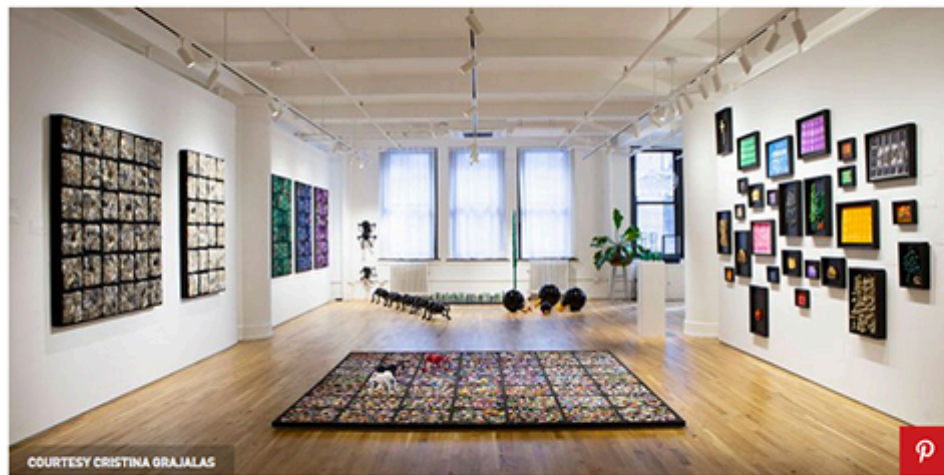


# Welcome to Santo Poco! The Ladd Brothers Evoke Childhood Magic at Cristina Grajales Gallery

William and Steven Ladd's solo exhibition is full of color, life, and a giant ant or two.

by **OLIVIA MARTIN** NOV 29, 2018



**T**wo brothers and artists **Steven and William Ladd**, a single ant hill can serve as a world of inspiration. So when they purchased 19 acres of land in Germantown, New York, they felt they had come across a veritable universe. In *Welcome to Santo Poco!*, their new solo show at **Cristina Grajales Gallery**, the brothers transmute the wonder of the new property into a variety of mixed media artworks.

*Welcome to Santo Poco!* is a reference to the comedy *Tres Amigos* and even just mentioning the name prompts Steven and William to act out short bits from the film a la Steve Martin and Martin Short. "They notice and remember things that most of us don't and then tell those stories through their work," Cristina Grajales told T&C. "It really is special, unlike anything else."

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COLORFUL TEXTURED PANELS REPRESENT DIFFERENT MOODS AND PLACED FROM THE LADD BROTHERS' 19 ACRE PROPERTY IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. THE GLASS ANTS (EACH, EXCEPT FOR ONE "LIL' ANT," REPRESENT A FAMILY MEMBER) AND THE BOMBS (WHICH REPRESENT THE BATTLE THEY'VE OFTEN FELT WITH THE FLORA AND FAUNA ON THEIR LAND) WERE MADE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CORNING MUSEUM OF GLASS.

COURTESY CRISTINA GRAJALAS



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Most recently, [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) selected the Ladd brothers for its 2018 [Public Art Challenge for Coral Springs, Florida](#), which will focus on creating a community-focused artwork to aid healing and recovery after the violent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. No doubt this commission is a result of the artists' Scrollathons, which they host with local, underserved communities to create collaborative art installations in cities like Brooklyn, Atlanta, and Saint Louis. The Ladd Brothers have also been in a number of shows across the U.S., including exhibitions in Parrish Art Museum, SCAD Museum of Art, the Saint Louis Art Museum, and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, and are known for vibrant, highly textural artwork that evokes childhood memories.



GOLD AND SILVER BEADED ARTWORK PANELS ARE EXTREMELY INTRICATE AND TAKE HOURS TO CREATE. "EACH TIME WE FINISH ONE, IT IS SO INTENSE THAT WE SAY, 'OK, NEVER AGAIN,' BUT THEN THEY ARE SO BEAUTIFUL THAT EVENTUALLY, WE DO ANOTHER ONE," THE BROTHERS EXPLAIN.

COURTESY CRISTINA GRAJALAS

But for *Welcome to Santo Poco!* the brothers focus on the present. "We've always wanted an upstate studio to expand upon our practice—we needed wilderness and a place to work on larger scale pieces. It has also become a place for our parents and family, which is amazing," they said. The exhibition is comprised of self-made artifacts, creating a sense of myth and exploring different materials with gleeful abandon. Marching oversize glass ants, created in collaboration with the Corning Museum of Glass, represent family members.

Wood cut from the property is whittled into beads and cut into circles (the brothers hint that wood will be featured more prominently in upcoming works). The tents they originally camped in, renderings of the sheds they are building, and intricately beaded and textured panels representative of different emotions and places from Santo Poco all generate a special kind of magic.

Across the floor, a mat filled with fabric scrolls invite the visitor to lounge about. William and Steven explained: "We've done this type of artwork before and it is so tactile—everyone was asking, can we touch it? can we sit on it? And we were hesitant, but then we thought, 'Well why not?!'" *Welcome to Santo Poco!* will be up at [Cristina Grajales Gallery](#) through December 21.