

METRO PICTURES

John Miller

The Collapse of Neoliberalism

January 30 – March 14, 2020

John Miller has been exploring notions of identity, economics, and social class throughout his forty-year practice. His latest exhibition at Metro Pictures concerns, among other things, a sense of everyday malaise and life's petty annoyances. It features a series of large-format photographs, two installations, and a video work titled *Toll Free*.

Mannequins are an iconic theme in this show. Miller characterizes them as simple anthropomorphized clothing racks that can nonetheless prompt unnerving degrees of identification. Miller's current photographs, installations, and videos insert these figures into familiar, even normalizing, scenarios that underscore their function as objects of desire onto which we, as both spectators and consumers, project a miasma of fleeting trends and fashions. These projections convey not only the sphere of popular culture but also the expectations of artworks operating within it.



The eight large-format photographs, with titles such as *The Tip of the Iceberg* or *Sleeper Cell*, feature various mannequin groupings posed against odd, vaguely evocative settings—generic photo backdrops Miller purchased mostly on Amazon. They depict anything from the cockpit of a spaceship to hospital beds to a diagram that references Rosalind Krauss's essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." The installation *Project for a Revolution in New York* is a schematic mannequin rock band seemingly locked in a state of detached contemplation. This deadpan ensemble suggests that what was once a counterculture has devolved into a mode of marketing. Another installation, *Epic Theater*, restages the kind of photo-shoot Miller used to produce the pictures in this show. Here, the lights and props are real, but the backdrop paper and the stands that support it are merely images printed onto a wallpaper mural. In the video *Toll Free*, on view in the back gallery, a camera slowly rotates from a central vantage point located in the middle of a busy intersection, picturing the view as if an observer was seated on a slowly rotating office chair. Generic "on hold" music plays softly in the background. As floating images of desk phones and mannequin hands come and go, robocalls urge listeners to call back immediately. These sequences alternate with close-ups of the inert face of a male mannequin.

John Miller was born in 1954 in Cleveland, Ohio, and lives and works in New York and Berlin. Along with Mike Kelley, Jim Shaw and Chris Williams, he was part of an influential group of artists who studied at CalArts in the 1970s. In 2016, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami presented the first major American survey of his work. Miller has had previous solo exhibitions at Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Kunsthalle Zürich; Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva; Magasin Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France; and Kunstverein Hamburg. He has participated in group exhibitions at the New Museum, New York; CAPC Musée D'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; and MoMA PS1, New York. His work also was included in the 1991 Whitney Biennial and the 2010 Gwangju Biennale. The Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin is planning an overview of his work from the mid-1980s to the present scheduled to open in April 2020. Miller's writing and criticism have appeared in *Artforum*, *e-flux*, and *Texte zur Kunst* and in the compilations *The Price Club: Selected Writings, 1977-1996* (JRP Editions and the Consortium, 2000) and *The Ruin of Exchange* (Geneva and Dijon: JRP-Ringier and les Presses du Reel, 2012). Miller is currently Professor of Professional Practice, Department of Art History, Visual Arts Concentration at Barnard College/Columbia University, in New York.

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Image: John Miller, *Deep State*, 2019, inkjet print on Ilford Smooth Pearl paper, 40 3/16 x 60 1/4 inches (image), 102.1 x 153 cm
41 x 61 inches (frame), 104.1 x 154.9 cm.