

**NOON Projects
Presents**

**Michael Lombardo
*Pearl Snap***

**May 16 – June 21,
2025**

Opening Reception:
May 16, 2025
6–9pm

951 Chung King Road
Los Angeles, CA 90012

NOON Projects is a gallery in Chinatown, Los Angeles. Our program showcases artists who work from the heart, with a focus on queerness, the divine, the natural world, craft, and social practices. We host an ongoing program of dinners, concerts, meditation groups, and community happenings.

We aim to create a welcoming space for artists and the community to connect and flourish. Please come by and see us – you are very welcome here.

Away from this red dirt town,
I'm gonna make a joyful sound.
— Emmylou Harris, "Red Dirt Girl"

Michael Lombardo's home, perched on a hillside in Northeast Los Angeles, is brimming with the things he collects — scuffed cowboy boots and cracked-open geodes, conch shells with curling pink insides, red Oklahoma rose stones, rhinestoned clip-on ties, pearl-button satin shirts, black and white photographs. He is drawn to artifacts of the American West and his own past, objects both humble and dramatic, ornate and ordinary, like opening lines of stories, or songs.

Below, in a space he built beneath his house, Lombardo enshrines these objects in paint.

His sculptural paintings, meticulously jigsawed and upholstered in stretched linen, are luminous, glinting things, made from wood, cloth, oil, and dirt. Shimmering in melon ochres and pale, limpid pinks his subjects are incarnations of California light. A satin Nudie blouse, a Western bandana, a blooming rose are held in reverent focus, their tightly-cropped compositions pressed close to the surface, like relics under glass.

Lombardo frames quiet details — the cursive handwriting in *Conch III*, the faint stain on the folds of *N. Turk* — fossilized traces of intimate histories we've never been told, but can feel. Because they're ours, too. We grow up and still dream of our childhood house. We hold a conch shell up to our ears to hear an old ocean roaring, and then shellac it for the mantle. We drive full speed away from the town we grew up in, but the dirt is still under our fingernails. We steal our boyfriend's shirt.

In French, *souvenir* means "to remember." It is memory that sanctifies our objects, imbuing them with weight, with story. Pearl Snap is a monument to memory, but one that acts as oracle. Lombardo points by painting, as if to say, "Look. Here. This is where liberation lives."

In this world, a worn Emmylou Harris T-shirt becomes a modern relic. The soft insides of an overripe fruit recall Caravaggio's *Boy with A Basket of Fruit*, reminding us that rendering something in a state of decay can still find desire blooming within. Here, a honky tonk, lit just right, can be as radiant as a Papal palace, and salvation might be found in the bar, the orchard, the shore, the studio — the places we can hide and still see.

In a culture that rushes toward explanation, Lombardo's work insists on presence. The paintings remind us that devotion doesn't need grandeur; it only needs attention. That home might be a place, but it's also a practice. That in this tender, tactile world, faith — whether in grace, in country, in memory, in dirt — is worth holding up to the light.

Lombardo's work suggests we are only as good as what we touch and what touches us. What we walk on. What we pick up off the beach in the middle of the night. The things we handle are lit with our life force. To frame them, Lombardo gives them a voice.

—Emily Bernstein

NOON Projects
951 Chung King Road
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Thursday to Saturday
Noon–5pm
And by Appointment

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