neutral background. In another, she sends text messages; in a third, she lifts a potted plant, while streams of pink paint pour over its brim down onto the table. A graffiti-like white scrawl in this last tableau makes a random arc across the front of the picture plane. These rivulets, which also appear in some of his other works, are scrawled across the Plexiglas and frame of a piece called *Velum* (2012), suggesting a fierce and restless presence against a backdrop that is almost decorative.

—Mona Molarsky

John Byam, assorted sculptures, ca. 1970–80s, wood, sawdust, glue, between 2" and 9" high. Andrew Edlin.

John Byam

Andrew Edlin

This unsettling and intriguing show of drawings and small wooden sculptures by John Byam, a Korean War veteran, former gravedigger, and trailer-park attendant, included cartoonlike drawings, some copied from newspaper photos, others pulled from television or his imagination, and all inscribed with the phrase "A Hobby to Draw Pictures." In many ways, that sums up the attitude and spontaneous nature of Byam's art-making. The artist's draftsmanship is childish, but his conceptions can be funny and poetic. In one drawing, a large veteran, just home from the war, holds a doll-size parent under each arm. In another, a woman in orange and blue underwear announces she's the Venus de Milo. "Welcome to the planet," she says. "But beware there are dangers."

The sculptures, concocted from scraps of wood, at first seemed like toys made by a child. On closer inspection, however, they assumed an ominous aura. There were tiny airplanes, cameras, and robots; also soldiers, coffins, hospital gurneys, and men digging graves. Meticulously decorated with glued-on sawdust—which suggests the grime of war and the debris of the ages—the little figures are as macabre as Mexican folk artifacts but so much more somber. They are pure American Gothic. Why did Byam make these objects, and to whom was he addressing them? Ultimately this eccentric body of work demonstrated directly, using his idiosyncratic artistic vocabulary and iconography, his complex responses to daily life and war.

—Mona Molarsky

Gayle Wells Mandle & Julia Mandle

Leila Heller

The new work in this show, titled "Game II," by Gayle Wells Mandle & Julia Mandle, a mother-daughter collaborative, took the humble wooden chair as its central metaphor. Using a variety of mediums, the artists mined that ubiquitous piece of furniture, both as object and idea for all its poetic potential.

The gallery was dominated by the massive sculpture *Study for a Monument* (all works 2012), in which a heap of burned chairs in dozens of styles had been placed on one end of an oversize seesaw, weighing down the uninhabited opposite end. Inspired by the artists' anguished reaction to injustices inflicted on pro-democracy protesters during last year's Arab Spring uprisings, the work stands as a poignant, theatrical set piece or artifact from a troubled, unequal society.

In addition to sculpture, the Mandles presented drawings, photographs, and embroidery-based works. *Rising Tide*, an embroidery on canvas by Julia Mandle, the daughter in the duo, depicts a sweeping black wave of chairs apparently on the verge of crashing and becoming even more disordered. The mother, Gayle Wells, provided a Rauschenberg-like construction, *Libro D'Oro*, consisting of a large painting of an artfully defaced book cover with a broken wooden chair at its base and the words "ONCE UPON A TIME" just visible in the background.

By employing different materials and styles in their sociopolitical approach to art-making, the Mandles hoped to provoke viewers to rethink their particular nationalistic perspectives and try to address the world's wounds. The wooden chairs, with the modest comfort they offer, can be viewed as symbols of egalitarian, frail, and ultimately silent survivors.

—Doug McClemont

Gayle Wells Mandle & Julia Mandle, *Study for a Monument*, 2012, burnt chair installation, 7' x 20' x 10'. Leila Heller.