INTO WHICH YOU WERE BORN
HAS MELTED AWAY UNDER
YOUR EYES.

Raymond Pettibon

SEPT. 13 - NOV. 8, 1998
OPENING RECEPTION
SUN, SEPT. 13, 4-7 PM.

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
5811 SOUTH ELLIS AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637
773-702-8670
Dear Reader,

In a media saturated era, there is no shortage of either words or pictures and few things would seem as natural as their combination. Both are primary means of representing thought in an urge to communicate. A history of combining the two has made for a very powerful narrative device which can be said to have culminated in cinema. Needles to say, the age of information relies so heavily upon the combination of words and pictures that their marriage is taken for granted. Over the past two decades, however, artists have become increasingly preoccupied with examining how meaning is formulated around such narrative conventions. Most of these efforts have taken the form of photography based media, making the more basic means of constructing narratives through a combination of text and the hand drawn image seem as anachronistic as a horse and carriage. The act of combining text and drawn image, however, has quite an illustrious history from the illuminated manuscript to the comic book. Although photography based media shed light on cinematic narrative conventions, it is actually something as simple as the cartoon format of text and drawing that throws these conventions into stark relief, exposing not only their seams but their very threads.

It comes as no surprise that Raymond Pettibon is based in Los Angeles. Likening him to a monk, locked away in his Hermosa Beach monastery producing drawing after drawing, would seem an extravagant claim were it not for the fact that his collected body of work could be said to comprise an American Book of Kells. Pettibon's practice is deceptively simple and his drawings could be objectively described as singular panels from a comic strip. His reverence for the word and image is directly proportional to his irreverence for their context. He combines hand drawn images and text taken from a variety of indiscernible sources. The style of his drawings range from the highly illustrative work of cartoonist Milton Caniff to the fluid brushwork associated with kanji. His eclectic iconography includes Gumby, surfers, trains, and dollar signs to name a few and he draws as much from pulp fiction as he does the Bible. The simplicity of means, however, does little to explain the complexity of the results. Likewise, the familiarity of the form makes it difficult to articulate exactly what separates Pettibon from a clever cartoonist or illustrator. It certainly is not Pettibon's drafting skill, which in many instances he purposefully chooses to disregard, opting for an aesthetic of rapid execution that forsakes the precision of a jewel maker. She will read from her latest book, "Bedtime," and William Tester, a collection of short stories and cartoons which somehow manages to retain the quality of a crisp sunny day. Tester and Pettibon will be in attendance and welcomed to meet and greet the audience. This event will take place in Cobb Hall Room 307, directly below the gallery. Admission is free for members and students.

Raymond Pettibon
September 13 – November 8, 1998

Opening Reception
Sunday, September 13 from 4:00 to 7:00pm
featuring an artist talk from 5:00 to 6:00pm

The Renaissance Society
at the University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois 60613
http://www.renaissancesociety.org

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