

Steve Miller: Crossing the Line



Crossing the Line: Paintings by Steve Miller

Over the past decade, Steve Miller has made numerous and provocative artworks based upon his collaboration with Rod Mackinnon, a Nobel-Prize winner in Chemistry in 2003. They met at Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York, when Miller, interested in advanced imaging, was working with scientists there and MacKinnon was investigating protein structures in order to better understand their functioning.

Scientists and artists routinely make and rely upon images to problem solve in the course of their work. And so it was not surprising that Miller became fascinated with the visual nature, vocabulary, and tools of MacKinnon's work: the graphic quality of his calculations and diagrams, the computer modeling he experimented with to grasp the three dimensionality of proteins, and X-ray crystallography technology itself.

MacKinnon was investigating how potassium ions moved across cell membranes. Miller's work engages itself with the crossing of borders as well: moving back and forth between photography and painting, shifting from micro to macro scale, combining representational and abstract imagery and what is theorized with what can be seen.

Commenting on his long-standing interest in working with scientists, Miller says, "we're all asking questions, trying to understand what forces make or shape who we are." For him, art and science are parallel dialogs about possibility; when they intersect, the context of each changes. What results, as these paintings reveal, can be unexpected, engaging, and powerful.

Marvin Heiferman



Roam Free, 2008, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 80 x 78 inches



Evolutionary Tango, 2008, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 79 x 81 inches
 Centerfold: Factory, 2008, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 80 x 120 inches

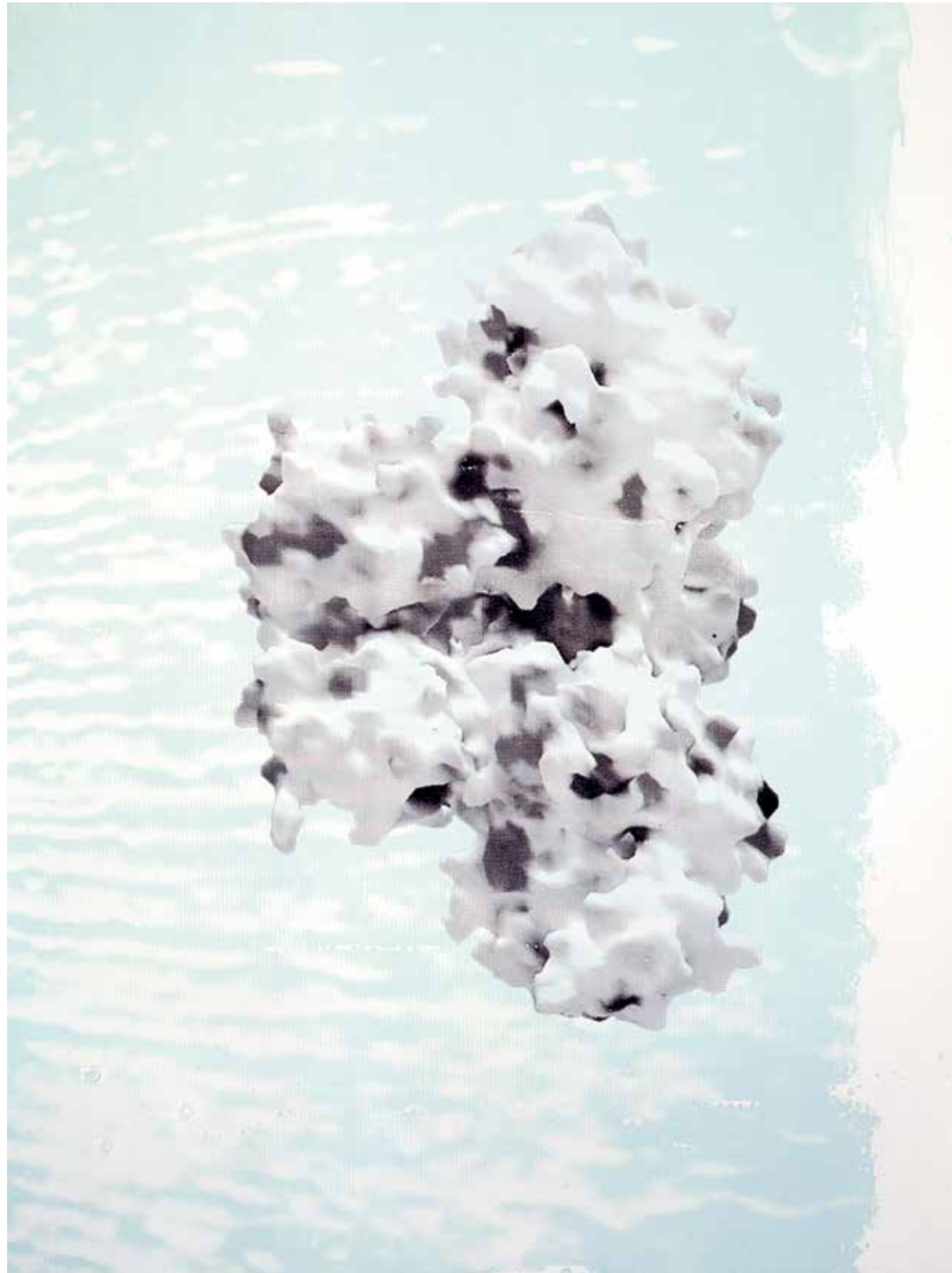




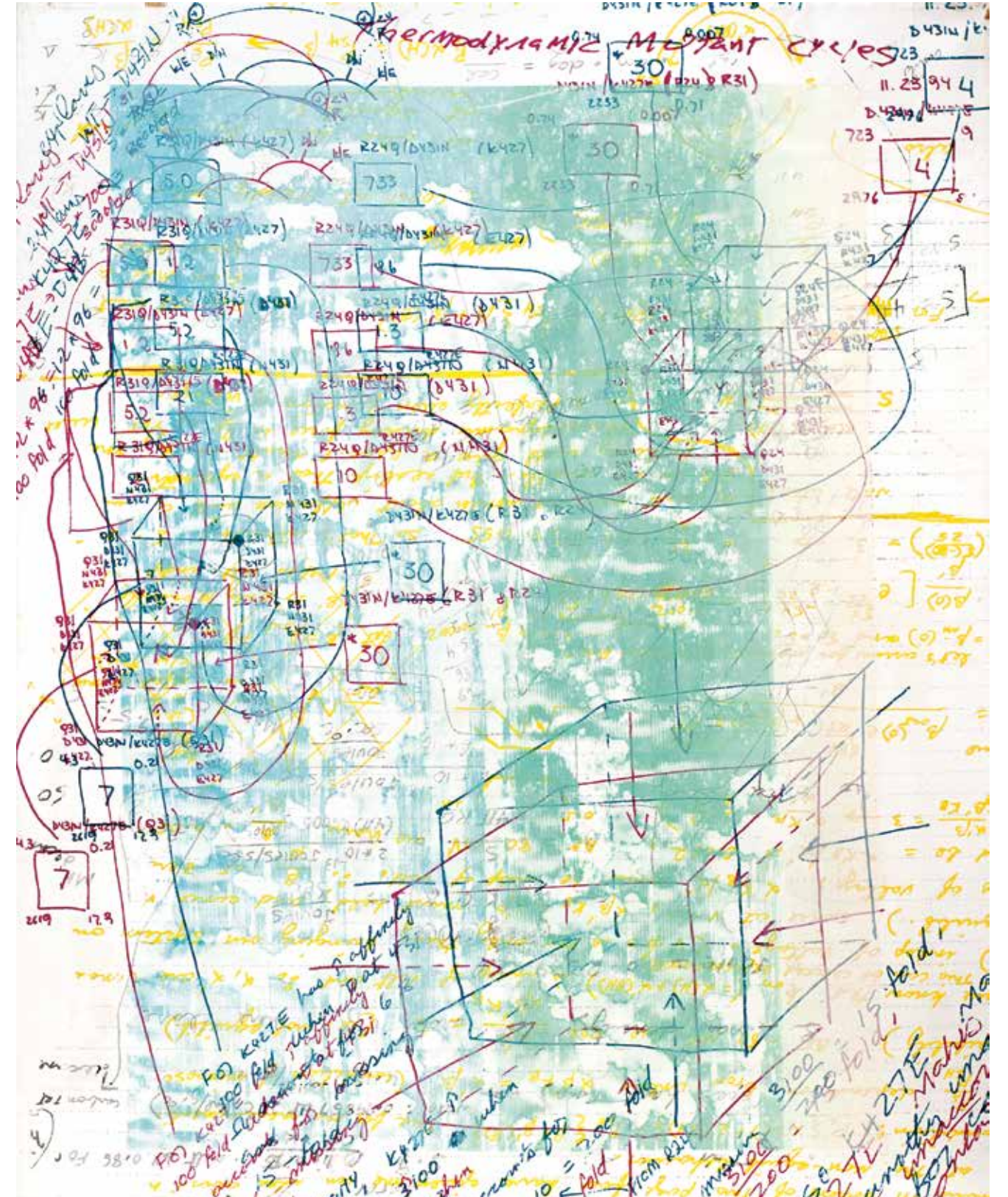
Potassium Chanel, 2007, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 80.5 x 80 inches



If They Exist, 2007, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 80 x 85 inches



Flight School, 2003, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 45.5 x 34 inches



Inscrutable Haze, 2005, dispersion and silkscreen enamel on canvas, 51.5 x 42 inches

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the cooperation of Rod MacKinnon, the 2003 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry and member of the National Academy of Sciences; most of the text and image elements in the paintings come from his modeling of human protein. I am grateful to Michael Rush, who sponsored and curated the exhibition, “Spiraling Inward” at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University in 2007, which featured a number of the works currently on view. Marvin Heiferman, who conducted an interview for the exhibition catalog that accompanied that show, has curated this exhibition for the National Academy of Sciences. Finally, I would like to thank J.D. Talasek, Director of Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences, for his support in expanding the audience for art and science and addressing the issues that affect our future.

Steve Miller



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