

Press release

John Miller
The Ruin of Exchange
July 14 – November 24, 2024

Curated by Melanie Ohnemus

The Ruin of Exchange presents a selection of John Miller's artwork ranging from 1994 to the present. Miller employs a wide variety of materials and media, making it difficult to pin him down to a particular or artistic style. And yet his work is highly influential, even though its mutability and limiting of personal gestures possibly best express a certain recognizable quality. Because Miller calls into question art's aspirations to transcend its subject matter, this persistent manner of impersonality has become the defining feature of his practice. His work conforms neither to the mocking irony of postmodernism nor the overweening authenticity of modernity. How better to dispassionately portray the real than to minimize these sentiments?

The relationship between Miller's art practice and the social and institutional factors that shape the art world has been persistent, and it carries over unabated into his art and writings. Fundamental to Miller's discriminating point of view is understanding art as commodities with an arbitrary value related to the vagaries of the market and public space. Miller reveals an interest in everyday modes that often go undetected. Like other material conditions in which people find themselves, consumption and structurally determined ideologies form and shape consciousness of reality. The world that the human subject constructs is the one it must inhabit.

The exhibition's title, *The Ruin of Exchange* reflects these issues. On the one hand, the ruin is the ultimate allegorical trope. On the other, exchange is something that necessarily unfolds in space. Capital can't exist in a vacuum. And if you don't take space into account, you lapse into idealist abstractions. So, material exchange happens spatially. In *The Ruin of Exchange*, Miller's new and old works both indirectly allude to how the term "ruin" suggests that exchange or exchange value fails us in some ways—or is a kind of holdover from some prior constellation.

John Miller was born in 1954 in Cleveland, Ohio, and lives and works in New York and Berlin. In the 1970s, he studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, the Whitney Independent Study Program, and the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California. Solo institutional exhibitions (selection): Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 2021; Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, 2020; Museum im Bellpark, Kriens, 2018; ICA Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, 2016; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (with Takuji Kogo), Berlin, 2015; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2011; Kunsthalle Zürich, 2009; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, 2004; Le Magasin, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble; Kunstverein Hamburg, 1999. Miller participated in the Whitney Museum of American Art's

1985 and 1991 biennials and the 2010 Gwangju Biennale. In 2011, the Museum Ludwig in Cologne awarded Miller the Wolfgang Hahn Prize. Miller's criticism has appeared in *Artforum*, *October*, and *Texte zur Kunst*. JRP and Les Presses du Réel published compilations of his writing as *The Price Club: Selected Writings, 1977–96* in 2000 and *The Ruin of Exchange* in 2012. John Miller is currently Professor of Professional Practice, Department of Art History at Barnard College/Columbia University, New York.

A brochure featuring an interview with John Miller by Melanie Ohnemus will accompany the exhibition.