

Galerie Martin Janda is showing Joe Scanlan's fourth solo exhibition Möbel from 14th September to 29th October 2011.

The show is based on a very simple idea, that of 'furniture'. But there aren't really any recognizable furniture objects in the show. Rather, it is a show about the definition of furniture not being a literal object but more of a political and philosophical concept. Furniture does not mean 'chair' so much as it means a state of mind about being structural, supportive, in the background, important but almost anonymous.

For example there are clotheslines that are like drawings in space, geometric arrangements with colored shapes hanging from them. The wooden stretchers in Möbel (for Knoebel) are straightforward painting stretchers – rectangles of various sizes with cross-bracing and beveled edges for stretching canvas – except that they are made out of very fine wood and are crafted to such a degree as to be objects in themselves. Further, they have feet and legs, so that they sit on the wall like 'furniture' rather than like paintings. Cameo is a small object that can be attached to the wall: Horizontal, like a shelf, it works like a stage where different objects (a coffee cup, a wad of packing tape, a notebook) have a brief cameo role. A 'cameo' is when a very well known actor appears briefly and without credit in a film. Or vertical like a painting, when it becomes a cameo itself.

As an idea, paintings are furniture. They exist in a room just like a chair, they have a wooden support and a fabric cover, only they sit on the wall. The English word mobile and the German Möbel come from the Latin mobilis, or movable. If you make paintings as furniture, it makes a very direct historical reference to the development of images as portable objects, i.e. stretched canvases rather than frescos. So, in the history of painting, this show restages that moment in art history when mobile, Möbel and mobilis were all definitions of not only what a painting was, but what it could do.

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