

## Jeff Landman

Tracy Williams, Ltd.

Exquisitely crafted out of salvaged lumber, the tables, chairs, stools, and totemic sculptures in Jeff Landman's exhibition could be situated somewhere between formalism and spiritualism. The installation "Working on a Building" (named after a popular gospel song that

originated in the South in the 1920s) gave the impression of an abandoned chapel: two sturdy wooden tables flanked a nave-like row of chairs, some facing the southern edge of the gallery, others facing north toward a pared-down structure resembling the outer bones of a canopy bed. Linen drawstring shades attached to the bed were partially pulled up, revealing a prie-dieu setup within, consisting of two small rectangular stools lined up next to each other and flipped horizontally as if for prayer.

Large sculptures were positioned in the room's corners as if standing guard. A small side room was sparsely yet, populated by a squat monolith resembling a Jenga-toy structure and a decidedly raw-wood column leaning toward another of Landman's perfect, pious chairs. Not surprisingly, the artist is also a custom-furniture maker.

The individual pieces of furniture were lovely with their clean lines and neo-Prairie-style posture; the designs were inspired by Josef Hoffmann's Secession-era work for Vienna's Wiener Werkstätte. Furthermore, Landman's objects were not merely placed in the space—they were conceived for it. Proportioned in direct relation to the gallery itself, the installation was meant to imply what Landman calls a "holy ghost building" (a lyric from



Jeff Landman, *bed*, 2013, white oak and linen, dimensions variable, installation view. Tracy Williams, Ltd.

the gospel song "Working on a Building"), giving viewers an eerie impression that they've stumbled upon the remnants of a ritual.

The furniture was arranged in such a way that viewers could barely cross to the other side of the room without grazing the objects. Yet the space's state of disuse was abundantly clear. The human scale, the austerity, and the specificity of the arrangement deftly suggested that we were not the first—nor the last—to ponder the installation's use.

—Rachel Wolff