



**Annie Miller**

smells like marcelle

## ***The eye, she said, was egg-shaped***

Paintings and videos by Annie Miller

*The entire story of the eye was woven in my mind out of two ancient and closely associated obsessions, eggs and eyes... I ventured to explain such extraordinary relations by assuming a profound region of my mind, where certain images coincide, the elementary ones, the completely obscene ones, precisely those on which the consciousness floats indefinitely, unable to endure them without an explosion or aberration.*

Georges Bataille, *The Story of the Eye*, 1928



A voracious reader and consumer of art and film, Annie Miller's source material appears as fleeting visions or veiled memories in her work. Perhaps most significant for the body of work in this exhibition is Lorser Feitelson's 1934 surrealist painting *Genesis: First Version*, in which a pair of godlike hands lifts a set of velvety curtains to view a full moon beside the image of a woman's torso. A second look reveals these hands belong to the woman herself, doubled in the mirror.

This doubling recurs in objects that resonate visually and symbolically—the egg, the moon, and the seed of an avocado bounce off the curves of the woman's body and evoke her fecundity. Yet there is a palpable strangeness to these pairings...who would compare an avocado to an ovary?

Miller's work draws on these dynamics—the gesture of reveal and the charge of improbably resonant forms, or "slant rhymes," as she calls them. Long interested in the embodied gaze, Miller toys with the expectations and desires aroused by certain structures of looking. Several of the paintings included in this show began with a recent exhibition for the *Cage Match Project*, a series that challenges artists to produce art in an industrial, caged trailer, exposed to the elements for several months. Miller's cage match entry, *I see london, I see france*, coyly riffed on the demand for exposure by covering the cage with sheets of plywood and providing only small apertures for viewing her paintings within. Peering through some of the peepholes in the cage, one might catch a tantalizing swath of pink or a glistening limb, while others were fitted with mirrors that bounced back only the image of your own eye.



Such a structure for viewing both tantalizes and frustrates, activating paintings and audience. At the same time, the covered cage orchestrates an intimate interaction between painting and viewer, as it makes the paintings visible to only one person at a time.



**Double dog** / 2019 / oil and oilstick on canvas / 72x44 inches

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In another experiment with structures of viewership, Miller has produced several videos for this exhibition that speak to her paintings through color, texture, and tactility. The wooden housing for viewing these videos, which recalls a stereoscopic viewer, functions much like the exterior of the cage: obscuring, revealing, and creating a private space for looking.



Clean Ginger / 2019 / 02:09 loop

As one moves between the videos and the paintings, Miller's idiosyncratic use of color evokes the sense of an interior world filtered through personal vision. In her warm and shimmering light, hands, mouths, and limbs slip from abstraction to figuration with an ease that both suggests and frustrates access to linear narrative. This flexibility and confusion are part of the excitement as spatial perspective wobbles and shapes transmute. In a climactic scene of Bataille's novella *The Story of the Eye*, two young lovers explore the erotic potential of the mutability of forms, fixating particularly on eggs and eyes. In the story's original French, the words *oeil* (eye) and *oeuf* (egg) add the oral pleasures of linguistic play to the transference of such a strange pairing. How, we might ask, is an eye like an egg? As in Feitelson's painting and Bataille's story, Miller's work explores the fluidity of the gaze and the eye's capacity to hatch subliminal, tactile associations.

**Jessi DiTillio** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin. She researches modern and contemporary American art with a focus on art engaging the politics of race and gender and sexuality, affect theory, and curatorial practice. She has held curatorial fellowships at the Visual Arts Center and the Art Galleries at Black Studies at UT Austin, and The Contemporary Austin.

Cherilyn Manson / 2019 / 01:25 loop



Thumb War / 2018 / oil and oilstick on canvas / 84x60 inches

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**February 21 –  
April 20, 2019**

RECEPTION

Thursday, February 21  
5–7pm

Annie Miller's work explores a space of sensuality and desire; the longing to touch, to penetrate, to hold and make contact and the inherent failure or displacement of this longing. Miller holds an MFA in Painting from The University of Texas at Austin and a BFA in Painting and Drawing from California State University Fullerton. She has exhibited throughout the country and currently lives and works in Austin, Texas where she is a lecturer in Studio Art at The University of Texas at Austin and Texas State University.

FRONT

**Simone** / 2019 / oil and oilstick on canvas / 74 x 48 inches

The Courtyard Gallery is located in the AT&T Hotel and Conference Center at The University of Texas at Austin and features artwork from alumni of the Department of Art and Art History in the College of Fine Arts.

[courtyardgallery.utexas.edu](http://courtyardgallery.utexas.edu)



**Courtyard  
Gallery**

**AT&T HOTEL AND  
CONFERENCE CENTER**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



The University of Texas at Austin  
**Art and Art History**  
*College of Fine Arts*