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Miller's photographs show his warmth of approach

By Alan G. Artner

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Wayne F. Miller: Photojournalists are made by heightened times, and the 87 black-and-white prints at the Stephen Daiter Gallery record some of the most heightened times of the 20th Century. World War II in the Pacific, the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima, the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt—Miller witnessed them all, seeking out and celebrating humanity.

But as both the exhibition and a handsome new book ("Wayne F. Miller Photographs 1942-1958") show, the Chicago-born lensman was equally persuasive on a more intimate scale, whether documenting lives in Bronzeville or focusing on the daily life of an American family, which just happened to be his own. Lines between understanding, empathy and affection are confidently crossed in the pictures, only rarely coming within distance of sentimentality.

A show as large as this happens most often as a memorial, but Miller is, at 90, still with us. So the exhibition is a happy rediscovery. Few serious galleries mount holiday exhibitions anymore; they're mostly recalled from bygone times. But the warmth of approach shown by Miller is wholly appropriate to the season, observing some of the best human qualities without overstatement or triteness.

*** *At 311 W. Superior St., through Jan. 3. 312-787-3350.*

Neil Goodman: For a long time the artist has been a master of the sculptural grouping: several small, discrete abstract shapes in bronze brought together on a platform or wall. One of the most successful of the wall pieces is permanently above the staircase of the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University. But there is another one in Goodman's show at Perimeter Gallery that wrings the last ounce of expression from a repetition of forms that is almost as arresting as ancient calligraphy.

Otherwise, free-standing pieces continue to have echoes of Moorish architecture and the whiplash line of Art Nouveau that the sculptor encountered in Spain a few years ago. The way the pieces are built, additively with modules, means a certain repetition of shapes is here, as well. But the way Goodman has tweaked each component assures a sense of unpredictability that continues to suggest ornamental ironwork of turn-of-the-



century Barcelona.

There also are several groupings of five pieces each on wooden platforms. Here the forms range freely, evoking ancient tools, irregular geometric drawings in space, arcs and such living creatures as eels. Bringing all that together is anything but inevitable. Yet the compositions prove every bit as satisfying as they are spare.

*** *At 210 W. Superior St., through Jan. 3. 312-266-9473.*

CarianaCarianne: A great deal of faith is necessary to apprehend what goes on in a lot of contemporary art, and seldom is that faith tested as much as in the large solo exhibition at the I Space gallery. First, we are to believe it is a two-person show. The two occupy the same body and collaborate, though they are not conjoined twins or multiple personalities. All of the work on view, from drawings and objects to projections and text pieces, are "about" this condition.

In one of the text pieces, CarianaCarianne has written that she "spent her life embracing and documenting her body. She found this to be an adequate level of existence." But do we? Certain of the works attempt to broaden and generalize beyond the personal to all sorts of dichotomies in the world. Yet they are not convincing. The pieces that are the most engaged relate only to the selves we must have faith exist in the one body.

As with Outsider Art, we're never far away from issues that hold interest less because of idea or craft than possible pathology. And this may satisfy some viewer/theorists, though it remains to be seen how long they'd be held by the formal sameness resulting from a profusion of mirror images. For me, it's work of tremendous solipsism that assumes everyone should believe despite an inherent thinness of gospel.

** *At 230 W. Superior St., through Dec. 20. 312-587-9976.*

Mark Booth: "Spanish Still Life or A Large List of Merged Animals," at the Hyde Park Art Center, is a complex installation that purports to "dissect and restructure two 17th Century paintings by Spanish artist Juan Sanchez Cotan." What compels such recasting is something else. But it has been said that the best response to an artwork is the creation of another work of art, and that has elaborately happened here using 21st Century materials.

Booth has projected a different Cotan painting to the left and right of the viewer. The images are large and continually in slow motion, each dissolving into the other and coming back again. Before and behind the viewer are two mirror-like panels that remind us of the paintings' actual size. With them are speakers that play back on separate channels 13 voices in a long recitation of words by the artist.

The words, heard solo or in counterpoint, present a string of often fanciful creatures and other information that conditions our response to what is there and, more importantly, what is not but might be. Lines of text also appear in still photographs of the paintings. What you see here is not always the what you come away with.

** *1/2 At 5020 S. Cornell Ave., through Jan. 4. 773-324-5520.*

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