

Have you seen Paolo Miller?

Text by Alex Aymerich, Lucy Hendersom & Gloria Strauss

The exhibition *Have you seen Paolo Miller?* serves as a retrospective of the works attributed to Paolo Miller, building his persona through the diverse voices and perspectives of ten international artists. Together they have built his fictional character, his avatar. This collective fiction creates a framework to explore and articulate identities and perspectives in different artistic languages, filtering Miller's character through the unique lenses of each artist involved. The result is a compelling narrative that brings to life the elusive and multifaceted character of Paolo Miller, an artist who exists solely through the shared stories of those who claim to have known him.

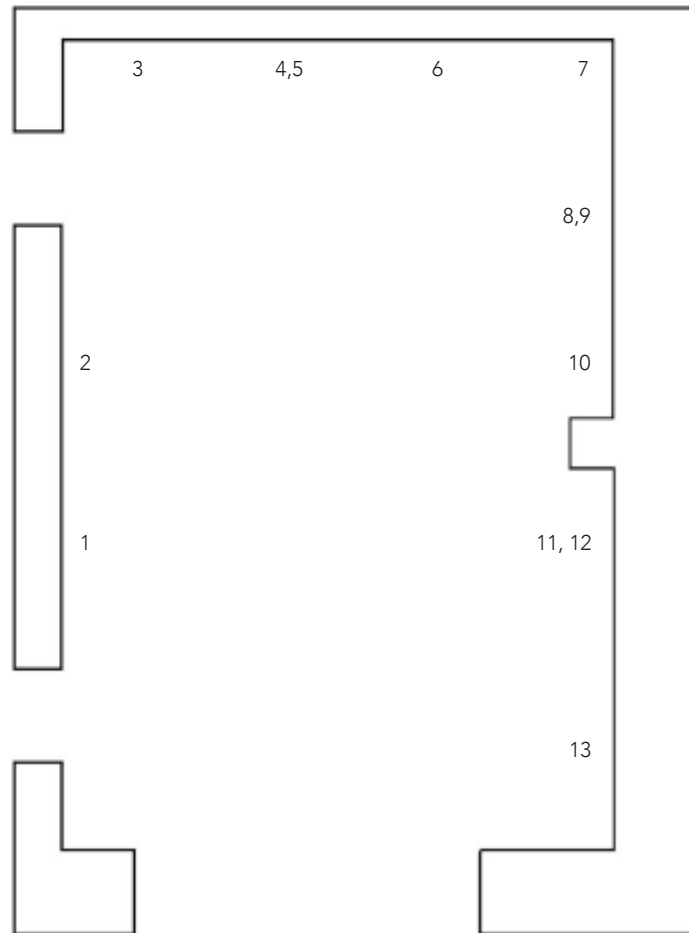
An avatar represents an embodiment or manifestation of a person, idea, or entity. This allows for the exploration of multiple identities and experiences, transcending the limitations of a singular and tangible existence. Every artist constructs a version of Paolo Miller from their unique perspective, there is also no such thing as an authentic or exemplary Paolo, as he is not a real physical entity. In this sense, he becomes a vessel for the diverse stories and artistic expressions of his creators. His presence is simultaneously asserted and negated; he is a constant yet ephemeral figure whose reality is perpetually reconstructed through the fragmented remnants he left behind. There is no single truth to who Paolo Miller is, he is simultaneously a long lost friend, a thief, a lover and a fleeting acquaintance. Miller's identity is built in a rhizomatic manner, through intersecting narratives and artworks that form a decentralised, and yet collective persona. Unlike a tree with a singular root system, a rhizome spreads out horizontally, forming connections in a non-hierarchical network.¹ Each storied encounter with Miller is equally significant in shaping and adding further nuance to his personality.

In Miller's absence viewers are left to form their own perceptions of his character on the basis of the recounted interactions of others, about whom they know little and whose narratives may or may not be reliable. In the accompanying interview footage, a picture slowly emerges of a man who seems erratic, callous and perhaps even dangerous—qualities that are understood through the similar experiences of those he encountered. In this respect, it is unclear how much we, as viewers, know to be true. In the end there are no facts, only interpretations. This is even more pertinent in the case of an avatar, whose entire identity hinges on the interpretations (real or fictional) of others.

While Paolo Miller only exists as a fictional construct, he gains a quasi-real existence through the voices of others. Their experiences act as nodes of memory and imagination, piecing together a mosaic of his life formed of their perceptions. This aligns with Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation, where representations and symbols of reality can become reality itself². The distinction between real and imagined blurs, as the fictional narrative constructed around the avatar gains substance and form through artistic expression. The collective fiction not only reconstructs (their) identity but also questions the nature of reality and truth in the context of personal and shared histories. By constructing Miller's identity through their varied perspectives, the artists dispel the idea of fixed/singular identities or experiences, instead highlighting the complex networks of individual stories that shape our understanding of identity. Paolo Miller occupies a liminal space between presence and absence, reality and fiction, self and other. In the end, a personal legacy is not only the physical objects left behind, but the recollections of others. We come to understand that, in many ways, we are all avatars—constructed through the memories, narratives, and perceptions of those we encounter, existing simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

¹ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

² Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press, 1994



- 1 Giulia Vitiello, *Ricordi Lividi I, II, III*, loose pigments on synthetic skin, 50 x 30 cm (I), 30x20cm (II,III), 2024
- 2 Kateryna Sopelkina, *Surreal 3*, oil, foam on canvas, 120 x 90cm, 2024
- 3 Alvi Östgård, *The woman I saw in the forest*, oil on pillow case/cotton and birch bark, 50 x 60cm, 2024
- 4 Kira Protsenko, *Auto ritratto*, watercolour on paper, 30 x 21cm, 2024
- 5 Kira Protsenko, *Her smile*, watercolour on paper, 21 x 15cm, 2024
- 6 Alina Zialionaya, *My rabbits*, oil on wooden panel, 184 x 50cm, 2024
- 7 Alexandra Bittarová, *Offspring II*, plastic foil, spray paint, rope, 50 x 70cm, 2024
- 8 Yelyzaveta Tarasenko, *Matrimony with grief*, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30cm, 2024
- 9 Yelyzaveta Tarasenko, *Bridal flowers*, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30cm, 2024
- 10 Alexandra Shukhobodskaya, *Dorothy*, photography on instax mini, 5,4 x 8,6cm, 2024
- 11 Ximena Robles Gárate, *Quetzalcoatl*, oil on canvas, 40 x 40cm, 2024
- 12 Ximena Robles Gárate, *Xólotl*, oil on canvas, 30 x 40cm, 2024
- 13 Janneke Leenders, *The Sleepless*, prints on acetate, 9,5 x 9,5cm, 2024

Pianobi - contemporary art project
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Have you seen Paolo Miller?

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Exhibition: 20th June until 10th July (only by appointment)
Info: www.pianobi.info