

P R E S S R E L E A S E

NICK MILLER

Still Nature

9 September –21 October, 2022

Exhibition Catalogue with essays by:
Brian Treanor and Martin Herbert[view Catalogue on line](#)

Branching and fragmenting: Tikkun Olam | 2019-20 | Oil on Linen | 168 x 186 cm

Still Nature is the third instalment in a trilogy of exhibitions held at Art Space Gallery since 2016 where [Nick Miller](#) has engaged with the still-life genre with groups of paintings that have evolved at each successive stage from early intimate compositions to works of immense complexity and monumentality of scale. And now, in *Still Nature*, the human form finds a place amongst the transient cuttings and blooms in abstracted studio interiors and restores portraiture back to the core of his practice.

The earliest works were of seasonal flowers and branches placed in vases that had been brought from his mother's home in London during her terminal illness. Small in scale and collectively titled *Vessels: Nature Morte* (2016) they were his way of processing her passing with the vases being seen as embodied containers for 'holding life'. In *Rootless* (2019) the pictures are more epic in scale and the compositions more complex and ambitious with the assemblages and studio interiors woven together in various stages of flowering, seeding and decay that pushed the boundaries of the genre and introduced the painter's solitary response to nature.

The evolution in *Still Nature* can be seen as Miller's response to the growing existential chaos of our times and an attempt to ground himself through painting within his own reality. A set of large mobile steps, ladders and assorted remnants from a neighbouring steel yard provide the armatures on which the paintings grow. Found or collected objects, photographs and postcards now find a place amongst vases and flowers, branches, starfish, seaweed, animal skulls and even a beached blue shark have become motifs of impermanence that interact with sculptural figurines from the studio shelves. Buddhist and Taoist deities, a broken Menorah and other signifiers of reflection, thought and human spirit seem charged with life surrounded by indifferent nature in paintings such as *Branching and fragmenting: Tikkun Olam* (2019-20).

Three previously unseen portraits give context to the small figurines and deities that populate the latest still lives and act as benchmarks to Miller's long engagement with portrait painting, Eastern thought and Taoist practices. *The Venerable Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche* (2006) is a renowned Tibetan Buddhist Lama

who heads a small teaching school near the artist's home in the North West of Ireland. The inclusion of this portrait after 16 years in the painter's studio, is in part a questioning, open-ended response to disturbed times, and perhaps a reminder of other pathways for addressing the seemingly unavoidable realities of human suffering and conflict.

The large scale naked figure, *Wilderness: Painting Patrick Hall (2016-2022)* is of a fellow Irish Artist, now eighty-six, with whom Miller has often collaborated and painted on many occasions since the 1990's, is also receiving a first public viewing. In these works and the new self-portrait *Closer now: Seeding and painting (2022)*, the human presence and form become *Still Nature*.



The publication includes a new text, teasing out aspects of these universal existential concerns, by Los Angeles based philosopher, **Brian Treanor**, whose interdisciplinary writing includes the recent book, *Melancholic Joy: On life worth living* (2021), and an essay offering some context in terms of contemporary art by writer and critic **Martin Herbert**, associate editor at *Art Review* and author of numerous books including *Tell them I Said No* and monographs on Mark Wallinger *Carol Bove* and *Tal R*.

Born in London (1962) [Nick Miller](#) moved to Ireland in 1984 and now lives and works in Co Sligo on the North West coast of Ireland. One of Ireland's leading contemporary painters he is highly regarded for reinvigorating the traditional genres of landscape, portrait and still-life with a highly engaged personal approach. Nick Miller was elected as a member of Aosdána in 2001 in recognition of his contribution to Arts in Ireland and is the recipient of the inaugural 2014 Hennessy Portrait Award at the National Gallery of Ireland. He has exhibited widely including solo shows at The Irish Museum of Modern Art, the RHA, the New York Studio School, Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris with numerous works held in public collections including the Irish Museum of Modern Art and National Gallery of Ireland.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm