

SLEEK

Art & Photography

Navot Miller: Bringing Paradise to Berlin

Navot Miller's Paradise is now on view at Dittrich & Schlechtriem.

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Navot Miller. Photography by Lukas Städler.

Navot Miller's world is painted in color, literally and emotionally. With his latest exhibition *Paradise* at Berlin's Dittrich & Schlechtriem, the artist turns the gallery into a vivid, immersive space that blurs the line between painting, architecture, and memory. Born in an Israeli settlement and now living between Berlin and New York, Miller draws on personal experience, queer intimacy, and diasporic longing to create portraits that are both tender and political. In this conversation, he speaks with *Sleek* about fleeting paradises, the quiet power of listening, and how Berlin made him who he is today.



Image Courtesy of Jens Ziehe.

SLEEK: Your exhibition Paradise turns the entire gallery into a world of color. Almost every surface has been painted a different shade. Why was it important for you to extend your pictorial space beyond the canvas and into the architecture itself?

Navot Miller: It is a teaser for a broader aspect of my practice that I hope to expand and bring to life in the near future. I aspire to collaborate with architects and design both interiors and exteriors: a subway station painted entirely in pink, a bridge shifting from yellow tones into red, and other such interventions. While oil-on-canvas painting remains the medium I am most committed to at the moment, and the one I use to express myself most fully, it is not the only medium I intend to

explore. Film and architecture have long been sources of inspiration for me, and I am confident that my practice will continue to evolve in those directions.

S: Some of your recent works show Zipolite, the queer beach town on Mexico's Pacific coast. What does this place mean to you personally, and how does it reflect your idea of a "temporary paradise"?

NM: Yes, several pieces portray Zipolite and are based on photographs I took during my visits there. Zipolite is a truly unique place. In the wider context of contemporary mass tourism and the profound transformations it brings to cities like Venice, Paris, or New York, Zipolite has managed to remain strikingly authentic. The roads are unpaved, roosters wander through town, and most businesses are owned and run by local residents. What left the strongest impression on me, however, is the atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance, and mindfulness that I sensed from the very first time I visited, at the end of 2021. It might be the place where I feel most grounded. There is a certain energy in Zipolite. Something intangible, something I can't quite put into words. Its compact size naturally fosters encounters. You see the same people again and again, and that repetition becomes an invitation to connect, to talk, to truly get to know one another. That alone creates space for honesty, vulnerability, and intimacy. Zipolite is an exceptionally rare place in that sense. It is unpretentious, grounded, and deeply human.

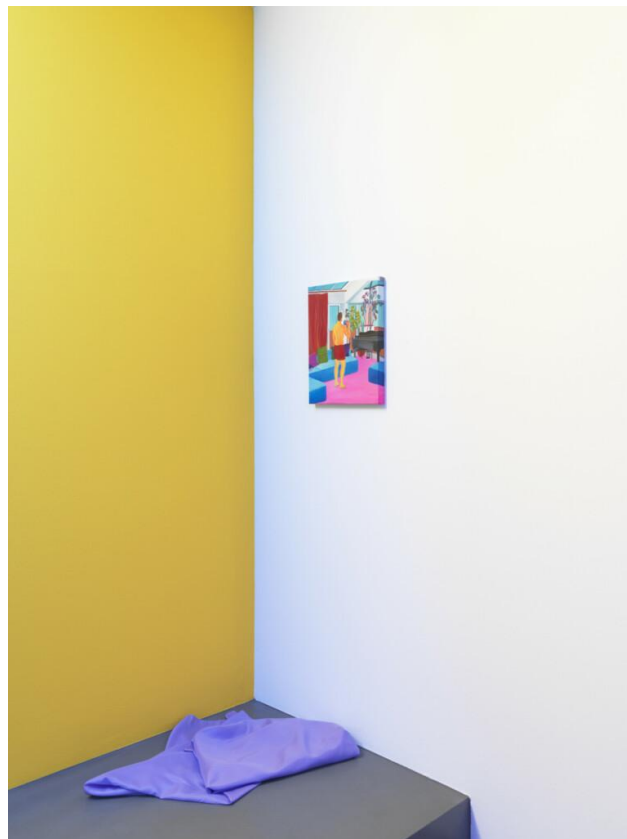


Image Courtesy of Jens Ziehe.

S: This fall, a special edition of Hanya Yanagihara's A Little Life will be released, for which you contributed an artwork. What connects you to that novel, and how did you approach the task of creating a piece for such a profoundly emotional book?

NM: *A Little Life* gave language to many thoughts and feelings I had carried with me. No other book has ever affected me so deeply. A few years after reading it, I had the chance to meet Hanya, and a dialogue began between us—eventually leading to her asking me to create a painting for the book. It was an incredibly meaningful and humbling moment, considering how much admiration I had developed for both the novel and for Hanya herself.

I knew early on that I wanted to depict a scene described in the book, but to do so in a way that balanced fidelity to the text with my own interpretation—how I imagined the scene, how I saw the character. I chose to paint Willem in a moment where he is listening to Jude tell a story. It's a moment I find deeply moving, not only within the narrative but also in real life. I've always been drawn to these quiet, intimate instances of listening, when someone is fully present, genuinely invested in what another person is saying. Listening is something we should all strive to do better. It's a practice, and a beautiful one, especially when it unfolds between two people in a loving relationship.



Image Courtesy of Jens Ziehe.

S: You came to Berlin already as a teenager and had what you described as your first “awakening” experience at Berghain. What role does Berlin still play in your life today, as an artist and as a queer person?

NM: I consider Berlin a version of home; a place I came from, and a place that shaped me, instilling values and manners that continue to guide me. The influence Berlin has had on me is something I carry proudly wherever I go. Berlin is also the sexiest educator I’ve known. It taught me how to try to be an ethical slut. It is the place that made me realise my life is unusual, valuable, and worth protecting. Of course, not everything about it is easy. I still struggle with questions of safety and the meaning of living in a city like Berlin. But despite the challenges, Berlin has played a defining role in who I am today—a contemporary, independent, and free person. It all began in Berlin. And perhaps, in many ways, it happened because of Berlin.



Image Courtesy of Jens Ziehe.

S: Your paintings show queer bodies, intimacy, closeness and sex – but never in a voyeuristic way. What draws you to these moments? Is it about representation, memory, or perhaps a way of grounding yourself?

NM: I try to live in a way that feels real, honest, and authentic. I enjoy talking to strangers and getting to know people. I am less interested in speaking about myself and more drawn to asking questions, listening, and discovering who others are. Sometimes this leads to moments of intimacy. When vulnerability appears, either in myself or in others, I feel a deep sense of connection and aliveness. As human beings, we are sensitive and social, and these moments matter. When I witness them, I often feel they are worth remembering, celebrating, or sharing. They carry meaning. In that sense, my work becomes a kind of visual diary. It reflects where I have been, where I am, who I have met, and who I have loved. I believe others can relate to these moments as well.

S: You've said that paradise, for you, is never permanent. It's a fleeting safe space, a moment of feeling secure. In a world full of political crises, violence and queerphobia: What makes such spaces possible for you today, and how can we protect them?

NM: Tolerance, kindness, and engaging with others, especially with strangers, in the same way we would hope to be treated ourselves. There is a beautiful principle in Judaism that captures this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." I believe that reminding myself of this every morning is a good way to begin the day. It also helps to remember that short, seemingly uneventful moments can have meaning. They can affect others more than we might realise. That, to me, is the essence of kindness.