

METRO PICTURES

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ARTFORUM New York

John Miller

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John Miller's revered output finds inspiration in the writings of Henri Lefebvre and Walter Benjamin, the drawings of Douglas Huebler, and the indisputable hospitality of the Midwest. His latest site-specific installation, *Suburban Past Time*, 2012, a work in three "sites," seems to expand the scenes depicted by Miller's ongoing series "Middle of the Day," 1994–, in three-dimensional space and scale by presenting familiar landscapes whose jarring mundanity disarms viewers.

A behemoth concrete and foam board rock, a synthetic sugar maple tree, and decorative wallpaper depicting an apartment block in Berlin establish the first site as an unlikely commons, one that articulates the paradox of a privatized public space such as city parks, or even, the gallery space itself. Alienation, work, and time—three tropes rampant throughout the exhibition and Miller's oeuvre—further complicate the second site, where two performers (seemingly college students gaining an hourly wage) mostly read while sitting, either on chairs or on a plinth. Miller insists on paying for your pleasure, and you, in turn, must pay as well (albeit with an awkward intrusion). In the same site, Miller pairs gray plinths with metallic Staples filing cabinets. The objects' proportions are similar, this visual simile rendering equitable, by extension, the matte finish of Robert Morris's *Slab (cloud)*, 1973, and the glittery luster of DeWain Valentine's *Triple Disk Red Metal Flake—Black Edge*, 1966. Both Morris and Valentine tirelessly insist upon phenomenological surface; Miller directs their argument to the tedious maintenance work of archiving.



John Miller, *Suburban Past Time* (detail), 2012, mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view.

The third and final site presents *Look 49*, 2012, an animated video projection created with Takuji Kogo. Wall-size picture-postcard settings (London's Big Ben; a romantic, deserted byway) are spliced with shots of parking lots and close-ups of white plastic chairs. Texts taken from personals ads—seeking generic sexual encounters and wealth opportunities—are superimposed on the images and vocalized by a computer voice. Miller's predecessor and late collaborator Mike Kelley demarcated the territory of the spectacular underbelly of Americana; in retort, Miller resuscitates middlebrow culture, locating in it an unspectacularly rich theoretical paradox where the everyday subsumes individual reference and experience. Here, alienation begets community.