

For immediate release

## RAYMOND PETTIBON

### To Wit

September 12 – October 26, 2013

Opening reception: Thursday, September 12, 6 – 8 PM



No Title (Route 69, follow...), 2013  
Collage, ink, and gouache on paper  
27 ¼ x 17 inches (69.2 x 43.2 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Raymond Pettibon, on view at the gallery's 519 West 19<sup>th</sup> Street space in New York. It marks the artist's ninth solo exhibition with David Zwirner since joining the gallery in 1995.

Pettibon's work embraces a wide spectrum of American "high" and "low" culture, from the deviations of marginal youth to art history, literature, sports, religion, politics, and sexuality. Taking their points of departure in the Southern California punk-rock culture of the late 1970s and 1980s and the "do-it-yourself" aesthetic of album covers, comics, concert flyers, and fanzines that characterized the movement, his drawings have come to occupy their own genre of potent and dynamic artistic commentary.

*To Wit* presents a wide range of drawings and collages unified by their bold, vivid lines and striking compositions. Fragments from American society have been distilled into key images, which often incorporate texts of varying length, from one word to several paragraphs. The selection of texts, spanning a broad array of influences from popular media to Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Henry James, Gustave Flaubert, and the Bible, relate both rhythmically and narratively to the visual content of his drawings, although their relationship may not always be immediately apparent.

Defined as "namely" or "that is to say," *to wit* originally meant "to know" (from the Middle English, "to witen"). Today "to wit" imparts a tone of formality and appears in legal documents and technical writing, though it has recently become

prevalent in news broadcasting and blog writing. As the exhibition's title, "*to wit*" introduces the works without an antecedent, as an interrupted thought followed by something spontaneous: *to wit*, this body of work. The words also convey Pettibon's long-standing interest in the way language moves through its many registers: formal and highfalutin, literary, lyrical, and spoken. "*To wit*" is at once Shakespearean, legal, and tweetable. It is also a dedication to Wit, the broad principle of learning and humor that pervades this work.

In keeping with Pettibon's prolific practice, the works in this exhibition alternately address violence, humor, sex, evolution, and sports. In some drawings, the subject matter is easily recognizable: *No Title (Learning to play...)* depicts Joe DiMaggio as a young boy learning how to play baseball; *No Title (I'm ready for...)* portrays the musician Bob Dylan with his characteristic hair dressed in a bright blue blazer and lime green shirt; *No Title (I wonder at...)* shows the comic strip character Bazooka Joe, distinguished by his eye patch and baseball cap, blowing bubble gum.

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Other works combine a variety of references, some political, as in *No Title ("If you're getting...")*, which depicts the West Point basketball team huddled around coach Bob Knight giving a "half-time pep talk," according to an inscription on the drawing. Knight coached at West Point during the height of the Vietnam War, a time when recruiting was difficult. The drawing takes on a darker tone as the text towards the bottom reads, "Hope yr ready for draft day, causes that's where you're going: MFCKN Vietnam!"

Over the years, Pettibon has incorporated more elements of collage, which in turn have made his works more freely associative in their subject matter and arrangement. *No Title (Is it cuyt?)* is composed of an envelope used to protect color prints that displays a vintage photograph of a young blonde woman; glued above her is a drawing of naked man running, cropped from his torso down. In *No Title (Which attacks real...)*, the artist has built up the surface sculpturally by layering sections of drawings, making it one of his most abstract works to date.

Literary subject matter also features prominently in this series of new works. For the large-scale *No Title (I command to...)*, Pettibon tore pages from books and arranged them in rows of tombstones, sardonically turning the books' texts into epitaphs. Pettibon has also included a number of illumination-style works, composed solely of written messages with decorative borders and small illustrations; some have been inscribed with self-questioning thoughts, such as "Was all that drawing and painting, painting and drawing, writing and creating and ... done in vain?" and "To produce some little exemplary works of art is my narrow and lowly dream," which create a narrative thread running through the exhibition.

Due out this fall are two eagerly awaited publications by the artist. *Raymond Pettibon: Here's Your Irony Back, Political Works 1975–2013* is devoted to the artist's drawings of political figures and historical events and presents over one hundred works. Co-published by David Zwirner and Regen Projects with Hatje Cantz, it includes a text by art historian Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. *Raymond Pettibon*, published by Rizzoli, is a major collection of works, spanning the artist's early flyers for the influential punk band Black Flag through recent work. Edited by Ralph Rugoff, texts are by Robert Storr, Jonathan Lethem, Kitty Scott, and Byron Coley.

Born in 1957 in Tucson, Arizona, **Raymond Pettibon** graduated with a degree in economics from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1977.

Pettibon's work has been exhibited widely throughout the United States and abroad. Earlier this year, he reworked a drawing from 2010 that was featured as the tenth installation of the High Line Billboard, located at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York. Prominent venues which have held recent solo exhibitions of the artist's work include the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland (2012); Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2007); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (both 2006); Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, California; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (both 2005). In 1998, he had his first American museum presentation, organized by The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which traveled to The Drawing Center, New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Permanent collections which hold works by the artist include the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Tate Gallery, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; among others. Pettibon lives and works in New York and Venice Beach, California.

Follow the artist on Twitter **@RaymondPettibon**

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