

PRESS RELEASE

Raymond
Pettibon
22_05_00
19_07_00

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exposition / exhibition
JEU-JEN / THU-FRI 14h-18h30
SAM / SAT 11h-17h

bureaux / offices
LUN-JEN / MON-FRI 9h-12h30
14h-18h30

On 22 May 2008, for the opening of the "quARTier des Bains" in Geneva, BFAS Blondeau Fine Art Services is delighted to present an exhibition at 5, rue de la Muse by the American artist **Raymond Pettibon** entitled *Punk Epocha – 70 Drawings from the Eighties*.

Born in 1957 in Tucson, Arizona, Pettibon grew up in Los Angeles, where he still lives and works today. He is known for his vast corpus of drawings in which images and fragmented texts combine to communicate feelings often imbued with grave humour, pathos or a perfectly-judged mixture of the two. Executed in ink and watercolour, his works on paper explore the myths of US culture and describe a range of American clichés from a bygone era. Certain images and motifs return again and again in his drawings – a stock of apocalyptic imagery that recurs throughout his corpus: flames, speeding automobiles, bombs, explosions, the Bible, Stalin, Charles Manson, Leonard Bernstein, LSD, suicide, orgies of violence, surgical operations, etc.

Pettibon came to art by a most unusual route. In the late 70s, he began creating fanzines, flyers, posters and album covers for punk groups such as Black Flag, Minutemen and Sonic Youth. His work's ubiquitous appearance on flyers and album covers from the late 70s and on into the 80s substantially defined punk's image. *I've never been a musician*, he explains, *so I never felt restricted by the association with punk. I never thought much about it. But in a way there was the quality of the music that came out of punk – and I think there's some pretty big stuff, especially considering the times. Just in that way it might have affected me, like it affected a lot of people.*¹

An occasional double-bass player and deeply involved in the punk movement, Pettibon designed his first album covers for the hardcore punk group Black Flag (1976-1986) simply because he was friends with the group and because his elder brother, Greg Ginn, was the group's leader and guitarist and the founder of the record label SST Records. Pettibon designed the Black Flag logo – the 'Four Bars' – and created some dozen album covers for the group over the course of the early 1980s, becoming well known on the Los Angeles punk-rock scene before acquiring a national reputation in the world of contemporary art. He has always denied that what he does is illustration, often feeling constrained by the gallery and museum context: *The minute I was working in what I consider to be my mature style, which is from 1977 on, I considered my work as art, as much as any artist showing in galleries at that time. There's nothing I had to apologize for. My work never had anything to do with illustration, or commercial art, or advertising. The fact that some of my drawings were used for record covers or advertisements doesn't matter. They were never done with that context in mind. Where my art is shown is pretty irrelevant to me. It's nice to have an audience, but it could be just one or two people. [...] In some ways, I did prefer those ways of showing my art to showing it in galleries. It's not because of the nature of the work that I say that, it's just more about my attitudes in general. At this point, it would just mean more to me to go outside this frenetic gallery system where you're preaching to the converted. It's a very small world.*

Raymond Pettibon's work has come to enjoy a substantial position in the international art scene of the last thirty years. His drawings deal openly with the collapse of all too short-lived hopes and demands of the generation of 1968. He says: *Back in the punk days I pointedly avoided contemporary references. My depictions of the nuclear bombs or hippies or whatever were references from the 1960s and 1950s. The first time I ever did a drawing about punk was after the fact, in the late 1980s. But that's really beside the point, because I'm not a topical artist, and I usually maintain a historical distance from my subjects. It's a kind of guilt by association thing, but it's not about guilt. It's like the same thing with comic books, or illustration, cartoons, rock album covers. It's a kneejerk response to the company I happen to keep. [...] It just shows the obsession that society has with rock music and rock culture, nowhere more so than in art.*

By illustrating the failure of those hopes with his often frightening images, Pettibon offers a striking example of the way in which an artist from an alternative milieu has become an acknowledged representative of this counter-culture. He is able to bring his oblique and percipient gaze to bear on highly complex subjects such as racism, war, politics, power, religion, drugs, violence, sex and anything else that bears, however remotely, on the vices and deviance of contemporary American daily life.

In order to give an accurate idea of Pettibon's work of the 80s, we have chosen to exhibit a group of 70 of his finest drawings alongside a series of fanzines and album covers. Twenty-nine drawings in this corpus were reproduced in fanzines while two of them were first used as album covers.

Pettibon has had many exhibitions worldwide, notably at BFAS Blondeau in 2004, in this same space, where his work was hung alongside that of the French artist Jean-Luc Verna. He took part in Documenta 11 of 2002 and in the Whitney Bieniales of 1993 and 1997. His first exhibition in a European museum was held in the Bern Kunsthalle in 1995 and a part of that show went on to be seen at Marc Blondeau's 14/16 Verneuil space in Paris that same year. Since then, Pettibon has exhibited at Barcelona's MACBA (2002), the Museion (the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Bolzano, Italy) (2003), the Vienna Kunsthalle (2006) and at Hannover's Kestnegergesellschaft (2007).

¹ Raymond Pettibon in R. Storr, D. Cooper, U. Looock, *Raymond Pettibon*, Phaidon, New York 2001, pp.13,17

Please contact philippe@bfasblondeau.com to obtain a checklist of the works exhibited.

BFAS Blondeau Fine Arts Services moved to 5, rue de la Muse in Geneva in 2000. As a consultancy firm dealing with painting, drawing and sculpture from 1820 to now, BFAS Blondeau Fine Arts Services proposes major works to collectors and institutions in Europe and in the United States. The company benefits from an art library of 11 000 titles. Wishing to share its vision of contemporary and emerging art, BFAS Blondeau Fine Arts Services devotes its space called **5, rue de la Muse** to regular exhibitions. Among other artists, Alex Brown, Dan McCarthy, Jerry Phillips, Jim Shaw or Louise Lawler have been exhibited in the past.

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