



DEPARTMENTS ► DAVIDS DIARY

Tuesday, October 30th, 2012

## Sitting Still on the Brink of Sandy: Nick Miller Paints a Portrait

by David Cohen

It is amazing how creative and productive one can be, seated in a chair doing nothing for three hours. I'm not talking about Buddhist meditation, by the way, but sitting for artist [Nick Miller](#), which is what I did Sunday afternoon in Williamsburg, NY. OK, he painted and I just sat there, but it takes two to tango.



David Cohen with his newly painted portrait by Nick Miller. Photo by, and courtesy of, Nick Miller

Nick, who is visiting from Ireland for a month, has set himself a marathon schedule of pretty much one subject a day for the duration. He is ensconced in a rather fabulous hotel for artists – residents get a subsidized, gloriously high-ceilinged studio with kitchen, bathroom and sleeping loft – and the line-up includes poets, artists, art world personnel, and a few fellow Irishmen passing through town. I spied fellow scribblers Barry Schwabsky and Joe Wolin on the wall, and Peter Plagens, though the latter was an old work brought along for inspiration; plus collector Frank Williams, artist Corban Walker, and Glen Fuhrman of the FLAG Art Foundation.

Each sitter is given a watercolor for his or her efforts, a twenty-minute warm up for the *alla prima* oil on canvas or board that will follow. The encounter provides the artist with the social intercourse he needs for the day, after which he is jelly, he says. He spends the evening reading works by the writers coming up on his calendar, who include the likes of Colm Tóibín and James Lasdun, so hopefully he has some energy left after painting.

I last sat for Nick in 2010 when I visited him in County Sligo in preparation for a show I organized at the New York Studio School of his “truck paintings,” so named because they were all painted in a personally customized mobile studio adapted from an old telecom van. That fabled vehicle has been put out to pasture – literally, bereft of engine and sitting on stilts facing a favored view outside his studio. The visage that presented itself in 2010 was bearded and bespectacled, so not much prep for the 2012 incarnation. I have a difficult head, I'm told, as it appears long and wide at the same time.



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