

Dan Miller: Large Works, 2015-2021

April 9 - May 14, 2022

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present its second Dan Miller (b. 1961) solo exhibition featuring seven recent large-scale compositions. For 30 years, Miller has created enigmatic text-based abstractions consisting of dense layerings of letters, symbols, and words. The artist, who is both autistic and largely non-verbal, records in the works his thoughts and interests, specifically relating to mechanics (lightbulbs, fans and electrical sockets) as well as the names of cities he has visited, people to whom he is close, and foods he enjoys.

Since 1992, Miller has been active at the Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, California, a nonprofit renowned for serving artists with disabilities. There, he can be seen on a daily basis furiously drawing, painting and, from time to time, making sculpture and embroidery. In the studio, Miller picks up a ballpoint pen and starts doodling energetically, without hesitation, scrawling giant letters atop one another until they are no longer legible. With an intrinsic sense of color and composition, Miller frequently adds multiple layers of text, at times so dense a layer can only be distinguished if he has built it with different paint brushes and pens. For his large compositions, which sometimes measure over twelve feet in height, Miller stands, with the sheets of paper against the wall, and works ambidextrously, both hands actively drawing. This frenetic and obsessively repetitive process is one of Miller's artistic trademarks.

Though the words and symbols are not always easy to decipher, a drive to communicate lies at the heart of Miller's work. His autism was diagnosed in early childhood, following a protracted struggle to speak. His mother and grandmother, both schoolteachers, spent countless evenings teaching him to read and write by having him repeat words. Drawing has always been Miller's primary mode of expression and he has incorporated his early lessons into his art. As Miller works, he repeatedly chants the words he is drawing out loud or mimics the "click, click" sounds that light switches make when being turned on and off.

During his teens, Miller rummaged through his father's Grainger's hardware catalogs and took apart clock radios, overhead fans, and light bulbs. This fascination continues with outlines of light bulbs and electrical sockets and the words "lumber" and "clock" pervading his works. Miller also documents his materials, with the words "paint," "roll," "paper" and "craft" appearing throughout.

Certain symbols and lines stand for specific objects or ideas in Miller's visual lexicon. For instance, diamond shapes stand for the twinkling of bright lights, which to Miller "shine like diamonds." Diagonal lines represent streets. Some abstracted symbols have only appeared once, like in an unusual work from 2021 in which thick black outlines on a blue, green, and yellow background are meant to evoke racetracks.

Matthew Higgs, Director of White Columns, has compared Miller's compositions to Robert Rauschenberg's drawing, *A Heap of Language*. In both instances, Higgs argues, language isn't about certainty or clarity, but rather, through a compelling and disorienting layering process, "it becomes much more pliable and porous."

Miller's work has been featured in seminal exhibitions, such as *Viva Arte Viva* at the 2017 Venice Biennale and *Glossolalia: Languages of Drawing* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2008. His work is included in the permanent collections of the American Folk Art Museum, New York, the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, in Washington D.C., among others.