

JOHN MILLEI
six paintings

GEORGE LAWSON GALLERY | SAN FRANCISCO

John Millei

six paintings

A publication of George Lawson Gallery
on the occasion of the exhibition:

JOHN MILLEI

six paintings

George Lawson Gallery | San Francisco

March 28 – May 11, 2013

Images © 2013 John Millei

Text © 2013 George Lawson

Photo credit: Brian Thomas Jones

Design and Layout: Esther Ribot

For inquiries or copies of this catalog, contact the gallery.

GEORGE LAWSON GALLERY

San Francisco | Los Angeles

8564 Washington Blvd. Culver City, CA 90232

www.georgelawsongallery.com

info@georgelawsongallery.com

310.837.6900

John Millei

six paintings

commentary

George Lawson



John Millei in his Los Angeles studio

ONGOING PRACTICE

six recent paintings by John Millei

I saw my first John Millei painting in 1991 in a small show at Rena Bransten's gallery in San Francisco. He was grouped with Jacqueline Humphries, whose work I had been following, and another painter, Carl Ostendarp. I was in a transitional period in my own painting at the time, trying to find my way out of monochrome and back to drawing, and Millei seemed to be saying, "what's the problem?" A year later I was in New York and caught another three-person show, this time at Pamela Auchincloss, pairing Millei with Nancy Haynes and Sigmar Polke. It only confirmed my initial impression that here was one of those painters who did a lot of drawing, and could pull it successfully back into their painting. His working method seemed basically grounded in making marks, but he was increasing the scale of his marks to the point where they functioned as broad-based compositional elements, often stacked on top of one another.

It is interesting how a painter comes into your scope, sometimes through visceral experience and sometimes through osmosis. I continued to follow Millei's work through reproduction, but because of circumstances, it was years before I saw another painting in the flesh. It wasn't hard to keep a second-hand track of Millei's exhibition activity. For a while it seemed like every time I picked up an issue of *Art in America*, there was a big Millei on the back cover. Still, there's nothing like the real thing and I'm sorry to have missed many of the ambitious solo shows mounted at Ace, and I'm particularly sorry to have missed a 1998 group show in France that included Millei along with Gerhard Richter, Helmut Federle and Helmut Dorner.

One revelation that became apparent even in reproduction, however, was how free Millei's approach to painting had left him to leap from motif to motif, and in time from abstraction to figuration and back, in many ways anticipating the attitudes of a younger generation of painters to follow, a generation influenced by painters such as Phillip Guston and Raoul De Keyser. Like a number of artists I've met who may be just turning 30 now, Millei, who is in his 50s, has an attitude toward art history like a trust fund baby. I use that metaphor because the stance is a little empowered, but more importantly, completely guilt-free. He was born to it. Whatever he wants from that vast reservoir is just an ATM swipe away. But in another sense the success of his work and the freedom of it is tied to an understanding that ordinarily takes a lifetime to grasp: that the image is carried by the paint itself and not what you do with it. It is Millei's innate trust in this one principle that allows him to draw and to leap and to flirt and to basically have a pretty good time while doing some very serious painting.

The six paintings in this show were painted for the San Francisco gallery space, for the intimacy of it. They were conceived as a progression, and in some sense perhaps as a kind of private correspondence. Millei's titles in some way remind me of the proverbial Ox Herding pictures of Zen tradition, and place their emphasis on the ongoing practice of painting over any single result of that practice. Still, they are, each one, wonderfully realized works, modest in scale and ambitious in scope, and encapsulate all the best of what got me hooked 22 years ago: an experience paint offers that is unavailable through any other medium.

George Lawson
Los Angeles, March 2013

out of the door

through the field

past the gate

down by the stream

through the woods

to the edge

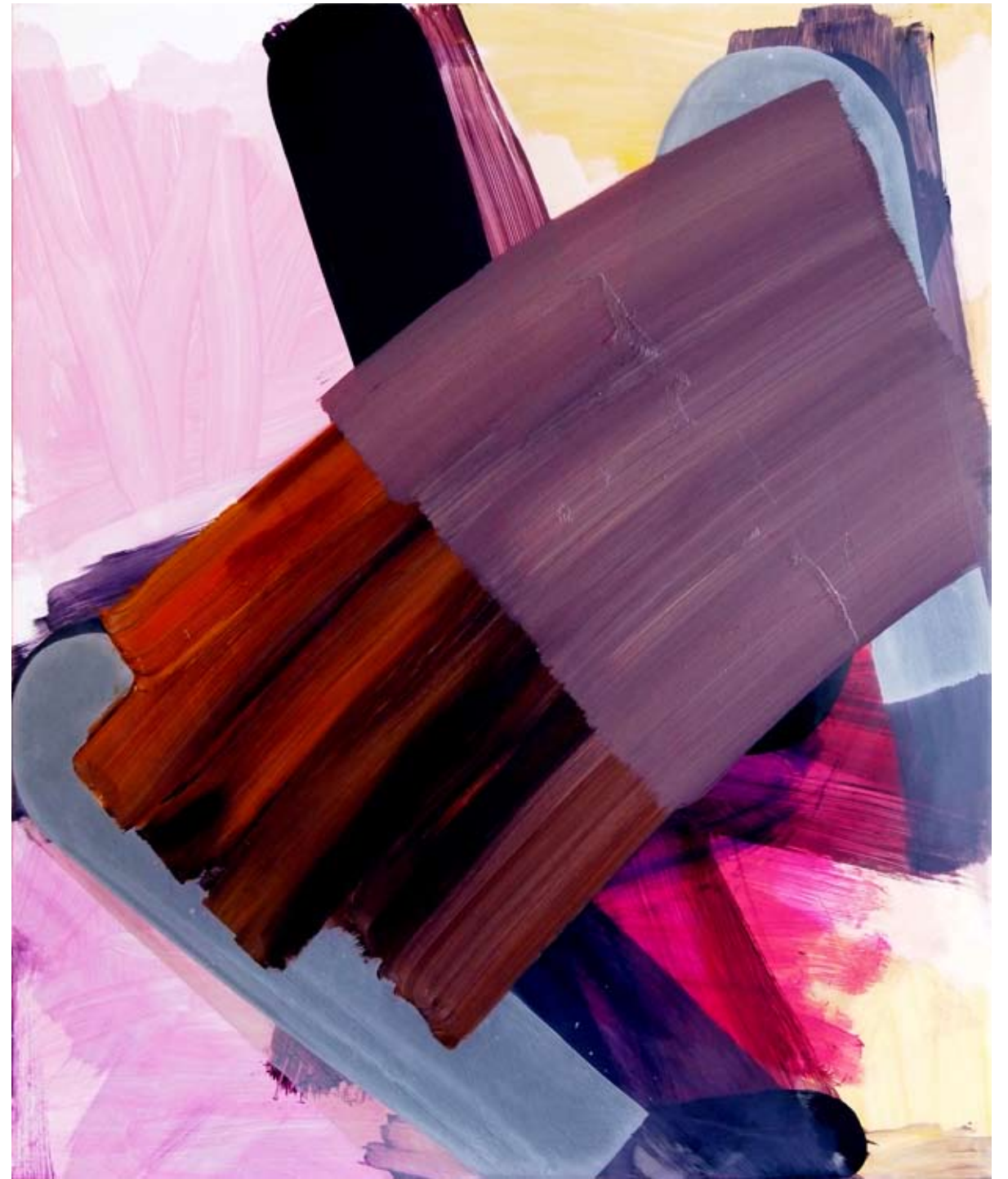
out the door, 2013
oil and flashe on canvas
36 x 30 in. (91.5 x 76 cm)
cat. no. JOM04



through the field, 2013
oil and flashe on canvas
36 x 30 in. (91.5 x 76 cm)
cat. no. JOM05



past the gate, 2013
oil and flashe on canvas
36 x 30 in. (91.5 x 76 cm)
cat. no. JOM06



down by the stream, 2013
oil and flashe on canvas
36 x 30 in. (91.5 x 76 cm)
cat. no. JOM07



through the woods, 2013
oil and flashe on canvas
36 x 30 in. (91.5 x 76 cm)
cat. no. JOM08



to the edge, 2013
oil and flashe on canvas
36 x 30 in. (91.5 x 76 cm)
cat. no. JOM09





JOHN MILLEI

1958 Los Angeles, California

Currently resides in Pasadena, CA

TEACHING

1991 - Present Adjunct Professor Of Painting, Claremont Graduate University

1987 - Present Fine Art Faculty, Art Center College Of Design Pasadena

1995 – 2000 Adjunct Professor & Thesis Advisor, Sci-Arc (Southern California Institute Of Architecture)

SELECTED ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2013 "Six Paintings" George Lawson Gallery, San Francisco, California

"Anthropomorphic Abstraction" Quint Contemporary, San Diego, California

2012 "Portraits of You" Quint Contemporary, San Diego, California

2009 "Woman In A Chair" Ace Gallery Beverly Hills, California

"Maritime" Ace Gallery Los Angeles, California

"Los Angeles Paintings", Washington Adams Project, Los Angeles, California

2008 "Procession," Galleria Michela Rizzo, Venice, Italy

2006 "Procession," Ace Gallery Beverly Hills, California

2002 "The Real Life Of Flowers," Ace Gallery Los Angeles, California

"For Surfing," Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, California

2001 "John Millei" Ace Gallery Los Angeles, California

2000 "Annus Mundi Paintings" Ace Gallery New York, New York

"John Millei" Ace Gallery Los Angeles, California

1999 "John Millei" Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris, France

"Paintings," Domaine De Kerguehennec, Bignan, France

1998 Terra Paintings," Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California

"Terra Paintings," Ace Gallery Mexico City, Mexico

"Paintings," Velan, Torino, Italy

1997 "Selected Paintings," Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California

"Friendly Pressure," Lawing Gallery, Houston, Texas

1996 "Selected Works: 1991-1996," Ace Gallery New York, New York

“Paintings & Drawings,” Douglas Lawing Gallery, Houston, Texas

1995 “Drawings,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California
 “John Millei Retablos,” Trisorio Gallery, Napoli, Italy
 “Ni-Be-Fe,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California
 “Nerve Meter Paintings & Drawings,” Douglas Lawing Gallery, Houston, Texas

1994 “Drawings,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California

1993 “Project: Retablos,” David Beitzel Gallery, New York, New York
 “Drawings,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California

1992 “Paintings And Drawings,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles

1991 “Drawings,” Marc Jancou Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland

1990 “Drawings,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California

1988 “John Millei” Marc Richards Gallery, Los Angeles, California
 “Drawings,” Thomas Babeor Gallery, La Jolla, California

1987 “John Millei” Marc Richards Gallery, Los Angeles, California

1984 Orlando Gallery, Sherman Oaks, California

1982 Orlando Gallery, Sherman Oaks, California

1981 Orlando Gallery, Sherman Oaks, California

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011 Selected Abstraction, 1940s -90s Santa Barbara Museum Of Art, Santa Barbara
 (Re-): Un-Historical Documents, Guggenheim Gallery, Chapman University, CA
 Baker’s Dozen Iii, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, California

2009 “Painting In Southern Caliifornia” The Riverside Art Museum, Riverside, CA

2009 “Los Angeles” Paintings By John Millei & Lucas Reiner, The Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, California

2004 “Ace Invitational 2004,” Ace Gallery Los Angeles, California

2002 “Ace Invitational 2002,” Ace Gallery New York, New York

1998 “Helmut Dorner, Helmut Federle, John Millei, Gerhard Richter,” Domaine De Kerguehennec,
 Bignan, France

1997 “Primary Colors,” Barbara Faber/Rob Jurka Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland (Curated By Bennett Roberts)

1995 “Abstraction From Two Coasts,” The Lawing Gallery, Houston, Texas “Painting Beyond The Idea”, Manny
 Silverman Gallery, Los Angeles, California (Curated By Bennett Roberts)
 “Flowers”, Boritzer/Gray/Hamano, Santa Monica, California

1993 “Physical Abstraction,” Blum Helman Gallery, New York, New York “4th Newport Biennial” Newport Harbor
 Art Museum, Newport, California (Catalogue)

1992 “New Physical Abstraction In Los Angeles Part Ii,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California
 “Essential Gestures: Nancy Haynes, John Millei, Sigmar Polke,” Pamela Auchincloss Gallery, New York, New
 York

1991 “The New Physical Abstraction In Los Angeles,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California
 “Three Painters: Jacqueline Humphries, John Millei, Carl Ostendarp,” Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco,
 California
 “Recent Acquisitions Of The Achenbach Foundation For The Graphic Arts, Part Two: 1950-1991,”
 California Palace Of The Legion Of Honor, San Francisco, California

1990 “Physical Abstraction,” Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California Brazil Projects

1990 “ Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles, California; Traveled To Art Museum Of Sao Paulo, Brazil (Catalogue)
 “In Perfect Silence,” Art Center College Of Art And Design, Pasadena, California (Catalogue)
 David Beitzel Gallery, New York, New York
 “The Ends Of Painting: The Edges Of Abstractions,” Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, California
 (Curated By David Pagel) (Catalogue)
 “Four Abstract Painters,” Claremont College, Claremont, California
 “The Spirit Of Our Time,” Contemporary Arts Council, Santa Barbara, California

1988 Marc Richards Gallery, Los Angeles, California
 “After Abstract,” Art Center College Of Design, Pasadena, California (Catalogue)

1987 “Drawings,” Marc Richards Gallery, Los Angeles, California

1984 “Small Works National,” Zanel Gallery, Rochester, New York
 “Interiors-Exteriors,” Gensler & Associates, Los Angeles, California
 “Drawing: Nine Artists,” Swope Gallery, Los Angeles, California

GEORGE LAWSON GALLERY
San Francisco | Los Angeles

