

NEW CITY
CHICAGO

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Review: Dan Gunn/Monique Meloche



Dan Gunn. "Grand Amusement,"
Dye, UV absorbent lacquer on plywood with nylon
cord and wire

RECOMMENDED

In "Impromptu Airs," Dan Gunn has crafted delights for the eye, deviating from his earlier projects that mirrored elements of recognizable architecture and design. A group of "Fans" assembled from laser-cut, wooden strips have been stained in a circus-tent palette of red and white. The standard motif in "Fan No. 9" of 2013 gets stretched into comically elongated and shrinking shapes in the works that flank it, fastidiously assembled trompe l'oeil constructions that imitate the ease of computer-manipulated imagery. "To Fan No. 2" winds a swerving pathway painted in lyrical, Paul Klee palettes. Its pensive, musical sensitivity evokes Sonia Delaunay and Blaise Cendrars' collaborative artist book "Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jehanne of France." Thicker wood planks drape from two illusory nails in "Grand Amusement," dyed in hand-mixed yellow, green, blue and pinks that turn its hard structure into goey taffy pulled in a shop window. Neither fan nor drapery, "Broadway" contains candy-colored dots dancing in between rich navy parquetry panels. The piece calls to mind Mondrian's "Broadway Boogie-Woogie" as well as Michelle Grabner's colored paper weavings, recently the center of inner art-world hullabaloo.

The objects in "Impromptu Airs" are "neither painting nor sculpture," to appropriate Donald Judd's seminal essay "Specific Objects." Although written nearly fifty years ago, the essay suits Gunn's overall oeuvre; his work "obviously resembles sculpture more than it does painting, but it is nearer to painting." Gunn's objects juggle both terms, as stains of color transform wood's surface grain and striations into painterly gestures.

A prominent figure in Chicago following his 2011 MCA exhibition and Artadia prize win during last year's Expo, Gunn has been critically linked to Bauhaus craftsmanship and considered among Chicago makers taking visual inspiration from architecture and design, including Richard Rezac, Steve Reber and Diane Simpson. "Impromptu Airs" produces a more purely visual spectacle, positioning this Harlequin in another prominent Chicago school—color abstractionists like Jessica Stockholder, Judy Ledgerwood, Anna Kunz, Dan Devening and many others. (Anastasia Karpova Tinari)

Through January 3 at Monique Meloche, 2154 West Division.