

and colorful, with numerous voices (and handwritings) competing for attention. His commentary also turned increasingly oblique, though no less caustic.

Throughout the 1990s, Pettibon continued to complicate the work and its messages, and the recent drawings (all dated 2001 or 2002) exhibited at David Zwirner brought this progress up-to-date. His pen-and-ink medium now includes heavy doses of watercolor, making painterly qualities more emphatic. The usual cast of characters, meanwhile, remains—locomotives, baseball players, Superman, Gumby, bleeding hearts, Bibles, waves and surfers, Christ, clouds and capital As—but this canon is updated with specific contemporary references. For example, a drawing has two men dragging a third from a “Publican” function

that range from the sublimity of this piece to a dreary, melancholic mood in others.

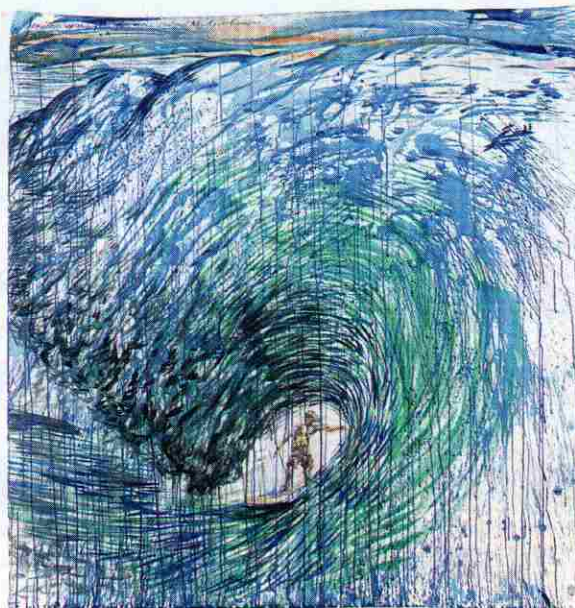
The more than 100 new drawings were installed in groups (side by side, in rows or in amorphous clusters) loosely determined by theme or style, and push-pinned to the walls, as Pettibon prefers. This elicited dialogues between the works. However, the words are so plentiful, the interconnections so tenuous, that one can never be sure of what is intended and what isn't. One image of a man wielding a blazing torch declares, “Follow me!—I'm the artist. I don't think we've met.” Indeed, we continue to follow Pettibon. Yet he always remains one step ahead, confounding, mystifying and thus preventing us from ever catching up to meet him face-to-face.

—Cary Levine

Fausto Melotti at Leo Castelli

Italian modernist Fausto Melotti (1901-1986) is known primarily for the abstract sculptures he began creating in the 1930s. These elegantly diminutive, finely wrought sculptures employ curved, flat and linear shapes that perch upon thin metal rods. Sometimes only barely asserting their identity as material objects, they dispense with not only the monumentality but even the volumetric quality of traditional sculpture. A similar sensibility—elusive, delicate and refined—emerged in this show of 32 of Melotti's drawings and watercolors. Dating from the 1950s through the early '70s, they come from the Melotti family and have rarely been shown before.

Most of the works (all untitled) combine abstract forms and loosely figurative motifs that can evoke the sea, massive stone architecture or Classical mythology. In one watercolor, for example, a series of thickly painted horizontal red and white bars float above an insubstantial, thinly washed pylonlike form at the edge of a cliff. In another, a red ornamental “A” floats between sea and sky in a soft, multihued composition that includes a series of colored bars at the edge. A third work features colored, soft-edged rectangles stacked on one another like building blocks of some archaic temple; upon them hovers, as if an alien spaceship, a pencil-drawn ellipsoid on thin, projecting legs or tethers.



Raymond Pettibon: *No Title (sometimes approaching the)*, 2001, ink and watercolor on paper, 53 1/2 by 52 1/2 inches; at David Zwirner.

Among the more representational works was one of a woman sitting on a massive stone composed of pasted-on variegated paper. She is shown in profile and painted in a rainbow spectrum. Her long, thick hair, which is rendered with rubbed graphite, expands as it falls like water to the image's edge; she might almost be personifying a natural force. In another enigmatic work, a giant animal-like form—drawn in simple white tubular lines, with gold rings serving for the creature's feet and head—appears to enter the shallow water of a grotto. Although works such as these seem at first to embody a kind of narrative, the ultimate effect is less specific, more about registering a mood or state of being, metaphysical, mythological or divine. In some of these delicate drawings, such as one that shows a collection of simple green and red triangles suspended like kites in the sky, the composition is completely abstract, a vision of twittering markings in a light and open space.

—Jonathan Gilmore

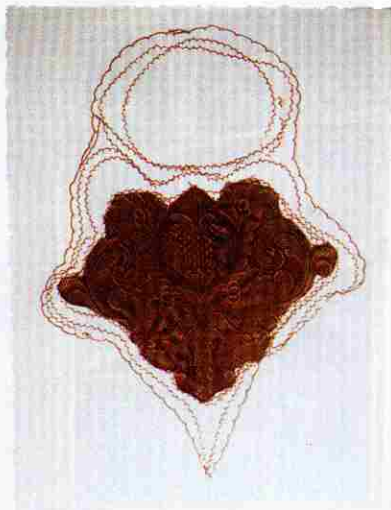
Tim Gardner at 303

Since his first solo show in New York, in 2000, Tim Gardner has become known for exquisitely rendered, photo-realist watercolors of frat boys at

play—a subject matter given short shrift in American art. For the 31 watercolors in his third New York show, all from 2002, Gardner increased the scale of his work (the pictures average about 7 by 9 inches) and expanded his thematic range to include landscapes, interiors, still lifes, and renditions of male body-builders and statues.

The imagery in *Untitled (S with Mt. Robson)* is fairly typical: S turns his shaven head away from the viewer to regard a gloriously snowcapped mountain; but because he's also swigging a can

Fausto Melotti: *Untitled*, ca. 1960, pencil and watercolor on paper, 13 1/2 by 9 1/2 inches; at Leo Castelli.



Elena Berriolo: *Sewn Red*, 2002, thread and fabric on paper, 15 by 11 inches; at Lo Spazio.

while this purported quote from George W. Bush himself unfurls overhead: “In 1996 I returned to Texas, discouraged over the prospects of the Republican Party ever being able to rehabilitate itself, so I regrouped—and sent to their deaths another—people.”

Other works are more focused on form. A large, visually stunning drawing shows a surfer in an oversized wave of green and blue watercolor, which drips extensively down the sheet, generating an all-over Abstract-Expressionist-type effect. A characteristic of the new work, the drip technique produces results

