
Michael Bevilacqua



Chelsea Art Museum, through Feb 24 (see Museums)



Drawing has come so decisively to the forefront in contemporary art that Bevilacqua, best known for bright, polished works full of logos and other cultural samizdat, devotes most of his first U.S. solo museum show to studies of his paintings—all made after the fact. The graphic works on view have none of the fanciful doodling of the Royal Art Lodge and similar artists who have helped repopularize the medium. Instead, these are the

notebook covers of a teenage boy, writ large, full of traced and retraced shapes and symbols: beer bottles (Sol), record covers (the Ramones), song lyrics ("Bela Lugosi's Dead") and animated personae (Kenny from *South Park*).

Images and words are neatly stenciled, photocopied and traced by hand. Textures range from loose graphite renderings to chaotic painterly patches. Where once Gucci and Louis Vuitton jostled for attention in a hard-edged, color-saturated space, here a range of grays is often set off by a single vivid note (like, say, Kenny).

This work is as visually appealing as any Bevilacqua has made, and it turns out to have more in common with its shiny predecessors than the shifts in approach and materials initially suggest. By reexamining the graphic elements of his past output in comparatively monochromatic calm, the artist points out that his big, glossy paintings are also, in their way, meditative—Zen gardens of branding, cultivated with calculated informality.—*Sophie Fels*