

TIF SIGFRIDS



Time Out Chicago / Issue 141 : Nov 8–14, 2007

Joe Sola

Bucket Rider Gallery, through Nov 24.



Flight data recorder, 2007.

Male dominance of painting throughout history, its consequent feminist critique and the abundance of new media in the art world all suggest Joe Sola's work is old hat. But L.A.-based Sola bucks these assumptions: His ability to criticize contemporary culture through watercolor is both smart and hilarious. To best understand the work, start with the short video *Watercolor*. With the tongue-in-cheek, PBS-like cadence of a Rick Steves travel video, Sola takes viewers inside the "ancient world" of watercolor painting. The artist travels through the woods, along a riverbank, across an open field and into a green clearing to find the stereotypically "perfect painting spot." As he begins to paint, a white van abruptly runs him over. The driver, a funeral-home employee, is unfazed. After viewing the video, Sola's watercolor paintings seem even wittier. *In a Church* is a painting of a house of worship's stained-glass window sans biblical reference; instead, a glowing sun illuminates a pizza-delivery boy and two telephones above him connect, suggesting the "miracle" of communication. *In a Museum* is another playful criticism: Against a backdrop of random "abstract" blobs on canvases, a young woman flashes her breasts. Sure, it's easy to find artists who ruminate on contemporary culture, but it's far more rare to find an artist who ties his work together with candor, humor and a sarcastic critique of contemporary culture.

— *Alicia Eler*