

THE CHILDREN'S GAME MUSICAL CHAIRS teaches us at an early age the value of a chair as a symbol of comfort and civility, which is perhaps why taking a chair at another's expense is only allowed in the ritual context of a child's game. In Musical Chairs we are allowed to abandon civility and selfishly take the nearest seat when the music stops. Knowing that one of our fellow players will be left seatless, precisely because it is a game, we can do this and then laugh about it, and even have the losing players join in on the folly.

Now consider that in the current economic crisis many participants ("players") lost so much as a simple place to sit, compliments of a gamed economy. Fueled by a whole lot of self-interest and reckless abandon, the economy was no child's game, but one played by adults, or perhaps an adult game where adults behaved like children. Capricious game-playing with calamitous results.

THE SERIES OF PAINTINGS MUSICAL CHAIRS by Berkeley artist Dean Hunsaker presents a meditation on the current economic crisis. Extending the metaphor of the children's game—a lot of people lost their seating and then some. To underscore this grim reality the viewer is presented with various groupings of decomposing chairs which are always vacant.

The titles and imagery of the paintings are suggestive in this regard. The ironically titled work *Circular Thinking*, for example, is comprised of 3 chairs, each on a small vertical panel, which rest inside in a larger horizontal panel. Within the same panel fragments of old music scores appear faintly in the background with red circles floating across the surface. The circle motif appears throughout the paintings, to reinforce the notion of circular thinking, in which participants circle around a diminishing number of chairs, knowing in advance that only one can ultimately remain. The painting *Remains of the Day* presents a trio of chairs receding into a grayed background, while in the foreground a pair of pigeons peck at crumbs on the ground, oblivious to the follies of humanity. *Game Over*, the sole sculpture in the series concludes the perpetually self-defeating logic of the game(s) by presenting the viewer with a collapsed chair which has lost all of its paint and functionality. It is circumscribed by a trail of departing "footprints" comprised of collaged fragments of old music scores and paint on wood.

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