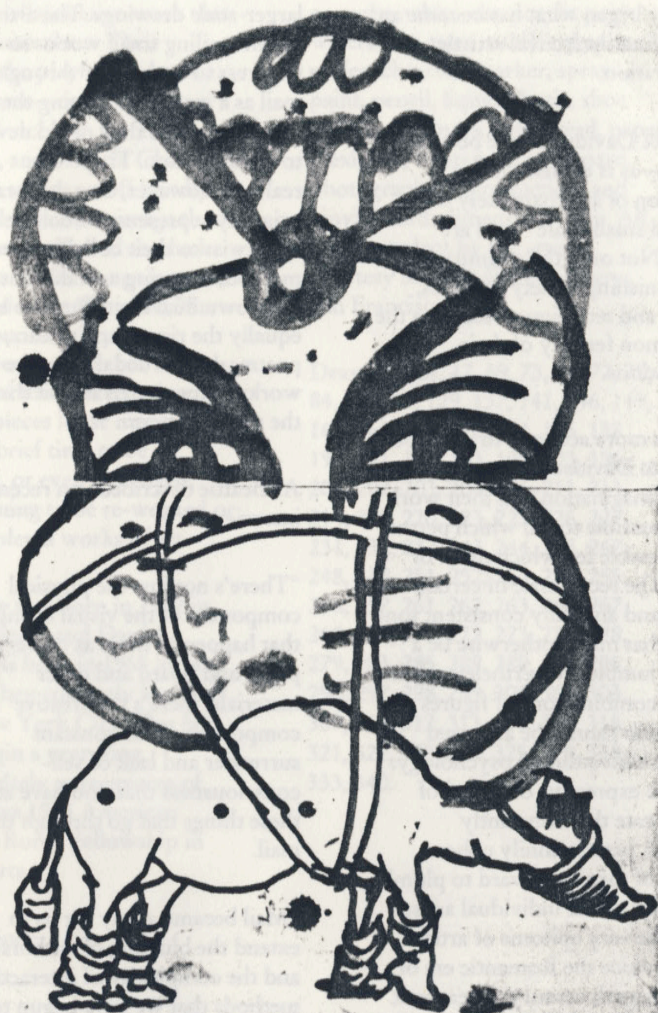


Drawing no. 330, 1994



"We love these things, we really love them."¹

In the summer of 1989 Drew Beattie and Daniel Davidson decided to try making a painting together. Impressed with the results, they continued working in tandem in what Davidson has described as a "private laboratory."² Within six months they had accumulated a body of work that seemed to both of them to be far more interesting than the work either was doing alone, and so officially began what has become an extraordinarily fruitful artistic collaboration.

Beattie & Davidson have been very prolific—as is evident in this exhibition of approximately one hundred small-scale "mail art" works. Not only the quantity but the astonishing variety of styles, images, and techniques testify to the uncommon fertility of their imaginations.

It seems more accurate to describe Beattie & Davidson as having a single "imagination": in their work it is impossible to tell which person is responsible for which mark or image. The recurrence of certain images and an oddly consistent tone unify what might otherwise be a chaotic jumble. Nevertheless, their strange combinations of figures and abstraction cannot be analyzed through conventional psychology. They are expressive of a kind of hybrid state that constantly fractures, yet uncannily coheres. Instead of turning inward to plumb the depths of the individual artist's soul—the very epitome of artistic practice since the Romantic era of the nineteenth century—Beattie & Davidson launch their investigations outward, in search of

the patterns, fixations, fears, and illusions of the collective, social psyche. Rather than being anomalous, the illusion of a single psyche underlying their work may simply indicate the degree to which *any* apparently unified personal expression is a composite of multiple sources and intents.

The "mail art" pieces in this exhibition were begun in 1990 and are the source of much of the imagery that later finds its way into Beattie & Davidson's paintings and larger-scale drawings. The artists began mailing small works-in-progress to each other through the mail as a way of increasing the amount of time they could devote to collaboration. They soon realized, however, that this practical exigency represented a compelling new twist to their collaborative method, engaging as it did not only their own dual contributions but equally the rips, tears, smears, and postmarks accrued during the works' unprotected transit through the postal system.

As Beattie described in a recent interview:

"There's not just the physical component of the visual changes that happen to them as pieces of paper and board and other materials, there's the creative component of the constant surrender and lack of self-consciousness that you have about these things that go through the mail.

"Mail became a way for us to extend the blurring of authorship and the complexity of interactive methods that we have begun to develop in paintings and other

conventional drawings. It became a way of extending that out over time and space. There were so many of them, traveling in time and moving out into the world and coming back. Sometimes they seem, by the time they get back to me or to Dan, like demented homing pigeons that fly out there into the world and come back to us somehow changed."³

Despite the occasional darkness and dementia of their imagery, there is an implicit trust in Beattie & Davidson's collaborative work that borders on innocence. Their method has the playful aspect of a children's game—combining, say, a three-legged race, Pin the Tail on the Donkey, and Musical Chairs—in which the artists set off blindly together in search of an image that either of them is allowed to pluck from the flux of their ongoing process and declare "finished." In the mail art works, they have expanded even further the parameters of this game, letting these small pieces loose into the world for a brief time to be transformed, or even destroyed, before returning to be re-worked or judged completed works of art.

Drew Beattie was born in 1952 in Atlanta, Georgia, and Daniel Davidson was born in 1965 in San Francisco. They currently live and work in New York City. This fall they will begin a year-long residency in Italy as recipients of the prestigious 1994 American Academy in Rome Fellowship in the Visual Arts.

Lawrence Rinder

1 Drew Beattie, audiotaped statement, 11 March 1994.

2 Interview with author, 1 July 1994.

3 Drew Beattie and Daniel Davidson, audiotaped statement, 11 March 1994.

Works in MATRIX:

All works executed between 1990 and 1994; media include ink, wax, gouache, white-out, acrylic paint, watercolor, tape, modeling paste, coffee, charcoal, marker, spray paint, pencil, liquid plastic, shoe polish, aluminum foil, thread, paper, plexiglass, foam core, cardboard, photographic reproduction, and vinyl record; dimensions vary. All works are lent by the artists, courtesy Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco.

Drawing nos. 47, 69, 73, 74, 77, 79, 84, 92, 127, 129, 137, 141, 146, 149, 164, 165, 166, 170, 184, 185, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 201, 202, 203, 204, 206, 211, 213, 214, 219, 220, 223, 225, 226, 227, 231, 234, 237, 243, 244, 245, 247, 248, 249, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 261, 262, 263, 264, 267, 268, 270, 271, 272, 273, 276, 278, 279, 283, 285, 288, 289, 291, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 303, 309, 311, 312, 313, 315, 316, 318, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 328, 330, 333, 340.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA '90; Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA '92; Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA '93; Germans van Eck, New York City, '93; Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA '94.

Selected group exhibitions:

Sonoma State University Art Gallery, *One by Two, Artists In Collaboration*, Rohnert Park, CA '92; The Drawing Center, *Selections/Spring '93*, New York City '93; Germans van Eck, New York City '93; Weatherspoon Art Gallery, *Art on Paper*, Greensboro, NC '93; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, *43rd Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, Washington, DC '93; The Museum of Contemporary Art de Beyerd, *Can You Always Believe Your Eyes*, Breda, The Netherlands '94; P.S. 1 Museum, *The Institute for Contemporary Art, P.S. 1 Studio Artists 1994*, Long Island City, NY '94.

Selected bibliography about the artist:

Levin, Kim. "Voice Choice: Drew Beattie & Daniel Davidson," *The Village Voice* (29 June '93).

Baker, Kenneth. "Sketch Artists' Raves," *San Francisco Chronicle* (22 August '93).

Humphrey, David. "Drew Beattie & Daniel Davidson at Germans van Eck," *Art Issues* (Sept./Oct. '93).

Kelley, Jeff. "Drew Beattie & Daniel Davidson," *Artforum* (Nov. '93).

Porges, Maria. "Drew Beattie & Daniel Davidson," *43rd Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting* ('93).

Risatti, Howard. "43rd Biennial, Corcoran Gallery of Art," *Artforum* (Mar. '94).

Edelman, Robert G. "Report from Washington, DC, The Figure Returns," *Art in America* (Mar. '94).

This MATRIX exhibition is supported in part by Mrs. Paul L. Wattis, the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the UAM Council MATRIX Endowment, Stanley M. Smith, Byron Meyer, and an anonymous donor.