World

Our eyes are set approximately 6 cm apart in our heads. This distance produces slightly different retinal images in the left and right eyes. The discrepancy between these perspectives is called binocular disparity— a horizontal shift that informs the brain of an object's location in space and allows it to render objects in three dimensions. This is just one of many cognitive cues the brain uses to gather data— sorting incoming stimuli and organizing it accordingly. These mechanisms are built for efficacy and geared toward survival, but what lies in the difference between two vantages? Allison Miller's paintings ask what latent poetry might be present in the unobserved and in the spaces between expectation, understanding and experience. If even cognitive functions regularly paper over nuance in their insistence on efficiency, then there is often only semblance.

The seven paintings on view operate from the position that certainty is elusive. The moments that make up each of Miller's compositions are a series of approximations and paradoxes. Each element is a divergence, and with each divergence comes another prospect. Miller avoids heuristics in favor of circuitous methods of inference. She employs an evolving cycle of motifs that can be gestural or diagrammatic in appearance, but their specificity has been recast in context. Not only is their application among the works in the show mutable, but even within a single work, the same motif may be engaged in conflicting purposes.

A 2008 viral online campaign for cycling safety asks viewers to count how many times a basketball is passed by one of two teams. As the video progresses, we are informed that we failed to notice a dancing bear moving through the center of the action. "It's easy to miss something you're not looking for", the text on the screen reads. The mind's inclination towards diversion is thoroughly displayed. It's an appeal for intentional looking, which is a tenet of Miller's studio practice. The moment we are watching the ball in the video, we have missed the bigger picture. In Miller's case it's reversed; the gestalt is iconic, but what of the details?

With its circular motion and formal structure, the video is a fitting analogy for Miller's work. Black, white, and orange elements crisscross the frame while something incongruous moves through the center, seemingly unmissable, but it takes a second viewing to discern. Miller, similarly, presents a procession of adaptive strategies, directions, and occlusions whose appearances and intentions may be in opposition. Each component can be taken on its face, unpacked or reverse-engineered; at other times it may just perplex. Regardless of the effect, they take a moment for their discrepancies and objectives to come into focus, thereafter, expanding meaning in all directions.

- Ian Trout