which is characterized by its struggling, agricultural working-class, paranormal sightings like the Mothman and Amish and Quaker religious communities. Dually at odds and spellbound by this conservative place—being myself trans* presenting—that inherent incongruity gave me insight into not only gender performativity but code-switching on a larger scale, blurring the lines between our interior otherness and outward masks.

This new body of wall-hanging sculptures presented in *Himmelsbrief* further merges the imaginal and material. These sculptures hover between taxidermy trophies and the mandala-like Amish hex paintings, both recurring specters of my childhood. The works’ unifying feature are their circular wood supports formally anchoring these assemblages. Here, I complicate regional folk art traditions, both memorializing Appalachian craft and re-imagining these artifacts’ potential in an increasingly globalized and secular world. The title, *Himmelsbrief*, comes from Pennsylvania Dutch folk magic, Braucherei, itself a disappearing practice. The Himmelsbrief or “heavenly letter” are inscribed talismans fashioned for health and protection, often asking for divine intervention or addressing the dead.

Andy Šlemenda

Andy Šlemenda (they/them) is a transgender, queer artist from rural Appalachia; based in Western Massachusetts. Their artworks challenge perceptions that the unknown or paranormal—historically deemed the queer—is sacrilegious and unnatural. Šlemenda role-plays as various queer-coded figures in popular culture. These vilified figures are often depicted as supernatural, gender-nonconforming beings outcast in isolated, rural settings. Šlemenda rehabilitates these mythic representations of queerness through performance, video, installation, and sculpture, revealing LGBTQI+ issues embedded in folklore and spiritual traditions.

Šlemenda’s artworks have been exhibited throughout the United States, France, Germany, Turkey, and Canada. They received their MFA from New York University Steinhardt and were a Sorbonne-Panthéon Université 1 postgraduate fellow. Their work has been included in Viola Kolarov’s *On Reading Walter Benjamin as Pure Medium*, in conversation with Katherine Sperber in Strange Fire Collective, and with Nüans Nüans for Revolver Publishing. They are a 2023 Millay Arts artist-in-residence and Vincent Prize recipient.

Turley Gallery is open Friday–Sunday, 12–5 PM, and by appointment.

For press and sales inquiries, please email info@turley.gallery.

Please visit www.turley.gallery for more information.