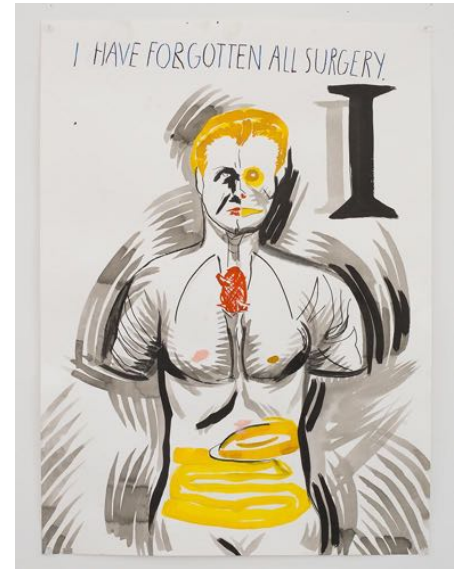


52W *HARDWAY***D. Allin, R. Pettibon, C. Ramone**

September 26-October 11, 2025
52 Walker Street, New York

Live matches October 3 and 10



Raymond Pettibon, *No Title (I have forgotten...)*, 2013 © Raymond Pettibon. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

52 Walker and Awesome Championship Wrestling are pleased to announce *52W HARDWAY*, the gallery's "sixteenth-and-a-half" exhibition, which will feature drawings by Raymond Pettibon related to his lifelong interest in professional wrestling. Organized by Ebony L. Haynes, this two-week-only presentation-part exhibition, part event-will also see Pettibon's friend and former two-time AEW (All Elite Wrestling) TNT Champion Darby Allin perform in live wrestling matches occurring on October 3 and 10 inside a ring installed within the gallery during the run of the show. Each performance night will also include live music and undercard bouts, organized by Allin, spotlighting up-and-coming figures in the sport. On view alongside Pettibon's works will be drawings and wrestling props created by artist, designer, and wrestling specialist Charlie Ramone, who is widely known in the sport for his pivotal behind-the-scenes roles.

The show's title, "Hardway," refers to when a wrestler gets busted open by accident. It could be a stray punch to the head that causes a gash, a slice from a broken piece of a weapon, or anything that causes accidental bleeding. More often than not, a hardway injury is gruesome, shocking, and unsettling because it's real. This rupture-where the performative nature of the match is pierced by something raw and truly violent-speaks to the heart of this exhibition, as seen in the works of Pettibon and Ramone and the matches featuring Allin, who has made his name in the sport for his extreme and often risky maneuvers.

Just as a hardway injury disrupts the illusion of control in the ring, Pettibon's representations of the sport take up its stylized characters and violence as a way to scrutinize and satirize American myths of masculinity, power, and spectacle. Across the exhibited works, deeper cultural tensions play out and intermingle, and boundaries between truth and falsehood, danger and safety, performance and reality become increasingly-and disconcertingly-blurred.

Pettibon's drawings include scenes of wrestling matches and hand-to-hand combat, depictions of Greco-Roman sculptures, and compositions that foreground muscular male bodies alongside inscriptions that make explicit the often subtextual homoeroticism of such imagery. This exhibition gathers these alongside Ramone's similarly expressive drawings and props-personal pop-punk and metal tributes to wrestling's energy and subcultural roots. The handwritten texts in both artists' work play off of wrestling's pantomime and exaggerated visual language, echoing Roland Barthes's observation that "wrestling is like a diacritic writing," in which gesture and posture annotate the body's meaning.¹

Allin's and the other wrestlers' visceral, high-risk matches give real-world embodiment to these concerns while enacting the rupture at the show's heart. Showcasing the less mainstream side of the sport, their matches fuse the gritty, anti-establishment spirit of wrestling's pre-commercial era with the self-aware, media-savvy edge of the contemporary performer, laying bare the fault lines where spectacle fractures into something more volatile-and more real.

Raymond Pettibon's (b. 1957) influential oeuvre engages a wide spectrum of American iconography variously pulled from literature, art history, philosophy, religion, politics, sports, and alternative youth culture, among other sources. Intermixing image and text, his drawings engage the visual rhetorics of pop and commercial culture while incorporating language from mass media as well as classic texts by writers such as William Blake, Marcel Proust, John Ruskin, and Walt Whitman. Through his exploration of the visual and critical potential of drawing, Pettibon's practice harkens back to the traditions of satire and social critique in the work of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists and caricaturists such as William Hogarth, Gustave Doré, and Honoré Daumier, while reinforcing the importance of the medium within contemporary art and culture today.

¹ Roland Barthes, "The World of Wrestling," in *Exquisite Mayhem: The Spectacular and Erotic World of Wrestling*, edited by Cameron Jamie and Mike Kelley, photographs by Theo Ehret (Cologne: Taschen, 2001), p. 9.

With his face half-painted like a skeleton and an intense blue-eyed stare, as well as a penchant for high-risk stunt performances, **Darby Allin** (b. 1993) has built an illustrious, punk-rock-inspired wrestling career with All Elite Wrestling (AEW). He is a two-time former AEW TNT Champion and a former AEW World Tag Team Champion. In 2025, Allin completed a climb of Mount Everest that has inspired his next project: building a free public skatepark in his hometown of McDonough, Georgia.

Charlie Ramone is the official Special Projects Manager at All Elite Wrestling (AEW), but he has also been referred to as AEW's in-house "jack of all trades." Ramone is a former wrestler and current prop maker, a guest star on AEW television, and an artist who realizes the visions and ideas of others. Ramone typically creates work in a high-contrast graphic style reminiscent of ink drawing and blackwork tattoos, which reference the political messaging that ground Ramone and his collaborators.

For all press inquiries, contact
press@52walker.com