

Meliksetian MB Briggs

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## **Auto-Tuned Commentary: John Miller's "Here in the Real World"**

BY WILLIAM J. SIMMONS, MODERN PAINTERS | FEBRUARY 08, 2015



John Miller's "Baffle" 2014

(Courtesy of Mary Boone Gallery and Metro Pictures, New York)

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Always searching for the extraordinary in the everyday, Miller creates a world of his own in this two-gallery show. “Here in the Real World,” now on view at Metro Pictures until Feb. 14th and Mary Boone Gallery until February 28, presents lifelike reliefs of pedestrians on the street (dazzlingly reminiscent of Cindy Sherman’s early cutouts and “Bus Riders” series of photographs); reality-television stars in the throes of contrived emotion; cropped, painted scenes from “Let’s Make a Deal” and “The Price Is Right”; and even a video featuring phrases from personal ads digitally put to music, creating what could be the next pop hit.

Miller’s work is more than a commentary on the state of contemporary culture, however. His game-show paintings, an ongoing series initiated in 1998, for example, take their criticality (or perhaps celebration) of a trashy TV aesthetic to the levels of pigment and canvas. The image is not seamlessly rendered; it is cropped and zoomed, and the texture of the paint interacts with the thick, grainy canvas to create a hazy patina. What results is an exposition not only of how culture has changed but also of how the medium of painting is complicit in or slyly critical of those changes.

In the animation *I Love to Make People Laugh*, 2014, created in collaboration with Takuji Kogo, we are treated to an Auto-Tuned (and admittedly catchy) song based on ridiculous phrases from personal ads. The final movement of Miller and Kogo’s “opera” is an empty theater, filled with sumptuous red seats that yearn for bodies to fill them. As the song drifts over the scene, one is reminded of the moment in David Lynch’s film *Mulholland Drive* when the headliner of El Club Silencio collapses during her number, revealing that the transfixing performance was only a recording.

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John Miller