

# THE BOSTON GLOBE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2003

## David X. Levine: Recent Drawings

At: osp gallery, 450 Harrison Ave.,  
through Jan. 3. 617-778-5265.

### Sound and vision

David X. Levine, who has drawings up at osp gallery, experiences synesthesia: When he hears music, he sees colors. Many of his drawings reference musicians and song titles. The musical overlay sometimes underlines and sometimes detracts from the purely visual experience of looking at his art.

Levine works on a smallish scale, mostly in colored pencil, occasionally collaging bits of paper onto his drawings. He starts with a basic vocabulary of loopy, biomorphic forms. In one series of works, these forms stand alone: "Ray Charles Red" shows the intensely red shape of the head of a golf club, with a single white bar around the neck. Hot-toned, and at once soft and aggressive in its shape, it does evoke the master of rhythm and blues. On the other hand, "Phil Spector," presented as an inky beige blob on scuffed-up paper, didn't connect for me.

The most impressive series of works brings Levine's ballooning

forms together into patterns and pathways, adding up to something more symphonic. "Joni Mitchell" has green and white ribbons snaking over passages of potent yellow and weathered black. It captures Mitchell's vaulting, silky vocals and layered rhythms.

Levine is self-taught. His drawings have a compositional sophistication that harks back to the funky design styles of the 1960s; his musical tastes also lean toward that era. But can the drawings stand apart from the music? There's a nonmusical work, "Drew Barrymore," resembling an army-green larva with twiggy gray legs, which baffles with its referential title.

If Levine had left his works untitled, with no guideposts, they would have been more enigmatic and provocative. As it is, he's making the mistake of asking us to view his intriguing drawings through his eyes, not our own.