



Artists Steven (standing) and William Ladd in their New York City studio; they are represented by Cristina Grajales Gallery (cristinagrajalesinc.com). **Right, from top:** An array of framed works on paper that served as studies for 3-D pieces. A detail of one of the brothers' intricate boxes.



SIBLING REVELRY

Inspired by shared childhood memories, brothers Steven and William Ladd create exuberant artworks rich with personal meaning

The history of art is peppered with famous fraternal duos, from the Van Eycks and the Carracci to the Chapman brothers and the Sarn twins. Yet few have made family ties as central to their work as Steven and William Ladd, Manhattan-based siblings who mine their childhood for shared memories and translate them into vibrant, mesmerizing sculptures and works on paper.

On October 26 some 180 of their pieces go on view in “Steven and William Ladd: Mary Queen of the Universe,” a major

survey at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York. The show’s title refers to the Ladds’ Catholic grade school in St. Louis, where they lived before moving to New York City and joining forces creatively—first making fashion accessories and later expanding to fine art.

Today the Ladds are best known for constructing elaborate assemblages that blur what lines still exist between art, design, and craft. Their signature pieces, called towers, comprise lovingly handmade groups of cloth boxes brimming with ribbon, beads, and other crafting materials. Each set can be stacked vertically or mounted on the wall in a grid, its contents representative of a memory—a noise their dad used to make, say, or their mom’s accounts of working in the school cafeteria.

The concept of boxed memories may call to mind the dioramas of Joseph Cornell, but such comparisons are beside the point for the Ladds. “We didn’t go to art school—we don’t have those kinds of references,” says Steven, the older of the two by a year. “We’re interested in making things and how they relate to family stories.” Explains William, “We’ve always been very close and wanted to work together.”

Their refreshing sincerity, focus on narrative, and meticulous artistry have attracted the attention of such tastemakers as collector Beth Rudin DeWoody and gallerist Cristina Grajales, who recently added the pair to her roster and will show their work at the Salon: Art + Design fair in New York this November. Terrie Sultan, the Parrish’s director, predicts a pleasant surprise for museum visitors unfamiliar with the brothers: “Some people will be bowled over by the beauty and elegance of their creations, others will be entranced by the stories behind them.” —TED LOOS