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# Reduction as Political Commentary in Tom Miller's Quiet, Formal Constructions

**ARTSY EDITORIAL**  
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Painter, draughtsman, sculptor, and installation artist Tom Miller melds the artistic with the ordinary, opening up new contexts for the materials and structures we encounter in our day-to-day lives, as the art of his contemporaries and the reductive artists that preceded him. Miller has a keen appreciation for form and apprehension, molding materials and spaces to suit perceptual tricks. "I use forced perspective and symmetry in my work as a structural limitation and as a metaphor or analysis of the political condition," says Miller. "As a result they reside in the middle ground between physical presence and illusion."

In *Black Gray Spire* (2014), Miller joins two similar pieces of painted plywood, one painted white and ridged with horizontal bands, the other painted black and fluted with the same bands running as vertical flutes. The twin triangular pieces meet at one vertex, with some of the white bands protruding barely into the black, forming round bumps reminiscent to the ridges of a spire. The triangle peaks in the middle and its two diagonal edges sweep outward, giving its far more imposing height and presence than its dimensions (less than two-by-four feet) would seem to allow. Likewise, in his two-dimensional work, including *Gray Gd* (2010) and *New Standard* (2012), Miller employs one- and two-point perspective drawing techniques to create dynamic compositions that investigate form. Minimalist imagery.

*Set in Topple* (2014) is perhaps among Miller's most ambitious sculptures: the tableau, made in painted wood and concrete, recalls work by artists such as Banksy, Violent and Steven Parrino, whose theatrical, rock-and-roll-inflected drawings, paintings, and sculptures were aggressively cool. Miller's sculpture, a wooden platform bisected by a cinder block wall and obelisk, is partially painted in a shiny black acrylic paint, connoting leather, glass, and vinyl records. The work also invokes artists such as Tony Smith, with his almost ceremonial staging of austere sculptural forms, like walls, monoliths, and pillars.

"I use the monochromatic palette to reference truth and specificity," writes Miller. "I subvert this notion by concentrating the physicality of the paint on forming a structural image." Miller's careful attention to form, color, and presentation place him squarely in line with several earlier artists, while innovating and developing material ideas for a new, increasingly immaterial world.

—Stephen Dillon

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Tom Miller  
*Set in Topple*, 2014  
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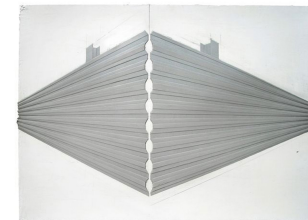


Tom Miller  
*Black Gray Spire*, 2014  
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Tom Miller  
*Gray Gd*, 2010  
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Tom Miller  
*New Standard*, 2012  
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## BIOGRAPHY

In his sculptures, installations, paintings, and videos, Tom Miller explores the structures we impose upon ourselves and the world—architectural and social—as expressions of politics, power, and interpersonal and international relations. With the precision and serialization of *Minimalism* as his reference points, he presents spare, monochromatic works, animated by subtle tensions. In his *Hiding the Body* paintings, in which balding, bespectacled, corporate types shroud each over a ditch full of roses resembling human skulls, he critiques our workaholic culture, in which the pressure to produce often overrides the usefulness and, troublingly, the morality of the production process. Isolated architectural forms, including walls and corrugated metal siding, recur throughout Miller's work, metaphors for what he calls "the political condition," as if politics were a disease. This is especially evident in his explorations of the wall, a structure both protective and dangerously divisive.

**Works**

Tom Miller: 25 works

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