

WHITE CUBE

Harland Miller

31 May – 24 August 2019

White Cube Hong Kong

White Cube is pleased to present an exhibition by Harland Miller, his first in Hong Kong. Featuring new paintings, drawings and prints, it foregrounds the exploration of text, image and the language of painting within Miller's work.

On the ground floor, a series of new large-scale paintings make reference to the layout of book covers, presenting large, overlaid letter forms using a pop-like palette. At the bottom of each, a neutral coloured band displays a 'title', in the form of short, enigmatic words such as 'sin', 'luv', or 'boss' alongside Miller's own name as their 'author'. In a departure from the artist's previous and well-known series of paintings that used the recognisable covers of vintage Penguin paperbacks, here text is approached more formally, as a painterly device where the negative space, lines and curves of letters become integral to both image and composition. Through the process of isolating and overlaying various letter forms, Miller creates a sense of fractured space within the painting, a receding visual field that effectively deconstructs both the form and referent of language itself. In the work *XXX* (2019), the letters are built up from layers of reds, oranges and yellows, their image suggesting objects in motion, where several forms are compressed at once, kaleidoscopic and transparent, like a series of sequential, transparent slides.

Miller draws on a wide range of cultural references in these works, including '60s and '70s graphic design and the bold, upbeat covers of post-war psychology books. More specifically, however, they connect with American mid-century painting, a constant point of reference within the artist's work. Suggesting the very beginnings of a narrative but remaining abstract and open-ended, they offer multiple possible interpretations. By using his own name as author within the image, Miller opens up a third space where the artist becomes his own alter-ego. Through a process of formal painterly exploration, fact and fiction become blurred, creating a visual rupture that provokes, questions and draws attention to the inherent possibilities of language within the visual field. This same compositional format is repeated in a new series of delicate and gestural watercolours, also featured in the exhibition, where bold overlaid letters are saturated in thick washes of different colours with the 'title' and 'author' rendered more precisely, suggesting a potential idea for a future cover, yet to be printed.

In contrast to the hard-edged paintings on the ground floor, a new series of smaller-scale paintings in the first floor gallery are expressively rendered, tactile and painterly, with impasto, drips and bleeds of paint marking their surface. In one work, *Way* (2019), Miller pays homage to the muted palette and linear forms of Art Deco and early 20th century

design using triangular motifs and sharp diagonals to contain areas of aquamarine, pink, green or blue. Equally, evoking popular spiritual imagery, it suggests a vague sense of mysticism, as well as a palpable tension between its upward, geometric composition and impastoed texture, where drips of paint at the bottom of the canvas expose its kaleidoscopic layering of pale shades. Also featuring overlaid letter forms, their highly gestural style makes direct reference to Abstract Expressionism and, in particular, to Jasper Johns's series 'O through 9' (1960 – 61), where numbers are overlaid and confined within the tight, rectangular limits of the medium itself. Built up in layers using bold, primary colours, the visible effects of Miller's hand remain integral to the image, including the marks from a brush or lines in shallow relief caused by dragging paint across the surface with a sponge. In these works, Miller explores the formal potential of text, pushing them against the edges of the rectangular canvas, placing the negative space of a letter directly in the middle of the composition – like a dark aperture within the painting's centre.

BIOGRAPHY

Harland Miller was born in Yorkshire, UK in 1964 and lives and works in London. Solo exhibitions include BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2009) and Palacio Quintanar, Segovia, Spain (2015). Group exhibitions include Somerset House, London (2016); Sculpture in the Close, Jesus College, Cambridge, UK (2013); Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2005, 2006, 2007); Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany (2004); and Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1996). In 2008, Miller curated the group show 'You Dig The Tunnel, I'll Hide The Soil' at White Cube and Shoreditch Town Hall, London.

White Cube Hong Kong is open

Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 7pm.

Admission is free.

WeChat: whitecube hk

For further information please contact:

enquiries@whitecube.com

50 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong

+852 2592 2000

whitecube.com