

# ARTFORUM

## Joe Sola

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by MICOL HEBRON

01.09.10-02.13.10 *The Happy Lion*



Me N' Kippenberger, watercolor on paper, 2010

As Joe Sola would have it, art is a culture industry that is simultaneously ridiculous and totally irresistible. His works relate to the field like an overenthusiastic child who squeezes the cute kitten to death. An LA art-world veteran, Sola's first solo exhibition at this gallery features six watercolors and a short video, each presenting weighty humor about the politics of looking and posturing.

The watercolors depict phalluses and fallacies while embracing and chiding the mechanisms of visual culture. *Yes Missile* and *No Missile* (all works 2010) are succinct summaries of power. The positive missile points upward as it is being sent. The negative heads downward as it's about to be received. In *Me'n Kippenberger*, the penises of two men in lederhosen are entangled in a square knot, while in the video *A Short Film About Looking*, two men embody familiar artistic antinomies—producer and consumer, artist and collector, subject and object, culture and nature—through catenary visual metaphors. A bohemian, artsy character, placed in the compositional foreground, is accompanied by scantily clad models in a messy studio while rectilinear objects perpetually catch his attention. His counterpart is more formally dressed and appears alone in the backgrounds of modernist architectural spaces, captivated by the spherical shapes around him. There is a whole lot of looking going on, as the protagonists's primary actions are to gaze deeply and contemplatively at their respective objects, the classic Lacanian *objet petit a*. The climax of the video is a tête-à-tête in a gallery (the Happy Lion itself), an intense staring match that culminates in *Scanners*-esque head explosions. I can relate—I often feel like art makes my head explode. At least the smart stuff does.