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Justin Lieberman **Famous Aliens of Filmland &** **American Folk Furniture**

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I got the idea for the Famous Aliens of Filmland paintings from a tiny painting of Kurt Russell that I bought on eBay and used as part of a sculpture I exhibited in Geneva. It was listed as a "REAL PAINTING!!! NOT A PRINT!!! HAND PAINTED!!!!". In fact though, it was a photograph which had been altered in Photoshop to look like a painting (a very simple procedure) and then made into an inkjet print on canvas. It was then touched up with a few highlights in acrylic, and finally slathered in matte medium to simulate the surface of a painting. These sorts of "paintings" are extremely popular and the treatment is even offered at many commercial photomats. The inkjet painting with its false front of authenticity is clearly a degraded product, yet extremely effective in its illusionism. It is a trompe-l'oeil painting of a painting in which the haptic, textural qualities of painting function as a carrier of authenticity. (A close-up image depicting the brushstrokes is often advertised) Thomas Kinkade could be seen as a pioneer of the medium, having had his prints on canvas retouched by his trained "master highlighters" for some time. Only later did it occur to me that there are quite a few art world figures that use this same technique in a similar manner, Richard Prince's nurse paintings being a prime example. The images in my paintings, which depict a portion of my collection of ceramic aliens from movies, also take their cues from ebay. Sellers on the website will often construct small sets in which to photograph the items they have placed up for sale. This relatively new form of amateur product photography stands in stark contrast to the high production values involved in contemporary advertising. They are the fan art of the world of advertising. They are installed in aluminum and plexiglass "community boards". Framing devices traditionally used to house a rotating series of bulletins, advertisements, awards, and art projects in high schools and office buildings.

The furniture pieces primarily consist of yard sale items that have been refurbished and altered in my studio, and refer to a tradition of folk furniture practiced in the Appalachian region where I grew up. Furniture, like fashion, has long served as a refuge of and repository for bourgeois sentiments regarding beauty. The inherent use value of furniture relegates it to the lower status of "merely design" while increasing its appeal as a commodity to a much wider audience than that of the "fine arts". This is why a connoisseurship based on appreciation of expression of unique individual genius disdains these utilitarian objects. But in this case, it is the furniture that bears the artistic virtue of an iconoclastic individualism and the paintings, which refer to design in their ways and means of mass production. It is a reversal that highlights the issues of class and morality that form the basis of aesthetic judgment.