

Ian Miyamura
Novel

October 3 – November 28, 2026

Opening reception: Saturday, October 3, 6-9pm

“Stencil sketched the entire history of V. that night and strengthened a long suspicion. That it did add up only to the recurrence of an initial and a few dead objects.”

—Thomas Pynchon, *V.*, 1963

Like a modernist writer shifting among epistolary, theatrical, and taxonomical registers in a single narrative, Ian Miyamura pursues multiple styles across *Novel*, his first solo exhibition at Bel Ami. Here we find geometric paintings that feign symmetry, abstract compositions that dramatize the meeting of two arcs, text pictures that make puns, sunken relief sculptures describing receding chevrons, and veristic tableaux populated by macabre miniatures from the British tabletop fantasy game, *Warhammer* (1983 – present). Is a plot concealed among these vespertine scenes and ordered characters? One senses a pattern, a point of unity where traces converge from seemingly opposed positions. If it could only be mapped out, would we at last reveal the force that turns the eras, furnishes one person with luck and a second with misfortune, and leads an empire to rise as another falls? In navigating Miyamura’s gauntlet of false doubles, mixed symbols, aesthetic changeups, and commercial reliquiae, the viewer is converted into a detective—a gumshoe seeking clues to *Novel*’s magnetic, warbling harmony.

Miyamura has co-opted one style almost wholesale: that of 17th-century Dutch and Spanish still life painting, in which contrived arrangements of exotic food, animals, and flowers from those empire’s colonies and trading partners were rendered in exquisite detail, as an imperishable attestation to a proprietor’s wealth and worldly tastes. In respect to Miyamura’s unique choice of *Warhammer* miniatures as his primary subject, the relations between the game’s players, its thousands of collectibles, and its economics are worth some discussion.

Consider the toys themselves, which evince power, ruthlessness, and a readiness to act. As inanimate objects, they possess no such traits. Moreover, they’re subject to the esoteric rules of the game, the chance role of the dice, and the fantasies of the players that deploy them. The players, for their part, are similarly restricted by the game’s conventions, blithely diverted from their material circumstances by the fictitious scenarios they co-create, and powerless to pay anything less for the game’s pieces than what its makers ask of them.

It’s notable that Miyamura depicts the miniatures in greyscale as unpainted, readymade ‘blanks,’ just as they would appear when purchased (prior to lengthy courses of ‘personalization,’ consisting of painting and modification by players). In doing so, he distances the figurines from the game’s culture, which indulges adolescent recitals of war, xenophobia, and imperialism. Neither dead nor undead, Miyamura’s miniatures have yet to be animated. They’re stilled and shown as what they are: highly reproducible and fungible products, sold at a premium to beguiled consumers by a publicly traded company valued at 7.5 billion USD.

The abstract grid paintings on view in *Novel* deal in likeness of a different order. They confront us with bisected patterns that appear interchangeable but defy transposition, flustering the eye and mind. Mulling them over, one may be reminded that isomorphism is generally imperfect in nature (and in art), and that divergences—whether minute or extensive—have made life, evolution, and culture possible. Though these compositions look impeccable, their surfaces are troubled, betraying concealed architectures that, if only skimmed, may elude detection. To be fully apprehended, paint would have to be disinterred, layer by layer. Even then, our study might not be conclusive.

Now, what of the typographic paintings, like *caret* (2026), which—as its title suggests—resembles an insertion along a familiar line? Did you catch the photograph of searchlights crossing the night sky above an old European city, or the suite of images documenting wall fragments and arcades? Nurture a compulsive attachment to the idea that mystery can resolve into a clear signal of meaning, if only the correct decoding process can be established. Finding an exit from uncertainty is your *idée fixe*.

Ian Miyamura (b. 1991, Kailua, HI) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He holds an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art (2021) and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2013). Solo exhibitions include *They Learned to Look Up and Down*, Bureau, New York (2025); *Chaos Spawn*, François Ghebaly, Los Angeles (2024); Bureau at Paris Internationale (2023); and *OCTOBER 31*, 4th Ward Project Space, Chicago (2022). Miyamura's work has featured in numerous group shows, such as *The World Is The Work*, The Drawing Center, New York (2026); *Total Matters*, The Meeting, New York (2026); *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, New York (2026); *Everything looks dark now*, Bel Ami, Los Angeles (2026); *Fifteen-Year Anniversary Exhibition*, Bureau, New York (2025); *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue*, Adams and Ollman, Portland, OR (2025); *Invisible Architecture*, Ralph Arnold Gallery, Chicago (2023); *My Condolences*, M+B Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); and *A Tournament of Lies*, The Wassiac Project, New York (2022).