

Annie Miller

The surfaces Annie Miller's large-scale paintings seem to emanate shifting, translucent swaths of warm colors. The artist renders her forms with distinct, confident long brushstrokes and uses oilsticks to fill large planes with the overlapping patterns of parallel lines. Colors mix optically in the viewer's retina as much as they are forcefully blended on canvas into vigorous compositions in a constant flux. From them, figurative forms emerge: an outstretched foot, extended torso, spread out legs, multiple, intertwined limbs. Despite a large format of Miller's canvases, the figures are never whole: Spectators are never offered a view that might coalesce into a complete, cohesive pictorial scene. Rather, the fragmentary character of bodies suggests a conflation of distance between the observer and the observed—an intimate proximity or a voyeuristic intrusion. Miller's dynamic qualities of color and equally dynamic compositions envelop us and make us complicit participants in the corporeal scenarios created by the artist.

Indeed, Miller mines old erotic photographs and prints in order to crop out and extract sensuous approximations of the feelings— perceptual, corporeal and affective— of intimacy rather than its anatomical, pornographic or academic depictions. In her earlier paintings such as *Mask Face Foot* (2015) and *Tada! (Blue Toe)* (2015), for example, limbs, digits, faces and penises acquired the graphic qualities of decorative objects—hard, static and immutable. One could say that they were symbolic of eroticism rather than erotic as such. In turn, in Miller's recent works, body parts are instable, moving, and permeable—as if rendering a liminal space between lovers. In *Peer, Smear*, we can discern at least three figures. A scarlet red female body is stretched horizontally along the middle of the canvas. Her head and her raised, bent leg disappear beyond the edges of the picture. Towering beyond her, there is a pair of bent, splayed open legs. Still further behind, we can distinguish a silhouette on an animal, perhaps a giant dog. Rendered in mostly horizontal, greyish-green and blue strokes on the painterly, deep red ground, the human and the animal seem to exist on one plane, nearly blending into each other, even despite the overlapping. The image is further complicated by a wide swath of light color that encroaching from the lower left corner of the painting, seems to clasp the woman's body with five tentacle-like forms. As the artist states, "Sex is fluid and bodies either take form, dissolve, or merge into one another."

Speaking about the effects she seeks to produce, Miller deploys the comparison of walking at night. Like walking, painting and having sex are full-body, kinesthetic and haptic experiences that engage all the senses. Miller's night is not a darkness and lack of visibility, however. Instead, it is a continuously morphing play of glares, reflections and shadows, blurring physical boundaries between people, animals and objects. In such conditions, bodies and identities of humans and things are mutable and porous, the shifting licks of light on their surfaces reflective of a desire to touch the flesh and the spirit of the other.

-Dorota Biczal