

Melanie Miller

moth boy and bees

9th – 29th Sept. 2010

private view: Wed. 8th Sept. 2010

gallery opening times: tues – fri 10 – 5:30

sat. 11 – 2:30

nearest tube: pimlico



“The problem which everyday reality poses for painting does not exist for them spiritually, but (so to speak) technically. In its quality of attention, still life possesses a delicate and ambiguous instrument. Its whole project forces the subject, both painter and viewer, to attend closely to the preterit objects in the world which, exactly because they are so familiar, elude normal attention.”

Norman Bryson “Looking at the overlooked”

Melanie Miller works from a small studio on Eel Pie Island in West London. Famous in the 1960's as a major Jazz and Blues venue, the island can only be reached by footpath or boat. Miller's studio is a small wooden shed, situated in a boatyard at the end of the Island next to a nature reserve and on the bank of the river. Miller has recently acknowledged how this situation has influenced her work, and its tendency to creep into her paintings.

Miller paints in oil on gesso panels that she prepares herself. Painting from life the objects are depicted as life size. Working within the tradition of Still Life, she scrutinises the insignificant. Her subjects are detritus and street ephemera, insignificant objects of unknown provenance, often found en route to the studio. As Odysseus Elytis (1911-1996) stated, “You can learn a great deal if you study the insignificant in depth”. Miller does just that by recognizing that there is no such thing as an insignificant object. By slowing down the process of looking, getting to know the objects as intimately as possible and perhaps becoming the first person to ever lay eyes on or at least attend to them reveals small truths and quiet everyday stories. During the physical process of painting, everything exists in relation to everything, its relevance or resonance different for every viewer. Miller often doesn't realize why she has put particular objects together until she is painting them and recognizes what memories they stir or what linguistic, art historical or poetic connections there may be between the objects.

The natural objects that are around Miller's studio appear in the paintings, the honeysuckle that grows outside, the ivy from the nature reserve. The plants and insects are indigenous; she is not interested in exotic beauty. She finds the moths nocturnal habits more interesting than butterflies; “I like an element of attraction and repulsion, notions of beauty and death, profound and insignificant. Someone asked me why I painted the flowers without their roots and bulbs I think this is because I am not interested in them as specimens more as tokens or signs, each one particular”.

For more information on the exhibition or additional images, please contact Sarah Long or Emma Wingfield at the gallery (020 7834 1434) for more details.

L O N G & R Y L E
4 JOHN ISLIP STREET LONDON, SW1P 4PX
tel 020 7834 1434 fax 020 7821 9409
longandryle.com gallery@long-and-ryle.com