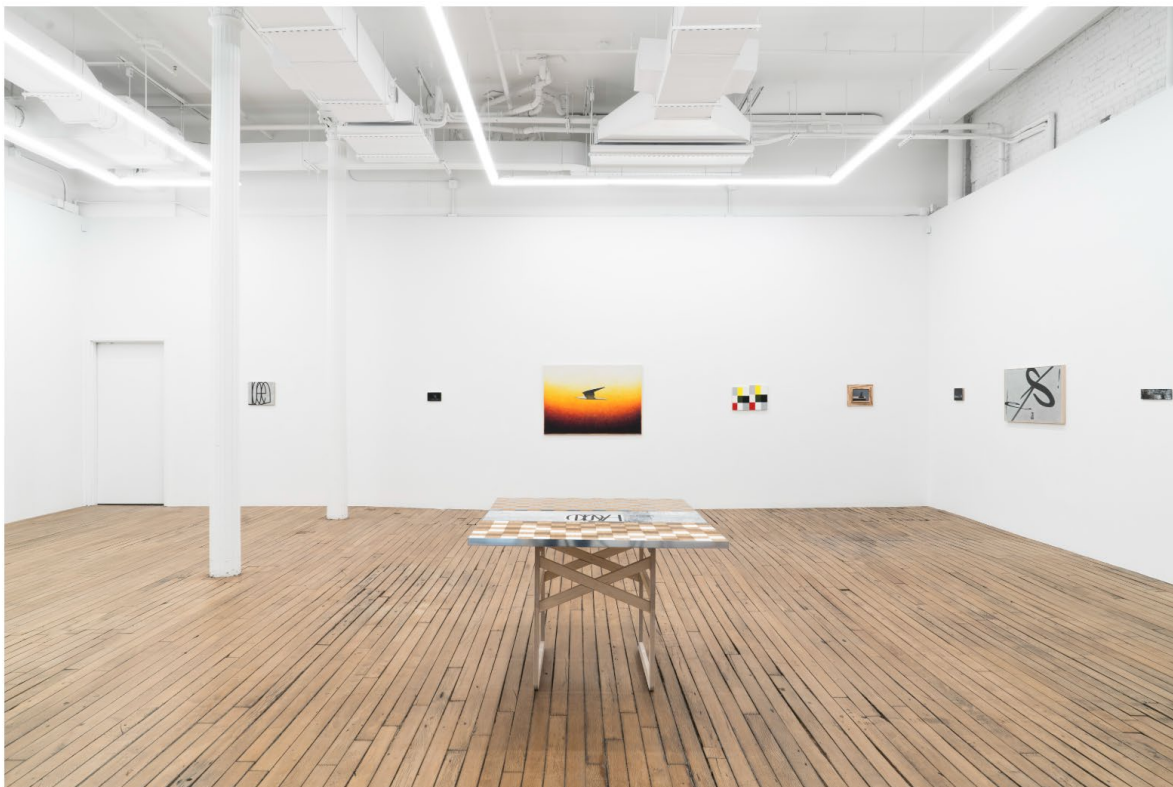




## Ian Miyamura's Quest

By Edward Waisnis

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*Ian Miyamura: They Learned to Look Up and Down, installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York*

As technology, through social media, streaming, gaming, advancing AI and the emergence of DeepSeek predominates, Ian Miyamura retreats to the centuries old medium of painting, counterposed to the attention sucking steady onslaught of the digital realm, deferring to interior quietude.

An artist authored cryptic essay bereft of de rigueur art language in favor of poetics, serves as text of the press release for this Miyamura's first solo exhibition in New York. Cobbled with the descriptions of the tendencies of arachnids vs. insects, with comparisons to art against artist, the text provides a pointed slippery guide to the artist's thought and working processes.

*They Learned to Look Up and Down*, upon a cursory viewing, reads as a collection of disparate work (i.e. a group show) by a multitude of artists. In fact, we are confronted with a riffing through of four distinct tropes of painting, all by Miyamura, hanging in an alternating concert. A reflexive ascribing of the influence of Gerhard Richter, though a bit obvious, is relevant. Supported by the high level of craft testifying to a practice that prizes skill and patience to a point of near scientific precision.



Ian Miyamura, *seat of power; charnel throne (1:1)*, 2024, oil on linen, 71 1/8 x 50 3/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York

With devotional countenance, *seat of power; charnel throne (1:1)*, 2024, \* despite a size slightly larger than the standard sheet of paper, draws one in with exquisite realism with near-photographic precision, that lends an uncanny view to another world. The throne, built from human bones, sits squarely centered, rendered in the saturnine palette of a Whistler. While bringing to mind Mr. Kurtz' heart of darkness enshrinement, the rendition is an actual size depiction—hence, the reference to scale in the title—of a figurine from Warhammer a tabletop game rooted in fantasy aggressive conflict that are sold, as models to be painted, to the hobbyist market. As Miyamura has turned this quotidian consumer model—sold to the hobbyist market—into a subject of serious consideration transmogrified through the rigor of execution into a first among equals and as a little gem.



Ian Miyamura, *seven grimghast reapers*, 2024, oil on linen over panel, artist's frame, 12 3/4 x 16 7/8 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York

Another half dozen small canvases depict figures from the same game. Among them, seven grimghast reapers, 2024, portrays a line of the title characters marching over a tiered plane that appears to be constructed from the same wood used for the artist's frame surrounding it. Additionally, the reapers echo the spiders evoked in the essay.

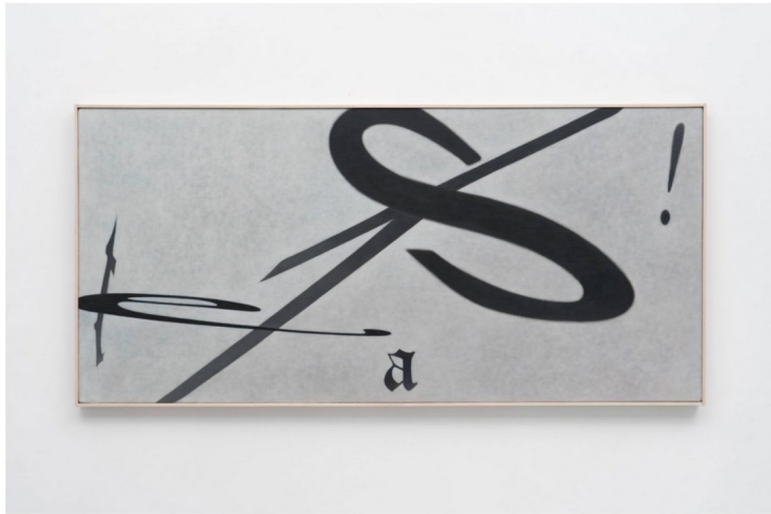
The outlier to these easel-scaled works, *seat of power; charnel throne (10:1)*, 2024, is exactly what is proclaimed, namely a ten times scale work-up of the statuette in the one-to-one version. The exercise spotlights the mimicking aspects in Miyamura's work. The effort expended in delivering the level of finish while admirable, falls short of the captivating quality found in its minuscule progeny (or, is it vice versa?).



*Ian Miyamura, in grim emus note, 2024, oil on muslin, 33 5/8 x 47 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York*

A major shift comes, in chromatic tone as well as subject-wise, with two exotically colored vignettes of sleek birds in mid-flight, sailing against an acid gradient. *in grim emus note* and *et consumimur ignite*, both 2024, impart the possibility of a cyclical existence given that the translation of the titles, from the Latin, collectively reads as: “we go round and round in the night and are consumed by fire”. \*\*

Given that the exhibition opened in close conjunction with the horrific event of the fires in LA, the event lent the works a tone of the prophetic. The color field that these birds are attached to is less the promise of a sunrise/sunset than the searing radiation of a heating oven. Nature's harbingers against flaming skies; gulls squawking over the Pacific Palisades coast. While the stylization owes more to mid-twentieth century automobile hood ornaments in deference to Audubon.



Ian Miyamura, *tetas!*, 2024, oil on muslin, strip frame, 20 1/2 x 42 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York

*tseat/taest*, 2024, stymies with twisty a title further confounded by the interlocking puzzle composition that appears purposefully insolvable. Ethereal graphics proffer the structure of a dream, albeit an intellectual one. It's companion piece, *tetas!*, 2024, strongly resembles late Ed Ruscha with its letterforms set to flight against an uninflected pewter ground.



Ian Miyamura, *fraternal painting*, 2024, 7 7/8 x 25 1/2 inches, oil on linen (installation view). Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York



*Ian Miyamura, fraternal painting (little dancer), 2024, oil on black muslin, 10 3/8 x 15 5/8 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York*

The oddest of the odd assortment of modes Miyamura pursues can be found in the trio of colorful blocky geometric works. The Neoplasticism of Piet Mondrian, with a through line from Ellsworth Kelly and Gerhard Richter are all referenced in these relationally titled pieces. Miyamura has decided to install the diptych *fraternal painting*, 2024, elbowed into a corner where one wall ends waist high, adding comment to one panel being slightly larger spotlighting this inherent eccentricity. The flat geometric bluntness, as well as the measured slightness, of the *To the People of New York* series by the late great Blink Palermo I find to be an apropos comparison, besides those made previously.



*Ian Miyamura, untitled, 2024, oil on wood, 3 x 13 3/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York*

A 'found' painting in the form of a narrow strip of wood, not much larger than a ruler or a paint mixing stick, that Miyamura had used as a palette. *untitled*, 2024, falls somewhere between a study for a bucolic John Constable landscape and a sliver of a New York School painting contributing anecdotal punctuation to all of the finesse.

*leaves end up on the ground*, 2025, the lone sculpture, anchors the exhibition in a sense, sitting dead center of the gallery. The hybridized table, whether typified dining room, kitchen, desk, or table tennis in variety, offers surface top panels mirroring characteristics from the wall-bound works, from imagery in the paintings as well as materials that are also found in the frames.



*Ian Miyamura, seat of power; charnel throne (1:1), 2024, oil on linen over panel, 11 1/8 x 9 1/8 inches (detail).*

*Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York*

If categorized, filed and put on shuffle according to the breakdown provided by the categories Miyamura is invested in a narrative of journey emerges. From the sanctum of fantasy to blistering atmospherics with a side dive into a twilight zone of linguistic acrobatics.

As I am given to filmic references—on account of early passion and a subsequent professional past—this summation comes with the recall of the skein of narrative Kubrick and Asimov put forth in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The (personal) connection being that I came out from viewing the exhibition with a quizzical elation and curiosity similar to that of my memory of experiencing that film upon its premiere, at eleven years old. Finding a sense of wonder is to be prized.

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\* All of the titles are in lower case, as popularized by E.E. Cummings, offering yet another bit of poetry.

\*\* Competing attributions split between Virgil and an anonymous palindrome describing the behavior of moths.