



B MILLNER

COURTHOUSE GALLERY
FINE ART

B MILLNER

PASSAGES

AUGUST 7 - SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

Essay by Carl Little



Belfast Lights, detail, oil on panel, 24 x 30 inches

COVER *Abandoned*, detail, oil on panel, 21 x 16 inches

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Rorschach Sundown
oil on panel
24 x 48 inches

B MILLNER PASSAGES

by Carl Little

Windows, doorways, a sunset, evening on a city street: all of these subjects represent openings, paths, transitions—the ways and means that move us from one place to another. Passages makes a nice catchall for this imagery in B Millner's third solo at Courthouse Gallery.

Fittingly, the painter finds some of his subjects while on the road, in the countryside of his home state of North Carolina, on the thoroughfares of his seasonal retreat in coastal Maine, or while traveling further afield.

Driving through Belfast a few summers ago, for example, Millner was struck by one of the city's central intersections. The two paintings that resulted capture the glow of summer dusk, the sky a deep blue as night descends, the downtown lights illuminating the streets.

Each painting features the wide evenly-spaced lines of the crosswalks which lead the eye to different parts of the scene: a pair of headlights gleaming at a corner, the lit entrance to a pizza parlor. Time has stopped, yet there's a sense it's only momentary: the city never rests. That car will turn the corner, and we will pick up our pies.

Millner considers Andrew Wyeth to be “the tops” among his favorite painters. That estimation has led him to visit the Olson House in Cushing, Maine, on several occasions, to immerse himself in that haunted setting—and, daringly, to paint it.

Christina's Window is one of two paintings in the exhibition inspired by the exterior of that iconic structure. Millner adds floral garnishes to the gray siding: geraniums line the inside sill while various flora reaches up from below. The house lives on.



Christina's Window, Olson House, oil on panel, 21 x 16 inches



Abandoned, oil on panel, 21 x 16 inches



Spare Room, Olson House, oil on panel, 21 x 16 inches

You can see some Wyeth influence in a lovely interior, *Spare Room*. There's a bit of word play in the title: The room is "spare," extra, additional, but also minimal in its furnishings. The single chair stands in for human presence in a simple sunlit attic space.

The exhibition also features several paintings of doorways. *Blue Door* is from a trip to Greece. Millner was drawn to the lovely faded blue of this entrance on a cobblestone street. "I don't usually do travel pictures," he says, but the double doors proved irresistible.

Millner despairs at the loss of old houses; "Preservation is on my mind when I paint these places," he says. Pointing to his oil on panel *Abandoned*, Millner says the worse-for-wear house with its ornate entry is "probably going to fall down before the door does." His brilliant portrayal saves it from oblivion.

The facades of theaters have also caught Millner's eye over the years. With its Art Deco topping, The Grand in Ellsworth looks truly majestic in his portrait of this iconic theater, which is celebrating its eighty-fifth anniversary this year.

Over the years Millner has painted his share of sunrises. "We live on Bailey Island and our house faces east so we get beautiful sunrises," he reports. *Casco Dawn* is a stunning arrangement of light, clouds, sea and sky.

Millner works from photographs, but doesn't consider himself a photo-realist. He takes a certain amount of poetic license while remaining true to the motif. For an artist who started in sculpture and shifted to paint (when he realized that you can't "sculpt a Maine sunrise"), he brings nuanced hand-eye skills to all of his work.

Millner is always looking to enhance his already substantial skills as a painter. To that end, for twenty-two years, he has attended Joan Elliott's studio class in painting at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. The class, for advanced painters, meets three terms a year and usually numbers around fourteen students, half of whom have exhibited. "We're mostly there for the camaraderie," Millner notes, "but also for Elliott's thoughtful critiques. She has been an important influence."



Blue Door, oil on panel, 21 x 16 inches



The Grand, oil on a canvas wrapped panel, 30 x 24 inches

“I get a little restless every now and then,” Millner admits, and he’ll shift gears a bit vis-à-vis subject matter. When a friend gave him and his wife, Tina, who is also a painter, an amaryllis plant for Christmas, he photographed it against a gray backdrop and decided to give it a try. He is not sure he will become a flower painter, but on the evidence of this stunning portrait we may be seeing more floral studies in the future.

Painting, Millner states, has given meaning to his life. The act of converting three dimensions into two has also brought great pleasure to a host of art lovers. His new work is bound to capture more eyes and hearts.



Amaryllis, oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches

Carl Little lives and writes on Mount Desert Island. In 2021 the Dorothea and Leo Rabkin Foundation presented him with its Lifetime Achievement Award for his art writing.



Tattoos, oil on panel, 24 x 18 inches



Red Barn Door, oil on panel, 21 x 16 inches



Stone House Window, oil on panel, 24 x 30 inches



Belfast Lights, oil on panel, 24 x 30 inches



Casco Dawn
oil on panel
16.5 x 32 inches



Crossings, oil on panel, 22 x 24 inches



Harbor Fish Reflection, oil on a canvas wrapped panel, 24 x 18 inches

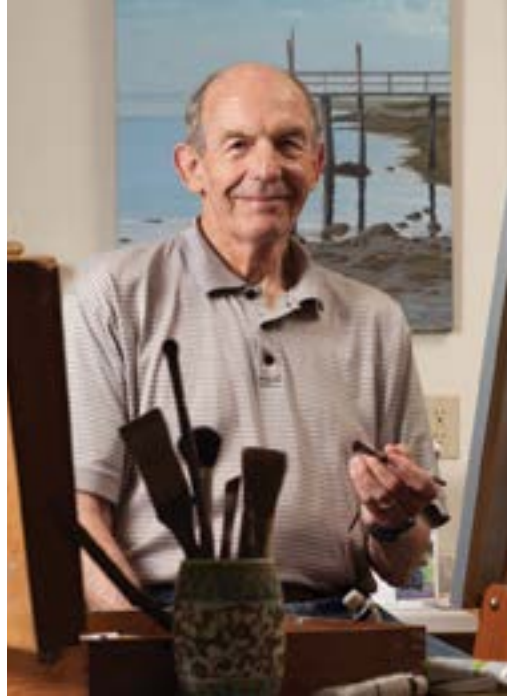


Copper Light, oil on a canvas wrapped panel, 30 x 24 inches



Closing Time, Wharf Street, oil on a canvas wrapped panel, 24 x 18 inches

B MILLNER



B MILLNER is a realist painter and sculptor who began exhibiting his work in 2002 near the end of a successful career in business. A native of North Carolina, Millner is a graduate of Davidson College (Economics and English) and the University of North Carolina (MBA).

For over twenty years, Millner participated in studio classes at the Virginia Museum of

Fine Arts Studio School. He also took foundry courses at Virginia Commonwealth University, the number one ranked sculpture department in the United States.

Millner’s sculptures derive from a variety of sources—images he encounters on the street, in creeks and marshes, and simply his imagination. Aside from a rough division between human and animal figures, his sculptures don’t lend themselves to categorization; he sculpts what appeals to him and what moves him.

Millner’s paintings approach photorealism and include interiors, landscapes, waterscapes, and cityscapes, frequently nocturnal. He favors character over beauty and likes to convey a certain grittiness in his paintings. When asked why so many of his paintings include manhole covers, Millner replied: “Because most streets have manholes.”

His work, which has been exhibited in galleries from Maine to Louisiana and in Anguilla, BWI, can be found in numerous private, corporate, and institutional collections, and has been selected for several national juried exhibitions.

Millner has been coming to Maine since 1995. He built a home and studio on Bailey Island in 2006, and splits his time between Maine and Virginia, where he also maintains a studio.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2020, '21, '23
Page Bond Gallery, Richmond, VA 2007, '09, 2012, '14, '18
Patricia Ladd Carega Gallery, Center Sandwich, NH 2013
White Canvas Gallery, Richmond, VA 2005
Devonish Gallery, Anguilla, BWI 2004
Cross Mill Gallery, Ashland, VA 2003
Cudahy’s Gallery, Richmond, VA 2000, 2002
E. Taylor Greer Gallery, Ferrum, VA 2001

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, Ellsworth, ME 2019–2023
Greenhut Gallery, The Portland Show, Portland, ME 2020
Roux and Cyr International Gallery, Juried Exhibition, Portland, ME 2018
Audubon Artists Annual Exhibition, Juried, New York, NY 2016
Page Bond Gallery, Richmond, VA 2011, '16, 2022, '23
Ann Marie Sculpture Garden and Art Center, “Swarm” Juried Exhibition, Solomons Island, MD 2016
National Sculpture Society Annual Awards Exhibition, Juried, Brookgreen Gardens, SC 2011, 2014
Patricia Ladd Carega Gallery, Center Sandwich, NH 2012–2015
Bayview Gallery, Brunswick, ME 2012–2023
Washington Sculptors Group, Juried Exhibition, Washington, DC 2002, 2005
White Canvas Gallery, Richmond, VA 2004–2007
Martha Mabey Gallery, Biloxi, MS 2004–2005
Devonish Gallery, Anguilla, BWI 2002–2012
Leighton Gallery, Blue Hill, ME 2000–2005
Earl McGrath Gallery, New York, NY 2000–2004

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Capital One Financial Corporation
Dominion Energy Corporation
Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
Longwood University
Union Theological Seminary
Virginia Commonwealth University Health System
Wells Fargo Securities

EDUCATION

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Studio School, Studio Painting Class, 2001–2023
Virginia Commonwealth University, Foundry courses
University of North Carolina, MBA
Davidson College, NC, BA in Economics and English

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT

Artwork: Paul Avis and Taylor Dabney
Portrait of B Millner: Paul Avis



Will's Gut Nocturne, oil on a canvas wrapped panel, 24 x 36 inches



Amaryllis II, oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches

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