

John Millei

This & That

January 11 - February 22, 2020

Opening Reception:
Saturday, January 11, 7-9pm



Lowell Ryan Projects is pleased to present *This & That*, the first solo exhibition in Los Angeles by California artist John Millei in ten years. The exhibition features new paintings that bridge formalism and implied figures. Rendered in sweeping brushstrokes and reduced to a few economic gestures, viewers can discern faces and hands in the large-scale paintings.

In these works, abstract marks and brushstrokes assemble to create an abstract image but also imply much more. Wielding cartoon-like reduction and using sumptuous application of oil and Flashe paint, the paintings play with our mind's evolutionary imperative to find patterns and meaning, such as perceiving faces and expressions in a collection of shapes and lines.

Interested in heads and hands not only because those are the tools of the artist, Millei is also depicting loved ones. After

decades of exploring subjects and styles ranging from seascapes to art historical references, these new paintings pull from his personal experience as a parent. A series of four paintings of his daughter show sweeps of hair, blue-green ovals for eyes, and a flopping bow on top of the subject's head. In a painting of his son, the formal problems of painting are more prominent. A dark background is framed on all sides by brushstrokes at the edges, two comedically simple circles near the middle of the picture become eyes, and a slightly curved mark at the base becomes a smile. The gestalt images coalesce into more than the sum of their strategic painterly moves and lighthearted colors.

Recent drawings by the artist are indexical of the human form, marked over graphite rubbings are uncomplicated forms, just the suggestion of eyebrows raised or listening ears.

In all of Millei's work, the ability for painting to depict complex spaces and subjects while simultaneously giving us a physical experience of the material itself is essential. His work marries the image or subject of the work with equally rigorous attention to the making of, which is always evident in bold strokes of paint across the surface.

A Southern California native, John Millei divides his time between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, CA. Millei began painting in the late 1970s, and while he has concentrated on a variety of subjects throughout his career, he is always focused on exploring and challenging contemporary modes of formalist painting. Largely self-taught, Millei is a celebrated member of the Los Angeles art community and a respected painting teacher having taught at Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA from 1987 to 2017, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA from 1991 to 2015, and SCI-Arc, Los Angeles from 1995 to 2000.

He has exhibited at galleries both nationally and internationally, including Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami, FL; Galerie PCP, Paris, France; Ace Gallery, New York, NY, Los Angeles, CA, and CDMX, Mexico; and Marc Jancou Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland. Millei's works are represented in important collections including Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; The Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Velan Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy; Colección Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico; and Dib Bangkok Museum, Bangkok, Thailand. John Millei's works have been reviewed and discussed in publications such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *Modern Painters*, *ARTnews*, *Tema Celeste* and *Artforum* to name a few.



first image: John Millei, *Girl (Pink Bow)*, 2019, Oil and Flashe on canvas, 72h x 54w inches
second image: John Millei, *Boy (All Smiles)*, 2019, Oil and Flashe on canvas, 85h x 75 1/2w inches