

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE REMAINS OF THE GAY

New Work by Samuel Gassman

Ornamentum Gallery

506 Warren St. Hudson, NY

June 25 – July 20, 2026

Opening Reception Saturday, June 27, 3 - 6 pm

Artist Talk Saturday, June 27, 4:00 pm

with Jennifer Blue

Marcia Brady Tucker Fellow, American Decorative Arts
Yale University Art Gallery

Hudson, NY:

Opening during Upstate Art Weekend, Ornamentum Gallery is pleased to present *The Remains of the Gay*, an exhibition of new work by Sam Gassman. On view are hand-sewn flags, Rag Jewels, and a new series of antique jewel assemblages. In Gassman's work each element is selected based on its saturated history and recontextualized to create meaning. Exploring the detritus of empire, Gassman gathers objects charged with the politics and labor of how they were made and for whom. The resulting assemblage converges hundreds of years of precious remnants together with the ordinary, repurposed to the desires of a new day.



A Reluctant King, 2025

4 ¼ x 2 ¼ x 1 ¼ in.

pendant, 9th century Coptic bone, 17th century baroque cloisonné panel, 19th century crown,
fossil, raised steel, gold, velvet, rock crystal, Chinese gold filigree, and natural ruby.

Central to the exhibition are Gassman's *Rag Jewels*, functional hand-sewn pieces in eccentric handmade boxes. Occupying the ambiguous territory between hard and soft, engineering and abandon, formalism and ludic play, these works resist easy categorization. Their value lies not in the singularity of any one component, but in the synergistic intensity produced by their formal unity: lost objects held together, made anew. The jewels are signed E.F.H., for Elizabeth Foxe Harrell, great-grandmother of the artist, whose family watch descended to the youngest child since the early eighteenth century. Gassman, the youngest child of Elizabeth's youngest grandchild, invokes her name as a recurrent homage, situating his practice within a matrilineal inheritance of fine historical jewelry and the arcana surrounding it.

The *Ruins of Empire* jewels are antique assemblages built from fine historic materials: gold, silver, gems, bone, and coral, drawn from Roman, ancient, and Coptic sources, joined using classical metalsmithing techniques. Wherein the Rag Jewels embrace the found and the eccentric, these pieces reflect Gassman's deep background as a jeweler and antique dealer, revealing the full range of his practice.

Gassman has been making flags for nearly twenty years and a group of these will frame the exhibition both in spirit and in the physical. Using the American Flag as a ground for the language of human rights and political history, the works carry texts including Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and Hillary Clinton's landmark speech on human rights, a version of which now hangs in the United States Embassy in London. Gassman uses the oldest American form to make the argument that this symbol of American patriotism has always been a problem.

The work exhibited draws on the history of matelotage, the legally recognized same-sex civil union practiced among sailors and pirates. Like the sailor in repose who turns found rope into a love token, Gassman binds and sews together the remnants of lost worlds into new expressions of libido, love, pleasure, and self-preservation. In doing so, he traces a queer influence at the foundation of American culture that has long gone unnamed.

The Remains of the Gay reaches for the highest aesthetic while insisting on what empire leaves behind.

Samuel Gassman's works can be found in numerous prestigious public and private collections including the Dallas Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art; the Museum of Art and Design, New York; the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, New York; the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; the Grassi Museum, Leipzig, Germany; the Museo Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile; and the United States Embassy, London.

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Samuel Gassman, *Out of Africa*, 2026
hand sewn denim & silk
27 x 46"

Upstate Art Weekend (UAW) is an artist-forward, region-rooted arts platform dedicated to amplifying artists, organizations, and creative communities throughout the Hudson Valley and Catskills, while fostering meaningful exchange with aligned creative communities beyond the region.

www.ornamentumgallery.com

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