

ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

April/May 2006



David Levine, *To Tony Randall*, colored pencil, graphite, and collage on paper, 11 1/2 x 10 5/8", 2005.

OSP Gallery/Boston, MA

www.ospgallery.com

DAVID X. LEVINE: RECENT DRAWINGS

There's a jazzy vibe to David X. Levine's clever small drawings. Or maybe it's more like the blues. Somewhere between the later generations of abstract expressionism and Saul Steinberg resides the wit of Levine, whose simplified but suggestive shapes butt against the edges of the paper and play games with perception.

That the games are so simple is not really a detriment. *Ray Charles* is a dark silhouette of graphite, almost like a cartoon dog. Something about its shape is sturdy and appealing—a new Charlie Brown character dancing to a different tune, perhaps. Other images combine bright colors with simple (but always handmade) geometry.

Phallic shapes and other soft pink appendages writhe in *Baby Please Don't Go*, an abstract depiction of love, desire, and heartbreak. The wormlike forms are goofy, hard to take seriously, but they're like the unsuspected tenderness hidden behind the trench coats of film noir thugs. All the more tender for their unexpected, laughable exposure.

To Tony Randall is an elaborate dada frame in homage to the unlikely hero, a character actor whose performances in less open-minded times were coded as gay and winking critiques of masculine ideals. That sense of a macho Bukowski-type, say, who knows that he's all too vulnerable despite his bluster, informs these quasi-organic creations.

Try a few more titles: *You're Going on and I Won't Stop You* and *Separation Necessity*. The latter shows a hopeful dark chevron, a little mountain peak, straining from below to re-link to a convex puzzle piece in blue, one that's rising farther and farther away from their former joint arrangement. That sort of separation anxiety figures as well into an image of a dark beanlike shape, a dormant kernel nowhere near a period of verdant growth or new life. This sterile seed is called, of course, *Poor Boy*. Shawn Hill