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**Reading Between the Lines:
Pettibon, Picasso and the Future of Drawing**

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Reading Between the Lines: Pettibon, Picasso and the Future of Drawing

In the history of modern art, drawing has had a contradictory role. On the one hand, it has seemed to occupy a subordinate position in relation to art's other practices, of painting and sculpture (in particular) but also of photography and the plethora of time-based media that recent and contemporary art has comprehended—it's been taken to be a preparatory medium, a means (essential or not) by which initial ideas can be given visual form, and/or developed, tested, experimented with, *en route* to the major work carried out in one or more of these other media. On the other hand, drawing has seemed at the same time to be of key importance to art's authenticity—in a time of the rapid and unending proliferation of new technologies of image-making, the perceived unmediated relation that it displays between hand, eye and mind has been an invaluable guarantor of subjectivity, of authorship, of the very identity of the artist.

In recent years, this contradiction has been further complicated by the readiness of artists to make use of the new technologies to extend the practices of drawing itself, as well as by an expansion of the field of these practices beyond the borders of art—indeed, by a concern to question the very utility of such borders. I'm presently writing an essay for a book, to be published later this year, whose several contributors look at archaeological drawing, drawing for courtroom and forensic purposes, engineering drawing, drawing for landscape design, and medical drawing, in addition to drawing as art.¹ It will join several other books recently published that have charted the proliferation of uses and purposes of a newly-resurgent medium of drawing across a widening range of disciplines.

What is the cultural significance of this expansion of drawing beyond the frame of art? And what does it mean for its contradictory role *in* art practice—do its claims to authenticity still matter? Perhaps we can best start to answer these questions by bringing in some historical perspective—by noting, first, the cultural sea-change, or paradigm shift, that occurred in the western world towards the end of the last century, and that we know by the now overused term of 'postmodernism'. The developments that characterised this shift (and to which I'll return) threw into greater relief the qualities, across the arts, of a 'modernism' that they were seen as breaking from. Among these qualities were a heightened concern to display the material properties

¹ Duff, Leo and Philip Sawdon, eds.(2007), *Drawing: The Purpose*, London: Intellect, forthcoming.

of a given cultural medium; to lay bare and sometimes to contest the conventions governing the use of that medium; and to explore the implications of those conventions—and that contestation—for artistic expression . Second, we should note that this modernism has itself been understood, and was arguably experienced by its participants, as an equally epochal break from an earlier cultural paradigm, that of 'realism'. It's worth looking at the practices of drawing in terms of this dynamic, because it has tended to govern the ways in which they have been interpreted by drawers and viewers alike. Thus it was in the second half of the 19th century, with the first crisis of realism's aspirations and the subsequent rise of a theory and ideology of modernism, that what we can summarise as drawing's narrative and communicative functions were replaced by a focus on its expressive, notational and self-referential functions—a focus that over the next hundred years became progressively narrower and more exclusive.



Figure 1.

Vincent van Gogh's *Olive trees and the Alpilles*, an ink-and-pencil drawing of 1889 [fig.1], is an example from near the beginning of this trajectory. It tells us something about his motif—the rugged shapes of these Provençal hills, the gnarled quality of the olive trees growing in their lee—but it tells us much more about van Gogh's interest in techniques of drawing, the deployment of a wide range of marks and lines, tones and patterns, and the decorative and expressive purposes to which these could be put; and it gives us an acute awareness of the material properties of the

medium of ink on paper. A generation later, Picasso took this departure from drawing's narrative and communicative functions a step further [fig.2].



Figure 2.

This gouache and watercolour drawing of early 1907 of the head of the medical student who was going to be among the *dramatis personae* of his painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* completed that summer—but who never made it into the final picture—is both a preparatory study and a distillation of the spectacular 'otherness' of that work, laying bare in a few disconcertingly bold strokes the shock of Picasso's encounter with African masks. And if the self-referentiality of this drawing shares with van Gogh's an expressive purpose—indexing the subjectivity of the artist through the physicality of its mark-making—in the cubist syntax that, with Braque and others, he elaborated over the next few years, that self-referentiality has an explicitly notational quality. *Nude woman standing*, an ink-and-pencil drawing of 1912, is an example [fig.3]. Its severely schematic notation of its subject reduces both the physicality of the woman and the skill required for her depiction to a minimum, and erects in their place a scaffolding of lines, planes and *chiaroscuro* that could clearly be adapted with little effort to an altogether different subject. This—as I'll suggest below—is not all it does, by any means, but its notational radicalism was a spur for others, such as Piet Mondrian, whose *Pier + ocean 5*, a charcoal and watercolour drawing of 1914 [fig.4] takes the deskilling of drawing to an extreme at the same time as it reduces its representative function to near ground zero.

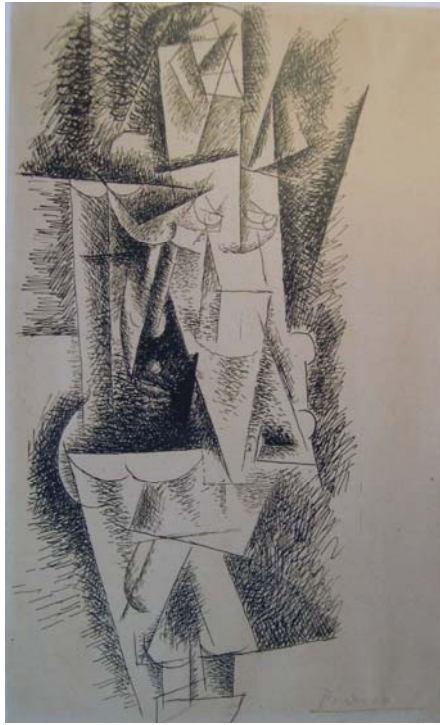


Figure 3.



Figure 4.

This portfolio of new, and at times incompatible, definitions of drawing was further extended, and its replacement of earlier models made comprehensive, by Surrealism, whose orientation to the subconscious and the corporeal dimensions of human identity opened up a vast new field of possibilities for drawing as the record of an infinite variety of psychic and/or physical processes [fig.5]



Figure 5.

The weird whimsy of Joan Miro's *The family*, a drawing from 1924, destabilises the 'realistic' model by the very completeness with which it appropriates this for quite different purposes; the heavily sexualised ambiguities of its figures—particularly,

perhaps, the central 'tree-woman-seedhead', but in truth the entire space is littered with fantastical personae—these dreamlike creatures depend for their charge on the painstaking representation typical of that observational drawing that they simultaneously undermine. But it was the 'automatist' experimentation conducted by Max Ernst, André Masson and others that most comprehensively sidelined earlier definitions of drawing. An example is an untitled ink drawing by Masson from 1924 [fig.6]. About nine inches by seven, it was the result of an 'automatist' procedure of putting down marks without preconception—of drawing so fast and so freely that the conscious mind hasn't time to intervene; deliberately seeking to avoid the imposition of premeditated images, in order to allow images and associations instead to well up, as it were, from the unconscious of both the artist and the viewer. In this case, the web of swirling lines thus produced seems to have generated, for Masson (or at least for this viewer) anatomical associations of all sorts.



Figure 6.

The radicalism of surrealist automatism lay in the degree to which it drew together the various approaches to drawing within modernism—the notational, the self-referential, the expressive, the deskilled, the indexing of an authorial subject, psyche and body—and made the medium into a signifier for authenticity. Thus automatism licenced, in different ways, a wide spectrum of types of drawing—including, at one end of the spectrum, the 'art brut' or 'raw art' of Dubuffet, the surfaces of whose drawings are often crudely scratched with a tangle of spidery lines that carry a charge of more than representational meanings [fig.7].



Figure 7.

Or the symbol-ridden, graffiti-like drawings of Jackson Pollock from the time when he was immersed in a dialogue between Jungian analysis and surrealist automatism [fig.8].



Figure 8.

This untitled work from 1943, a surrealist 'picture-poem' resulting, as Bernice Rose of New York's Museum of Modern Art suggests², from a collective session with Pollock's friends Robert Motherwell and William Baziotes, combines automatic writing (the phrases "the effort of the dance", "the city with horns", and "the thickness of white" are clearly legible) with equally, and intriguingly, opaque doodle-like images that seem to have arrived via Pollock's psyche from Picasso's *Guernica*. Such imagery gave way in Pollock's work, partly through the agency, and his experience, of surrealist automatist procedures, to the dripped-paint pictures of the years around 1950, an example of which is an enamel on paper drawing, about 30 inches high, *Number 15, 1949* [fig.9]



Figure 9.

Whether it's read, as critic Harold Rosenberg suggested of such works in his notorious 'American Action Painters' article a couple of years later, as the record of an event, an act that's inseparable from the biography of the artist, 'of the same metaphysical substance'—as Rosenberg put it—'as the artist's existence'—or whether, as rival critic Clement Greenberg declared in riposte, the 'drip' pictures should be seen as a post-cubist take on the pictorial space of Monet's waterlilies,³ it's evident that this little work shares with its vast dripped-paint siblings all those

² *Jackson Pollock: Works on Paper* (1969), exh. cat., NYC: MoMA, 34.

³ Harold Rosenberg (1952), 'The American Action Painters', *Art News* 51 no. 8, December; Clement Greenberg (1962), 'How Art Writing Earns its Bad Name', *Encounter*,

qualities of modernist drawing that I noted above, and brings these to a pitch of intensity in the service of a strident assertion of selfhood. But this paradigm, even—indeed especially—as developed by Pollock, could encompass radically different interests. Richard Serra was one of several artists emerging in the 1960s who took the physical and procedural implications of Pollock’s dripped-paint pictures into three dimensions. His use of molten lead to make ‘tracings’ (as he called them) along the line where wall met floor in his studio [figs.10 and 11] was a re-working of Pollock’s technique that discarded its psychic connotations to focus, in his case, on the phenomenological: not only to make work on the floor as opposed to the wall or the easel, but to incorporate this manner of making into the work, as its subject-matter. The result is, among other things, a stretching of the definition of drawing to its limit.



Figure 10.



Figure 11.

If Serra and a few others were pursuing the implications of Pollock’s automatic drawing, many more artists at mid-century were rejecting them in that embrace of the popular commercial culture of the post-war western world that we’re so familiar with as Pop art, and that we can now see as the moment of emergence of a post-modernist ideology. That initial rejection was sometimes violent in its directness—Robert Rauschenberg notoriously bought, and then erased, a drawing by Willem de Kooning—and the initial embrace sometimes naïve in its equally direct acceptance, as perhaps in Rauschenberg’s montages [fig.12] that seem, especially in hindsight, to juxtapose these images against abstract expressionist-style handiwork in a too simply celebratory way. But after the virtually wholesale abandonment of modernist

aspirations that characterised postmodernist art in its first flush of 1980s fashion, both the critique of those aspirations and the engagement with popular-stroke-commercial visual culture became more complex, subtle and often critical.



Figure 12.

What happened to drawing in this development? This is not an original question—over the last twenty years there have been numerous exhibitions of drawing whose curators have asked it. Two of the biggest and most influential of them have been at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1992 Bernice Rose curated *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing*, and ten years later Laura Hoptman presented *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*.⁴ Rose in 1992 focused on the relation of contemporary drawing to its modernist inheritance: “At the critical centre of art”, she declared in the show’s catalogue essay,

there is now a scepticism about the validity of the authorial role and the relevance of the signatory gesture. This struggle over self-expression as a still-valid concept strikes at the heart of drawing itself, long the primary medium [as I’ve been suggesting here] of the authorial gesture. Technology has invaded the Garden,

Rose declared. “The mediation of printed matter and printing techniques, collage, copying, tracing, photographic projection and the mass media are now taken for

⁴ *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing* (1992), exh. cat., NYC: MoMA,

granted as contributing to a newly enriched technical visual language.” And she continued: “If the technical language has changed, it is clear...that not only has iconography been restored to an important position in art but that the iconography itself is different.” Summarising these developments, Rose argued that

The iconography...of postmodernism is the abstraction and reworking—the ‘personification’—of modernist style itself, so that style is read through style, with the body of modernism serving as the original text. Remembrance of the past is iconographically integral to the new language of art. Within this general area of agreement, there is an enormous range of play inherent in the new mode, and drawing, with its enormous potential for overwriting, has become a primary vehicle for this postmodern allegory.⁵

Rose’s survey was devoted to the presentation of this argument in visual form, emphasising in its selection the dialogue of then-contemporary, postmodernist drawing with its modernist past. Ten years later Laura Hoptman complemented this emphasis with a survey that sought to show how, in the intervening decade, artists’ drawing practices had opened out from a dialogue with modernism to engage with a wide range of non-art types of drawing. A resurgence of drawing had occurred in the 1990s, Hoptman observed—what she called a “tsunami of drawing”—much of which “share[d] the techniques and formal vocabularies of varieties of precision drawing elsewhere considered industrial or commercial.” She argued that

such close relationships to popular cultural forms, architectural plans, scientific drawing, ornamental embellishment, and vernacular and fashion illustration...are creating a kind of drawing that refers as much to the language of life around us as it does to fine art.⁶

And her exhibition’s ‘propositions’ offered examples of artists who were in dialogue with scientific, ornamental, architectural, fantasy, topographical, humorous and fashion drawings.

Rose and Hoptman between them presented a fairly exhaustive compendium of approaches to drawing from the past twenty years of this medium’s postmodernist period. It’s remarkable, then, that neither included the work of a draughtsman whose activity has not only spanned that period but in doing so has exemplified, to a rare degree, those emphases that they profiled. Moreover Raymond Pettibon is the foremost contemporary artist, in America if not also on a wider stage, who has

⁵ *Allegories of Modernism*, 11-12.

⁶ *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions* (2002), exh. cat., NYC: MoMA, 167.

chosen drawing as his primary medium and who, in the later stages of a thirty-year career, has had an immense influence on younger artists across the world who have similarly privileged drawing. If the work of any single artist can demonstrate the range, and suggest the potential, of drawing as art today, it's his, and for this reason it's worth looking at closely.

Brought up in California and graduating from UCLA in 1977 at the age of twenty with an economics degree, Pettibon devoted increasing amounts of his time from then on to making art—painting, video-making and particularly drawing. His drawings were initially for punk music fanzines that he gestetnered off in tiny editions and collated himself, and in the years around 1980 he was unofficial in-house artist for the L.A. punk music scene. His initial style [fig.13] relied on the carefully-acquired tricks and conventions of cartoon illustration, and on the combination of text and image that this graphic form deploys. Except that in Pettibon's hands, the relation between the two developed an alchemical character that tested the limits of conventional cartoons, and—increasingly—broke beyond them, even as his (always untitled) creations drew eclectically on cartooning's compendium of mass-cultural themes and everyday languages.



Figure 13.

The reach of Pettibon's subject matter is as wide as his output is huge, and the variety of his graphic languages almost matches it. Both range from the deceptively

conventional [fig.14] (yet taken out of narrative context, even this compilation of war-comic clichés tips them effortlessly over into parody) to the brutally disturbing [fig.15].



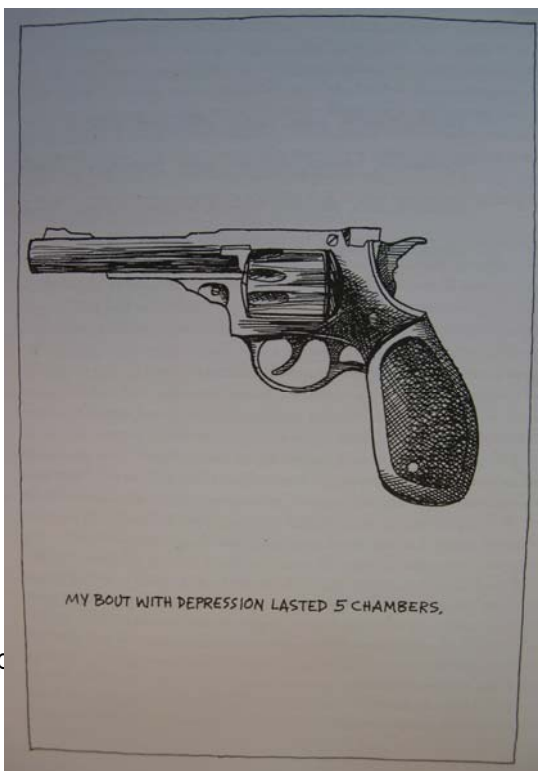
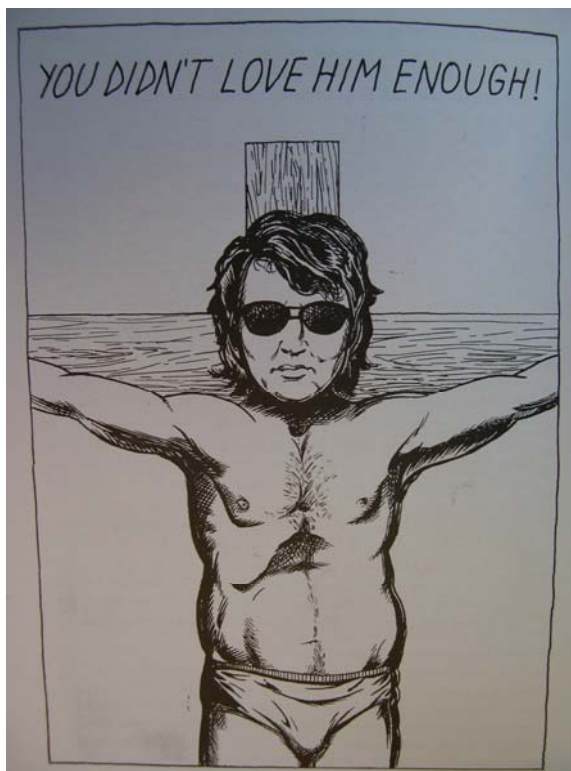
Figure 14.



Figure 15.

In between, he employs humour of various shades, sometimes blacker than others [figs.16-20].





Figures 16-20.

But as even this last, and fairly minimally captioned, example demonstrates, meanings of these drawings, unlike cartoons, are often ambiguous, sometimes disturbingly so (here, for instance, who's talking, if the image has any meaning?). Thus the humour is often not direct but oblique, and often too it's not the whole point of the image—indeed Pettibon's radical juxtaposition not only of text and image, but also of text and text, jump-cutting as it were from language to language, from literary allusion to film quote to dime novel cliché to subcultural argot—this montage of idioms, references and representations has the effect of overturning so completely our expectations of the cartoon genre within which these drawings offer themselves, that the humour itself is destabilised—and the boundaries between (to return to

Laura Hoptman's distinction) a kind of drawing that refers to the language of life around us, and drawing as fine art, are effaced. What are we to make, for instance, of a drawing such as that from 1991 of an electric chair [fig.21], that seems not only to sit uneasily within its assumed comic-frame genre, but to slip from philosophy to black humour and back between caption and image?



Figure 21.



Figure 22.

Or the drawing of a sailing ship from 1998 [fig.22], one of many whose primary frame of reference is, clearly, romantic art rather than any genre of vernacular visual culture? Here the two texts, in juxtaposition with the image, open towards reflections on the ephemerality and fragility not only of the drawing medium but of life itself, via references to Richard Hakluyt the Elizabethan geographer, and to Romantic poetry. This mixing of genres, transgressing of high/low cultural borders and wide-ranging quotation and pastiching of past authors and artists, literary and visual styles doesn't just disconcert us as to Pettibon's meaning but, more generally, seems to epitomise what Bernice Rose, in the remark I quoted earlier, called a "scepticism about the validity of the authorial role and the relevance of the signatory gesture"—and which she saw as one of the ways in which postmodernist art differed from modernist. And there's a strand in Pettibon's work, too, that underscores her other observation, that "the iconography...of postmodernism is the abstraction and reworking—the 'personification'—of modernist style itself, so that style is read through style, with the body of modernism serving as the original text." In drawing after drawing, he makes reference—sometimes ironic, sometimes gently mocking—to the canonical styles of modernist art from the preceding two generations. Thus Abstract Expressionism is the butt of quite a few works, and minimalism of others [figs.23 and 24].



Figure 23.

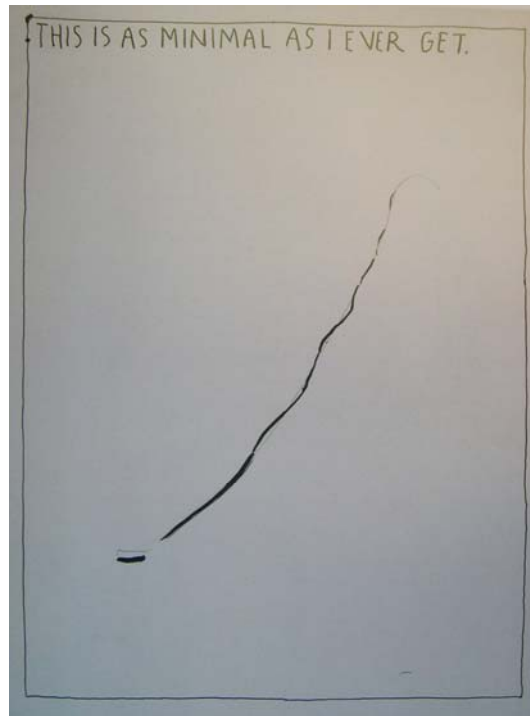


Figure 24.

We should be careful, however, of too simplistic a categorisation of Pettibon's work as fitting the generalisations, such as those of Rose and Hoptman, that have constructed postmodernist art against its modernist antecedents. Because alongside, or running underneath, that "scepticism about the authorial role" is a current of repeated reference in his drawings to, and of play with, the question of the identity, or the presence, or the power of the artist himself. In the examples of his work illustrated here, note how many of the texts in them speak in a first person singular that has no apparent subject, or origin, within the image. Whose voices are these? As readers, we listen for evidence either of the ventriloquist, or of the author. But when we listen for one voice, we are answered by many, a chorus that's sometimes embodied in the multiplicity of handwritings that cover a page [fig.25].

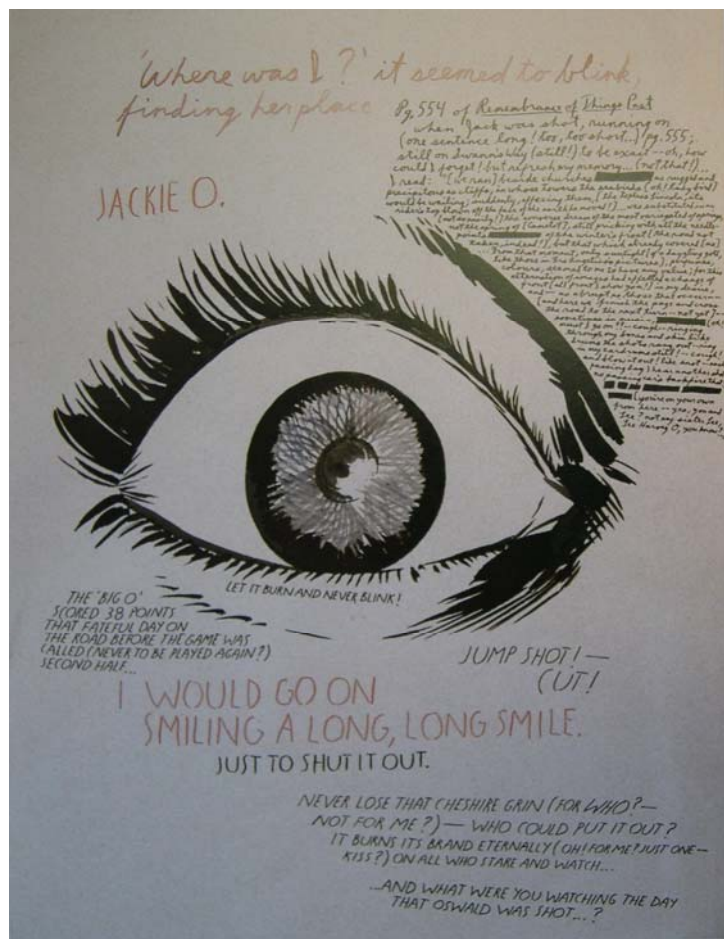


Figure 25.

Such drawings are a fabric of quotations—not that we're ever their ideal reader, able to recognise them as such, and this too obvious shortcoming on our part further heightens both our uncertainty, and our role in the construction of their meanings. At the same time, in the abruptness of their juxtapositions, Pettibon flaunts the second-

hand nature of his prose, and sometimes brings into play—in a disconcertingly self-effacing way—his own role in that construction [fig 26].

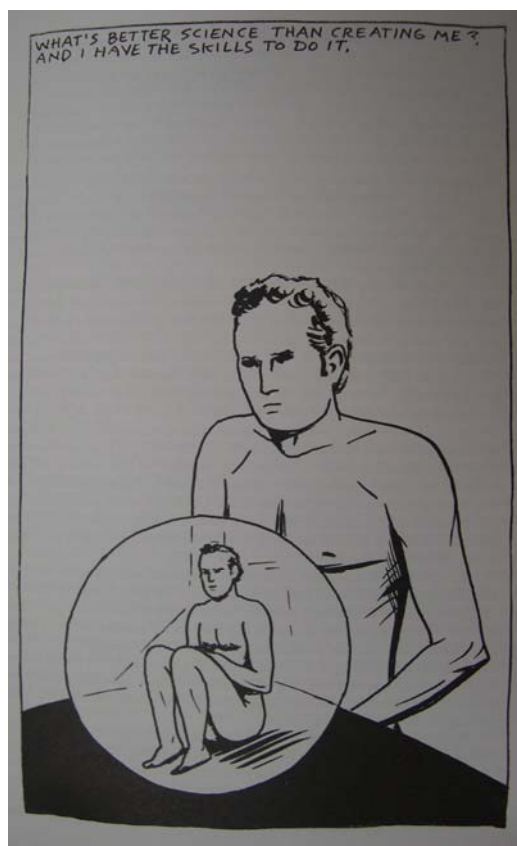


Figure 26.

Even from these few examples of his work it's evident that Pettibon's range, and the wit of his reflexive play with, within and between words and images, are both prodigious. There have been, I'd suggest, very few other draughtsmen who have displayed a comparable degree of either this range or this wit. Of those, the artist who offers the closest comparison—and it's an instructive one—is Picasso: in particular, the Picasso of the years before 1914, when he was, with Georges Braque and Juan Gris, plundering the proliferating culture of everyday printed ephemera—newspapers, advertisements, theatre bills, et cetera—with an imaginative abandon equal to Pettibon's.

Picasso pursued this engagement with this popular commercial culture in an extraordinary dialogue with that elaboration of the arcane syntax of analytic cubism in works such as the *Nude* of 1912 [fig.2] As I have suggested, there is more to this drawing than deskilling of drawing and depersonalising of its subject in the interests of achieving a notational economy of graphic means. There's humour in its construction—a humour in the depiction of the figure's breasts, one looking distinctly

like a pointing finger and the other a cardboard tube or wooden dowel; humour too in the detachment of her buttocks and her pubic triangle from the main image, each turned sideways and framed like pictures within a picture. The humour relates to Picasso's well-documented love of cartoons and caricature, which not only made him laugh like the rest of us but, from the start of his career, fed his appetite for visual experimentation. As art historian-turned *New Yorker* columnist Adam Gopnik once succinctly explained: 'Caricature is in embryo what the cubist syntax [in works such as this] brought to maturity: a working representational code that comments on the way representational codes work'⁷ But the sly introduction of caricature into this obscure scaffolding signals too Picasso's enjoyment of the *juxtaposition* of the cultural spheres in which these two representational codes work: the 'high' culture of art and the 'low' culture of comics. It's an enjoyment most memorably signalled in his major painting of six months earlier, the *Ma Jolie* ('My Pretty Woman') of the winter of 1911-12 [fig.27], with its title, unmistakably borrowing that of the number one pop-song of that season, written onto the canvas in richly ironic identification of its brown-cardboard-like configuration as a portrait of his new girlfriend.⁸



Figure 27.

⁷ Adam Gopnik (1983), 'High and Low: Caricature, Primitivism and the Cubist Portrait', *Art Journal* 43 no. 4 (Winter), 373.

⁸ On the source of this title see Jeffrey Weiss (1994), *The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp and Avant-Gardism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

When Braque invented collage—taking the opportunity, during a shared summer stay in the south of France, to buy a roll of imitation-woodgrain wallpaper from a local shop while Picasso was briefly back in Paris, and stealing a march on his partner by pasting it onto drawing paper and using it as ready-made representation—Picasso leapt at the possibilities it offered not only to play around with representational codes, but to play with voices and their implied contexts. It was a moment, not unlike the present one, when political debate was dominated by war—in this case, the Balkan War—and the newspapers were full of headlines about it. Picasso used them in dozens of pasted paper drawings as a foil to other references to his private life and café-based pleasures.



Figure 28.

An example is *Guitar, sheet music and glass* from the end of 1912 [fig.28] that, among other things, plays off an unmistakable reference to the war, in the bottom left corner (Picasso has been careful to include the word ‘Constantinople’ as well as ‘The battle has begun’) against signs for a guitar, a sheet of music and a wineglass on a wallpaper ground, to put us in mind of an interior, perhaps a café, in which these—and the newspaper—are being enjoyed. The ‘play’ of this is itself referenced, perhaps, in the truncated ‘Le Journal’ that can slide towards ‘jouer’ (to play), and ‘le jeu’ (the game)—but who knows? Like Pettibon’s montages of quotes, the collage leaves meanings fairly open.



Figure 29.

In another *papier-collé* of the same month, *Glass and bottle of Suze* [fig.29], a sheet of paper about is covered with pasted papers from a dozen different sources, including newspaper fragments that report, variously, a recent demonstration against the war, a bloody episode witnessed at the front, and political debate about it. In the centre, a scalloped pair of shapes carry a fragment from a romantic novel that the newspaper was currently serialising. Like so many of Pettibon's drawings, this presents us with a multiplicity of voices, and of modes of address. Which is Picasso's? Where is Picasso, the artist and the maker of this all-but-anonymous image, whose only trace of his graphic involvement is in the cubist pictograph of a glass, left of centre? A final example of this collage work [fig.30 (*Violin*)] places that graphic presence at its centre, juxtaposing deftly two visual codes for signifying depth against the flat sheets of paper that stand for the front and back of the instrument. As art historian Rosalind Krauss has tellingly shown, the turning of the body of the violin through 180 degrees that's signified by the complementary left sides of the newspaper pieces is also signified by the different-sized f-holes—the smaller of the two indicating recession into depth.⁹ But as a foil to this code, Picasso gives, in a passage of drawing of almost Ingresque elegance and economy, a more—but not

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entirely—orthodox representation of the scroll and pegs of the violin turning through 90 degrees.

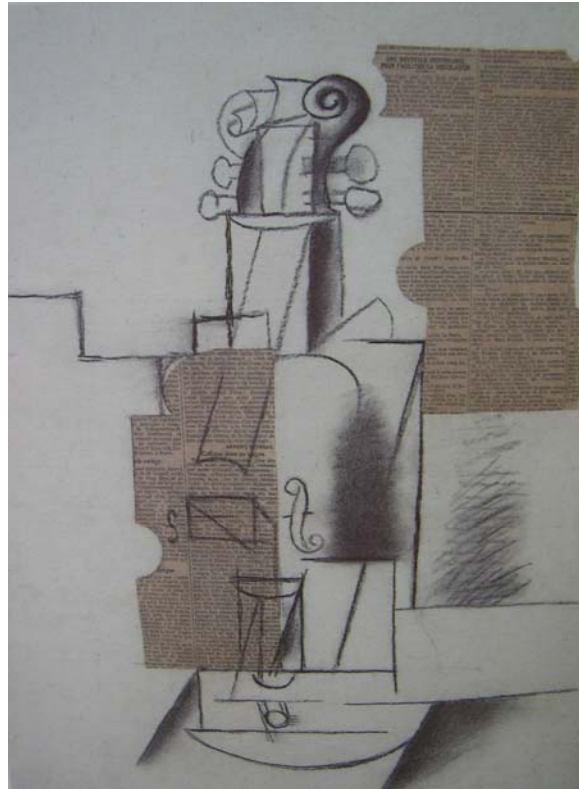


Figure 30.

What am I suggesting with this comparison of Picasso and Pettibon? That between the beginning of the twentieth century and its end, nothing changed after all, that modernist and postmodernist drawing alike could and can, did and does, cross codes, multiply voices and play with authorial identity in much the same ways? No, because the differences between them are crucial. In the above examples of Picasso's work there is a constant juxtaposition between public and private languages, public and private modes of address. Whilst Picasso was keenly aware of the irony of titling his obscure brown cardboard-looking painting 'My Pretty Woman', he was not mocking himself. He was committed to this experimentation with visual language, even while he acknowledged its inaccessibility to all but his small circle of friends. Indeed he *enjoyed* its difficulty enough to play it off, as in the *Glass and bottle of Suze*, against the conventional languages of the newspaper, presenting the latter as the 'background of events' to the private life and pleasures clustered in the centre and foreground on the blue café table and signified by the aperitif, the glass, the romantic novel—and of course the newspaper too: affairs of the heart and the stomach, the mind and the eye, represented in his private, playfully reflexive language of cubism. The same juxtaposition between accessible, public,

commercial vernacular codes and inaccessible, private, reflexive experimentation articulates all of the other above collages, and runs, indeed, through much of Picasso's work. It voices his commitment to exploring ways of making visual meaning that can not only critique the dominant conventions of visual representation—a commitment to developing, in Adam Gopnik's phrase, "a working representational code that comments on the way representational codes work"—but that can also resist collapsing into the sheer immediacy, and ephemerality, and (in their comic-pages medium at least) commercialism of caricature and cartoons. The difficulty of Picasso's cubist code, you could say, is a measure—so he hoped—of its independence, and its critical potential; of his occupation of a cultural space outside of, on the one hand, the academy, and on the other, the marketplace.

This doesn't seem, to me, to be the case with Pettibon. I have suggested that Pettibon "flaunts the second-hand nature of his prose"; you could say the same of the visual codes he employs too. All of his many, and often juxtaposed, drawing styles are—like his texts—a pastiche of existing and/or past styles, and depend for their effect partly on our recognition of this. Whilst in drawings such as this on the screen, and hundreds of others, he very clearly—and tellingly—articulates his (and our) private concerns—our fears, obsessions, hopes and pleasures—he does so entirely *through*, not like Picasso *against*, the public codes either of the mass media or of already-sanctioned artistic or literary convention. Indeed I would suggest that the bleakness which suffuses so much of his work arises from the recognition of the inseparability of these private concerns from those public codes. The art historian and critic Benjamin Buchloh makes this point, but then takes it further, arguing that "the abject obscenity of a large number of Pettibon's figures and texts...maintains an amazing specificity in tracing those precise intersections between the supposedly private realm of subjectivity and the supposedly public realm of ideological- and political-belief-systems."¹⁰ Buchloh suggests that

[i]ndividual derangement, the spaces of the family, and the types of social violence and sexual pathology (that is, the fundamentally private psychic formation of late capitalist society) and the mass-culturally enforced delirium, the narratives of B movies and television serials (that is, the ideological state apparatuses of the pathological public sphere) appear here as intrinsically connected.¹¹

¹⁰ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (2000), 'Raymond Pettibon: Return to Disorder and Disfiguration', *October* 92, Spring.

¹¹ 'Raymond Pettibon: Return to Disorder and Disfiguration'.

Connected—I would add—through graphic means that collapse the space between them. Unlike Picasso, Pettibon holds onto, or leaves, or makes, no space for the private outside of the public. You could say that the price of his ‘appeal’ (to use a perhaps inappropriate term), of the resonance of his images, is the loss of that space.

This observation could be generalised to suggest an answer to those questions I posed at the outset, about how the expansion of drawing beyond the frame of art—exemplified in so many ways by Pettibon—has altered the meaning and potential of drawing as an artistic practice. My answer requires, as I began by proposing, a historical understanding of the differences between modernism and postmodernism—between Picasso’s embrace of the commercial-popular and Pettibon’s. Picasso’s collages were made at a moment of belief in, and optimism towards, a modernist and avant-gardist alternative to dominant culture that could, at one and the same time, critique its codes, resist its incorporative efforts and remain accessible to a broad public. It was a moment when not only were the new technologies of mechanised image-making, and the new markets they created for mass entertainment, in the first flush of their expansion, but when the groupings of the artistic avant-garde were still outside of the mainstream, in many cases in opposition to it, and their products largely without a market.

Our present moment is different. Those new technologies have saturated our private and public lives, their markets and their carefully-cultivated sectors shape our sense of community, even our sense of self—and the artistic avant-garde *is* the mainstream, its products snapped up by a booming investment industry. In this present moment, the aspirations of that early-twentieth century avant-garde have proved—it seems—to have been contradictory, if not individually impossible. We live in a culture in which the new is almost inseparable from the marketable and we have a corresponding dislike or a fear of what appears to be the elitism of difficult and private codes of drawing. We prefer the ostensibly demotic aspirations that drive its current dialogues with scientific, ornamental, comic and other non-art languages of drawing. The new freedoms are invigorating—as the “tsunami of drawing” to which Laura Hoptman referred testifies, and, as my account of Pettibon has suggested, these freedoms speak to our shared experiences of this mass-culturally mediated world. But modernists believed that there is more to our selfhood than such mediation allows, and they used drawing to give voice to it. Maybe they were right to.