

Allison Miller

THE PIT

The six paintings in Allison Miller's "CAPRRIUS," her second solo outing at the Pit, preserve certain elements of her earlier work, spindly tracery and webs chief among them. Drips, black on black and goopy in the upper-left corner of *Sister (Gemini)* and in the upper right of *Sister (Capricorn)* (all works 2019), are a hallmark. So are arrows: Two, registered in thin black contours and ending in sharp tips, hold together the overlapping rectangular color blocks of *Curl Arch* like looping seams or the rings of a spiral notebook. Others—such as those that fill the round cartoon thought bubble of *Shell*, where the chunky red- and black-outlined arrows ram into semicircular forms that resemble crudely drawn ears—are more graphic. These darts point (rather literally and self-consciously) to their own compositional operations and to the clumsy registration of early computer programs such as Microsoft Paint, as emphasized by the repeated depiction of what might be described as dragged "screens" or overlapping large-scale blocks of color.

Hand looked to depict a stack of blank paper marked only by a date, 3/83. Miller's paintings are not exactly reticent, nor are they tentative; rather, they seem to have been discovered in the process of being recalled. This tension might be couched in a history of abstraction, where autonomous painting was long associated with the refusal of the mimetic even as it built on manipulations of light and color or shading and shadow, all of which are predicated on skillfully rendering three-dimensional scenes. But Miller's flexible formal system could also be explained via her own statement that, after the death of her mother, she found herself processing the profound loss through her mother's "objects, clothes, books, notes, and letters," which surrounded her in the studio when she made this show and inevitably seeped into her compositions. In the last fifteen years or

so of her life, Miller's mother produced a number of quilts. *Curl Arch* centers a patch-like diamond on a light-pink square, on top of which one can make out bright-green cursive reading RED SHOULDERED / SHARP SHINNED—presumably rendered in Miller's mother's hand. The artist also incorporated her parent's sewn designs and patterns from her fabric collection into the works on view.

Indeed, Miller figures information and what holds it in place, or the contexts through which it moves, even as she withholds meaning from the captionless and decontextualized numbers, letters, graphics, and figures floating across her canvases. The largest work, the diptych *CAPRRIUS*, took up a whole wall. The physical horizontal seam between the two stacked canvases ruptures the patterns that traverse it. A vertical orange block is confined to the lower register while a thick black squiggle that also appears to be a void moves across the divide unconcerned, as do parenthetical stripes of light and dark tan, fleshy pink, grassy green, and maroon. Reaching from the maroon stripe to the far-right edge of the work are two cobwebby lattice patterns. Caught within their threads are letters, symbols, and chalky shapes. These and other passages in the works on view move at different velocities, slowing into broad and brightly colored planes interrupted by subtle visual incidents—smudges and almost imperceptible layers—or vibrating with gestures that imply or picture energy. Like unwitting garlands, the diptych's sticky matrices struck me as especially poignant, acknowledging as they do that, despite what they have captured, so much else has been lost.

Allison Miller, *Hand*, 2019, mixed media on canvas, 35 × 35".

