

Pagel, David, 2012, *Stone Gravy*, exhibition catalogue, 31 May – 7 July 2012, Ameringer | McEnergy | Yohe, New York.

STONE GRAVY

curated by DAVID PAGEL

ALLISON MILLER

Allison Miller's first solo show, in 2006, included only six paintings. Each measured 4-by-5 feet, was hung vertically or horizontally, and stood on its own as a heart-warming testament to the pathos we feel when we see people strive for goals far beyond their God-given talents.

Miller (b.1974) did this with pencils and marking pens. Most of her draftsmanship seemed so unsure of itself that you found yourself rooting for each quivering line, hoping that it didn't run out of gas before it made it across a perilous expanse of forlorn emptiness or peter out before it joined forces with enough other lines to make a shaky pattern whose geometry, far from ideal, embodied homegrown charm.

A year later, Miller followed up with an exhibition of eight works, still 4-by-5 feet, that were bolder and beefier yet equally riddled by the vulnerabilities, risks and sentiments that were quickly becoming the heart of her art (which she still wears on her sleeve). Her tentative, anxiety-laced lines formed concentric triangles, diamonds and circles, the oddness of each segment growing in proportion to its distance from the center. These compositional building blocks added up to off-kilter abstractions whose architectural solidity was tense and jittery yet sufficiently freewheeling to leave viewers with ample room to maneuver.

That sense of movement—of nearly dancing back and forth, around an animated composition—takes shape in Miller's latest paintings, which manage, very deftly, to share with viewers the embarrassment embodied by the lines in her early works. Rather than inviting us to be sympathetic witnesses to someone else as she stumbles through a task outside her comfort zone, paintings like *Diptych* (2010), *Sail* (2011) and *Solid* (2011) draw us into the picture, eliciting interactions that can't be had from a distance. A fairly high dork quotient suffuses Miller's new works, in which she forgoes her standard, 4-by-5 format for different dimensions including squares. Dopey plaids, toy-boat sails, chain-link fences and pigment mixed with dirt—along with confident, swiftly applied lines—set the stage for participatory dramas that go beyond appearances to get to what's real, even if it's embarrassing.



I. Diptych, 2010, Oil, acrylic and gesso on canvas, 48 x 60 inches



II. Sail, 2011, Oil, acrylic, dirt and gesso on canvas, 48 x 48 inches



III. Solid, 2011, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 54 inches