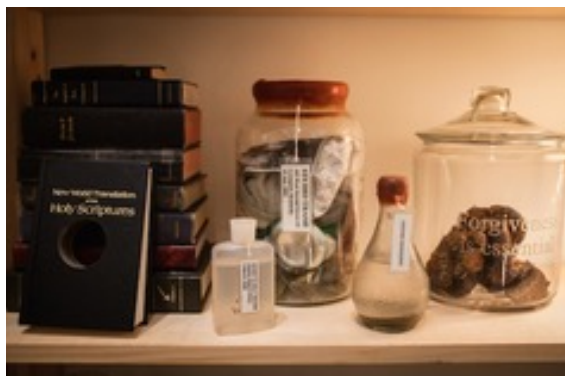


ARTFORUM

New York CRITICS' PICKS
Louis Zoellar Bickett

ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY
212 Bowery
March 3–April 15



View of “Louis Zoellar Bickett,” 2017.

Recent exhibitions around the AIDS crisis have been critiqued as too focused on how art scenes were affected in major cities—how refreshing, then, to see an exhibition that hones in on a singular, rural experience. Louis Zoellar Bickett’s show is a room-size installation comprising a vast collection of ephemera related to loss in its many forms, with visual jokes and texts that imbue the pieces with the artist’s wry sense of humor. Bickett, based in Lexington, Kentucky, began his archive in 1972, at the age of twenty-two. Early items include branches from a beloved apple tree his mother cut down during his childhood (*The AIDS Tree*, 1986–90). The saved branches are wrapped like wounded limbs. “Daddy” is often invoked here, too, though it’s left ambiguous as to whether Bickett is referring to his own father, whose passing is noted in several items, or a sexual daddy.

Ideas surrounding place are brought to the fore in myriad ways. Objects in glass jars abound: *Studio Trash: 102 West Second Street #2, Lexington, Kentucky 15 July 2002*, 2002, features, among other things, an undergarment, a soda can, and a handwritten note. There’s a vial of water (*Oxford, Mississippi*, 2001) and *Forgiveness Is Essential*, 2008, dried horse dung in a kind of glass candy jar that is omnipresent in matriarchal kitchens throughout the South. Bibles are everywhere: A stack of them is immaculately punctured for “The Glory Hole Bible Project,” 2000–2004. *What I Read (Nude)*, 2015, is a photo triptych taken at Walmart, Bickett’s preferred local photo studio. Wearing only his glasses, the artist looks surprised as he wields an open Torah, Bible, and Koran. Lovers and friends long gone are represented in this morbid, joyful catalogue, a paeon to suffering, nostalgia, and the fleeting nature of time.

— Lilly Lampe