Art in Review

Michael Bevilacqua

Drawing Under the Influence
(Fables of the Reconstruction)

Chelsea Art Museum
556 West 22nd Street
Through Feb. 24

Michael Bevilacqua is known for paintings that use a bright, animation- and design-inspired palette, with numerous references to bands, fashion and drugs. The drawings in this exhibition, technically collages of images and logos traced from his paintings, include a similar accretion of references.

The appropriation of pop images is by now a time-honored tradition. Robert Rauschenberg and James Rosenquist used pop appropriation to investigate art’s relation to mainstream culture, and 1980s artists like Jeff Koons and Ashley Bickerton turned it into irony-laden consumerist critique. But Mr. Bevilacqua’s references register more like MySpace “interests” or doodles on a high school notebook: sites for displaying your cultural preferences.

For the record, Mr. Bevilacqua likes the Ramones, Bauhaus, White Stripes and Stone Roses. His beverage of choice is the Mexican beer Sol. “The Poison Apple Café,” a backroom installation of objects, includes a wall of wine bottles labeled with band logos and a pair of mannequin legs clad in tartan plaid and zipper-pants jutting from the wall, a Robert Gober sculpture redone as a passed-out punk.

Unlike Mr. Bickerton’s work, which illustrated with artless acuity how brands and products (including so-called cultural products, like art and music) are integral in shaping postmodern identity, Mr. Bevilacqua’s work functions more like Beavis and Butthead Pop, repeating pop references without examining the way his generation consumes and/or digests them.

Mr. Bickerton’s work also included lots of embarrassing and prosaic examples of his consumer habits, while Mr. Bevilacqua strains without irony to paint a portrait of the artist as neopunk hipster. Winding through this warren of drawings, it’s hard not to feel that art this invested in cool should look and feel much cooler.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER