

METRO PICTURES

Rosenberg, Karen. "Art in Review: John Miller – Suburban Pastime," *The New York Times* (February 17, 2012): C27



Art in Review

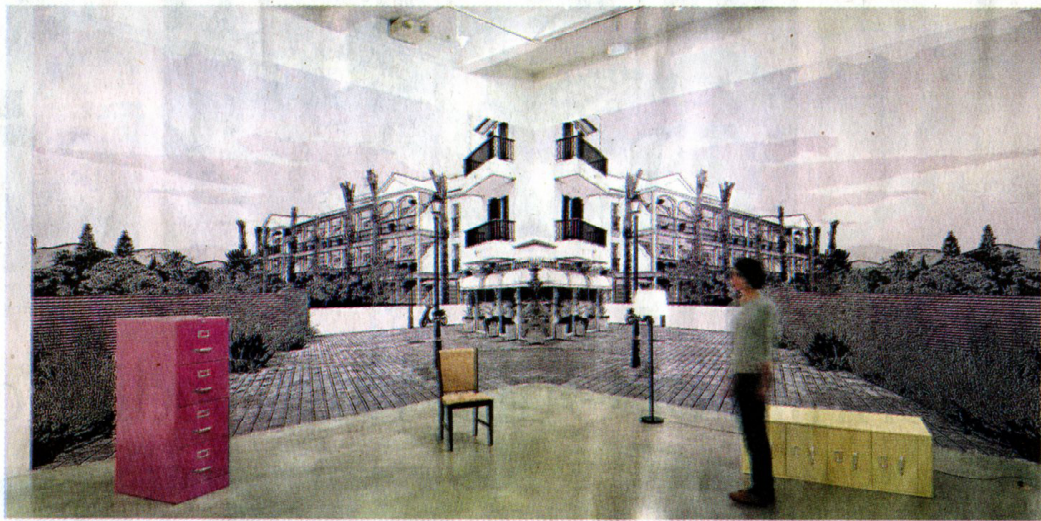
John Miller

'Suburban Past Time'

Metro Pictures
519 West 24th Street, Chelsea,
Through March 10

The art world is still in mourning for Mike Kelley — found dead at his home on Feb. 1 — making it difficult, though perhaps necessary, to look at this installation by his friend John Miller, who played with him in the band the Poetics. On the gallery's Web site is a remembrance by Mr. Miller, who sees in Mr. Kelley's work "an inclusiveness that turns the habitual avant-garde/kitsch distinction inside out." His own art isn't as generous; it surveys "so-called middlebrow culture," as the news release describes it, with reflexive disdain.

Here it takes the form of metal filing cabinets painted in gaudy, hot-rod finishes; fake rocks and trees of the sort that disguise pool equipment; and black-and-



Wallpaper with forgettable architecture helps John Miller create a sterile Anytown in "Suburban Past Time" at Metro Pictures.

white wallpaper printed with forgettable architecture (an apartment block in Berlin, a resort in Mallorca). On Saturdays two people inhabit this sterile Anytown, not interacting much with each other or the gallery visitors.

What else might such deadening environments do to our relationships? In a separate series of animations, Mr. Miller and a collaborator — the online artist and curator Takuji Kogo — give us some idea, setting text from personal ads to robotic-sounding digital voice recordings.

Some snippets broadcast a generic need for companionship ("just divorced feel lonely"); others detail specific fantasies or attributes ("Why you should get to know me? Because I don't have a dog that fits in my handbag."). They don't aspire to be much more than Internet memes, but you can see in them something of Mr. Kelley's concern for the human yearning behind sad clichés and inadequate forms of expression.

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