

Raymond Pettibon

Bakersfield to Barstow to Cucamonga to Hollywood

25 June – 20 August 2016

62 Kingly St London W1

Tuesday – Saturday, 11–6pm

In his sixth exhibition at Sadie Coles HQ, Raymond Pettibon presents a prolific body of new drawings that embrace many of his enduring themes – baseball players, surging trains, waves, film-noir encounters. Ranging in scale and subject, Pettibon's drawings home in on particular objects, incidents or vistas, while ambiguously severing these images from a narrative context. Fragments of handwritten text – placed alongside or threaded within the imagery – add multiple shades of meaning and irony.



Since he emerged in the 1980s in the punk scene of Southern California, Pettibon has depicted modern America from a myriad of angles (the title of the current show evokes the stop offs on a meandering trip through California). Images of sporting prowess or modern industry are offset by ambivalent or macabre scenes. The works retain the comic-book style of Pettibon's earliest drawings (rapidly hatched, sharply outlined), while alternating between melodramatic close-ups and far-off views. In their composition, they range from the stark monochrome of his 1980s output to painterly layering of gouache, acrylic and collage.

Several of the new works portray encounters – sexual liaisons, sports-field standoffs – in which the seemingly humdrum scene is underscored by an ambience of violence, angst or sexual dissatisfaction. Resisting the resolution of a story, Pettibon's works also blur the categories of art history – compressing elements of painting, cartoons, poetry, the novel, and polemics. He has commented: "All these closed fields ... hard-edged and soft-edged, and flat ... What does it measure, what does it ultimately say? It cuts out from the world the complexity that exists, which I deal with in every fucking drawing I make."

Pettibon's use of text – both quoted and created – deepens that complexity. Rather than explaining or contextualizing, his dense capitalized paragraphs and floating aphorisms tend to problematize or multiply the meaning of an image. This applies in particular to his long running series of self-portraits. He has explained that these works are "about self-portraiture rather than being self-portraits." Often, it is the act of striking a pose and seeing oneself in a given light that his works address. *No Title (Self-portrait with smile)* shows him in sunglasses, tugging his own face into a grin, while in *No Title (Self-portrait with bust)* he squares up to a sculpted double. His self-portraits unfold a sequence of different guises or attitudes, which mirror the shifting voices or registers of the text running through his wider corpus.

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, designing album covers for Black Flag and becoming associated with the Los Angeles punk scene. In recent years, Pettibon has had numerous major solo shows including *Home and Away*. *Raymond Pettibon: Living the American Dream*. *Marko Mäetamm: Feel at Home*, Kumu Kunstmuuseum, Tallinn, Estonia (2015); *Whuytuyp*, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland (2012); *Raymond Pettibon*, Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, Germany (2007); *Whatever It is You're Looking for You Won't Find It Here*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria (2006); and *Raymond Pettibon*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2005). The survey exhibition *Homo Americanus* is currently on view at Deichtorhallen Hamburg - Sammlung Falckenberg in Hamburg, Germany. 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. In 2010 Pettibon received the prestigious Oskar Kokoschka prize. Raymond Pettibon lives and works in New York.

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