

# RUTH MILLER'S ENDURING VIEW

SEPTEMBER 8 — OCTOBER 22, 2023

OPENING RECEPTION AND BOOK LAUNCH: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2023, 6-8PM



Ruth Miller, *Landenberg Trees — Moon*, 1971-72, oil on canvas, 39 x 36 inches

The New York Studio School is pleased to present a solo exhibition honoring the work of Ruth Miller, whose lifework is guided by a meditative and honest portrayal of the world and objects around her. *Ruth Miller's Enduring View* spans more than fifty years of creative work, pairing Miller's early paintings—which include rarely seen works from the artist's time living in rural Pennsylvania during the 1960s—with recent still lifes and landscapes to explore the technical experimentation and succinct observations that characterize Miller's oeuvre. A book launch celebrating the publication of *Ruth Miller: Painted Presence* (Grid Books, 2023) will be held during the show's opening reception on Thursday, September 7, 6-8PM.

The canvases in the exhibition highlight Miller's ongoing interrogation of place, temporality, reality, and symbolism. As an artist who nearly always paints from observation, Miller has developed a practice that is profoundly informed by the specificity of her environs. Rather than painting transient moments, Miller searches for what she calls an "enduring view" in a process of working that uncovers the underlying geometry of the "unique individuality of the whole." She continues, "And if I'm lucky, the painting will look back at me with a force of a portrait." *Ruth Miller's Enduring View* foregrounds the artist's persistent pursuit of truth by repeatedly revisiting recurring motifs of trees, skulls, gourds, and pitchers.

In 1959, when she left New York City for Landenberg, PA, she found herself compelled to paint massive portraits of trees found on the farm on which she and her family settled. These canvases represent some of the largest of her career with some spanning six by nine feet. Painting these impressive canvases en plein air required a commitment to observation and proximity to her subjects. The resultant compositions are therefore not perspectival, nor do they offer glimpses of distant horizon lines. Instead, they capture the movement of her eye and body in response to the towering trees; Miller's closeness in turn informs a surface that is gestural and a space that is intimate and enclosed. More intuitive than analytical, these compositions speak to highly personal experiences of perception, process, biography, and memory.

Landscape painting has remained central to Miller's practice since the 1960s. She gazes afresh at the natural world, with canvases shifting into new color palettes and compositions informed by synthesizing the ever-changing environs of the

location. Today, the landscape surrounding her Connecticut home continues to draw her outside in her pursuit of the truth of what and how she is seeing. Shuttling between the personal and the universal, these compositions ask, in the words of Miller, “How do you talk about what you can’t talk about?”

The early landscape paintings offer insight into the still lifes for which she has become most known. She herself has noted the direct connection between the two bodies of work:

Among the subjects I like to paint are fruit and vegetables, which sooner or later rot and decay and this gives a sense of urgency and transience to my work. It is the same with the landscape, as the light keeps changing and no two days are the same. However, I am not trying to paint transience, on the contrary, I find the longer I work on a painting the closer I get to a clear and true realization of what I am looking at, or rather HOW I am seeing it.

Miller’s still life paintings evidence sophisticated compositions in which structure is paramount. The objects and the atmospheric spaces between them engender a process of searching and feeling. As in her early paintings, Miller’s hand confidently vacillates between representation and abstraction to render poetic meditations of time and life in light, color, structure, and form.

*Ruth Miller’s Enduring View* surveys the convergences and divergences of Miller’s long and varied practice by placing her latest work in conversation with some of her earliest. Throughout the exhibition, repeating motifs and variations on those motifs invite quiet reflection on the life and work of an artist guided by close looking and a passionate interrogation of the phenomenological.

Concurrently with the exhibition, Grid Books will release *Ruth Miller: Painted Presence*, curated by the Tulsa-based artist and Miller’s former student, Mark Lewis. The collection features sixty full-color reproductions of Miller’s work and a compilation of essays from Eric Aho, Alix Bailey, Riley Brewster, Graham Nickson, and Karen Wilkin, among others. Together, the exhibition and the book speak to the lasting legacy and continued relevance of Miller’s half-century-plus career.

The painter **Ruth Miller** has taught at the New York Studio School, Queens College, Parsons School of Design, University of Hartford, Yale University Summer School, Studio Art School of the Aegean in Samos, Greece, and International School of Art in Umbria, Italy. Her work has been exhibited at the Bowery Gallery, NY; Lohin Geduld Gallery, NY; National Academy of Design Museum, NY; New York Studio School Gallery; Alexander Hogue Gallery, Tulsa, OK; and the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University, VA. In 1999, she was artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College and exhibited at the Jaffe-Friede and Strauss Galleries. Her work can be found in collections at the Delaware Art Museum, Corcoran Gallery, National Academy of Design, University of Delaware, and Bryn Mawr College, as well as in private collections throughout the United States and Europe. Her awards include the Emil and Dines Carlsen Still Life Award, the Benjamin Altman Landscape Prize, the Henry Ward Ranger Purchase Award, and the Ingram Merrill Foundation. She is a member of the National Academy of Design and of Zeuxis, an association of still life painters. Recently, her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Lohin Geduld Gallery, NY, and at the John Davis Gallery in Hudson, NY.

On **Tuesday, October 10** at 6:30pm, NYSS will present a panel discussion exploring Miller’s life and work featuring Elisa Jensen, Mark Lewis, Stanley Lewis, and Ro Lohin.

NYSS will host gallery talks by Miller’s friends and fellow artists at 1pm on **Wednesday, October 4** and **Wednesday, October 18** in person and streamed on Instagram Live.

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