

For Immediate Release

March 19, 2023

In Spring of 2023, ILY2 Too presented *Back Room*, an exhibition by Oregon-based artist max miller. miller was the inaugural artist-in-residence at ILY2's project space in Lloyd Center Mall, ILY2 Too.

The distinctively lavender drop-ceiling, corporate-carpeted space of ILY2 Too may be in a zombie mall, but it could be any of myriad anodyne institutional spaces from multi-purpose classroom to bank to church. miller took this anywhere-space itself as inspiration. For miller the space is analogous to a "development room" in a video game: the empty space devoid of details that is used by video game developers to work on the character controller, the basic mechanics of the player's in-game experience. These are the back rooms of our gaming experiences, rooms the player never enters, rooms of which the player is never even aware. The title of the exhibition called to mind for the artist the anxiety-tinged allure of back rooms of urban gay bars for a shy, newly-out young man.

Over the course of his residency, miller produced a body of work considering ways of thinking about digital and non-digital spaces. The work centered on a digital avatar of miller, a model that he created and rigged that serves as the protagonist in his untitled video game. The image of this avatar is also featured on a series of t-shirts and motivational posters.

The centerpiece of *Back Room* was the back room of ILY2 Too which miller lined in tumbling mats in primary colors. In the room, viewers could play miller's video game while being watched over by video clones of the same avatar.

In parallel with the production of in-game space, miller made interventions in the space of ILY2 Too including overlapping tape drawings echoing various athletic courts and a number of brightly colored balloons inspired by some of the circular primitive shapes in

millers video game. miller thinks about the ways that people particularize otherwise generic spaces as when an elementary school teacher infuses the blank slate of the classroom with visual elements to set an environment for learning.

In addition, miller pulled back the curtain on the space of production, with a workspace featuring story boards and clips from millers work-in-progress sci-fi video entitled *In Lavender*. With questions of access to tools in mind, miller made it a point to work with free and open source digital tools, tools including Magica Voxel, Miximo, Unity, Blender, and Unreal Engine. This ethos extends to his openness about process and production.

*max miller is a multi disciplinary visual artist whose work spans photography, long distance conversations, writing, fashion design, animation, filmmaking, and video game design. His work focuses on post-internet society, our relationship with the IRL world, and relationships between people and their alternate projected selves. Using various avatars and other "stand-ins", max creates alternate versions of himself and others, complicating the boundaries between performance and authentic self expression.*