

Nick Miller

RUBICON GALLERY

10 St Stephens Green

September 8–October 6

Since 1997, Nick Miller has brought his studio on the road with him, driving around the wild terrain of northwestern Ireland in an old truck in which he has installed shelves, paint and brush holders, and an easel. In the resulting “Truckscapes” series, 1998–2007, painted from within his truck/studio, the outline of the open rear door of the truck is visible in the paintings. This becomes a framing device, presenting a perspective, refining the focus of Miller’s paintings to a single tree, fence, laneway, valley, or field. Despite following in the traditions of Paul Henry and Jack B. Yeats—historically the two most famous painters of this part of the world—the resulting landscapes are no reactionary or sentimental depictions of romantic Ireland. Instead they capture the drama, energy, and urgent harshness of rocks, wind-blown trees, and leaden skies with vigorous gestural marks in casein and oil paint. These paintings are a reminder that, whether a fashionable or topical subject for art or not, the landscape is an omnipresent force underpinning our sensibilities.



Nick Miller, *Steel Yard and Mountain II*, 2011, oil on linen, 16 x 20".

The truck has now been decommissioned, and Miller has moved back into a more conventional studio. “Yard,” 2007–2012, the final series of paintings from the truck, shows views of a steel and scrap yard, its final resting place. Here, three of Miller’s artistic concerns come together: nature, culture, and time. Scenes such as *Steel Yard and Mountain II*, 2011, and *Steel II*, 2012, are still framed by the truck’s proscenium arch. They present rusting pieces of steel, a half-collapsed trailer, telegraph poles, and wires. Beyond these there is the brooding bulk of Ben Bulbin, the table mountain celebrated by W. B. Yeats (brother of the painter Jack), that gives Miller’s hometown in County Sligo its particular character. Young green grass grows up between and behind the velvety red of old metal, its vitality juxtaposed with the slow processes of rust and decay. Overlooking these scenes is the ancient weight of the mountain, whose contours will outlast all.

— Gemma Tipton