

Pagel, David. "John M. Miller's Paintings Angle to Get the Viewer's Attention." *Los Angeles Times* (Calendar), 12 March 1999, p. F32.

John M. Miller's paintings are phenomenal--in both senses of the term. Fully apparent to the senses and extraordinary in the experiences they generate, the stunning canvases at Patricia Faure Gallery harbor no illusions about how art works. Laying everything they've got on the line, the only mystery they present is why they keep you interested in their seemingly simple arrangements of angled bars.

Of course, you may be entirely uninterested in Miller's art. But that's a risk he willingly takes. Based in the conviction that each viewer is in the best position to determine what's best for him or her, Miller neither proselytizes nor panders. His art is for grown-ups. If it seems out of place today, that says more about the contemporary art world than the works themselves.

Four paintings in the main gallery form the show's heart and soul. A single bench divides the rectangular space into two unequal parts, with a three-color painting on the left and a group of three black-and-white canvases on the right. The installation's structure mirrors that of each piece: What takes place between the paintings also takes place within them.

Titled "Ritual," the exhibition's centerpiece is a red, black and white masterpiece made of four tightly joined vertical panels, across the surfaces of which march hundreds of sharply angled bars regularly interspersed with pairs of shorter, even more steeply angled bars. Each raw canvas panel contains a single color--from left to right, the sequence is white, black, red, white.

The bars that cross from one panel to the next visually rivet together the four-part painting. The vibrant intensity of the central sections is softened and expanded by the warm whites that flank them. Where the dense midnight black meets the blood-red paint, a strange bluish tint glows like a halo.

This mysterious phenomenon takes place entirely inside the eye, where Miller's colors don't mix or blend as much as bounce off one another. To look closely at these excruciatingly precise works is to see that although they are perfectly finished, they are neither hermetic nor off-putting. On the contrary, your experience of their tautly structured planes is what they're all about.

Autonomy and open-endedness similarly dovetail in the three paintings at the gallery's opposite end. Mirror images of each other, "INEX-I" and "INEX-II" create complementary sensations of compression and expansiveness. Hung between them, the largest painting in the show, "INEX-III," establishes a pulsating rhythm that likewise reveals that when art moves you it's impossible to distinguish between interior and exterior phenomena.

Two smaller galleries present works made of tape and wood, materials Miller has never before exhibited. The most interesting are three 20-inch-square panels, whose surfaces are covered by three different configurations of tape. The one on the right, with pairs of short angled bands sandwiched between longer bands, is the source for the bars in all the paintings in this exhibition--and nearly all of Miller's canvases of the past 28 years.

By comparison to the permutations in the other two small works, the one on the right is more harmonious and balanced. As an organizing principle, it simply seems right--as if every molecule had suddenly snapped into place, letting you see things with unparalleled clarity and focus.