

RAYMOND PETTIBON

25 November 2009 – 09 January 2010
69 South Audley Street London W1

For his latest show with Sadie Coles HQ, Raymond Pettibon is exhibiting a series of new drawings together with a number of seminal pieces from the 1980s. Pettibon's recent body of work shows his art at its most eclectic: comic book vignettes, art historical motifs and literary quotation conflate beguilingly into a multivalent artistic idiom, described by the critic Robert Storr as "ideas, echoes and impressions that well up and marble in the imagination".^[1] Threaded through with an oblique, elusive irony, Pettibon's drawings veer between homage and critique in their reflection of American politics, culture and counter-culture from the 1960s onward.



Pettibon's recent works display a newly 'painterly' quality. A number of them are predominantly monotone, with black brushstrokes flecked expressionistically across the page. Others abound with colour: the textured gouache and acrylic work *No Title (As he enlarged)* shows red curtains opening upon a swirling blue planet Earth; while in *Not Title (We would then)*, a fountain of colour – at once psychedelic and sickly – spews outward alongside textual fragments that include Aldous Huxley's account of taking mescaline. In many of the works, cartoon-style exclamatives streak across the page, echoing the stylised transcriptions of Lichtenstein and other Pop artists, and yet often spelling out unintelligible sounds suggestive of a primeval state anterior to language. The 'howl' is one of a number of recurrent motifs in Pettibon's new work; the human heart also reappears here as a dense, delicately rendered mass of capillaries.

Pettibon's black and white drawings from the 1980s evidence a sparing, linear style. The pronounced, starkly drawn expressions evoke comic strips – much of Pettibon's work from this period indeed took the form of fanzines. Pieces of excised text float suggestively above or beneath the images, baldly suspended within the white of the page and suspended in meaning between a multiplicity of emotional registers and connotations.

From his earliest pieces drawing upon the Los Angeles punk rock scene, Pettibon's art has been characterised by this kind of historical and stylistic dissonance. Pop-cultural influences intermingle with those of Goya and Blake; cartoonish exaggerations and conflicting perspectives are juxtaposed with subtle tonal variations; and the cacophony of transcribed and reformulated texts – high-brow and low-brow – confirm Pettibon's meandering, panoramic historical perspective.

Raymond Pettibon was born in 1957 in Tuscon, Arizona, and studied at UCLA in Los Angeles. As a young graduate he worked as a maths teacher before embarking on an artistic career. In recent years Pettibon has had various solo shows including 'v-boom', Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover, Germany, 2007; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria, 2006; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2005. Retrospectives of his work have been held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Santa Monica Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Raymond Pettibon lives and works in Los Angeles.

[1] Robert Storr, "'You Are What You Read': Words and Pictures by Raymond Pettibon", in *Raymond Pettibon* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2001), p. 72.

For further information please contact James Cahill on +44 [0] 20 7493 8611 or james@sadiecoles.com
Opening hours Tuesday – Saturday 10 – 6pm