

# WHITNEY

Whitney Museum of American Art

## PRESS RELEASE

Contact:

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Jan Rothschild, Stephen Soba, Meghan Bullock, Nathan Davis

(212) 570-3633

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### RAYMOND PETTIBON RECEIVES 2004 BUCKSBAUM AWARD

May 3, 2004 – Whitney Trustee Melva Bucksbaum and Adam D. Weinberg, the Whitney's Alice Pratt Brown Director, today presented Raymond Pettibon the 2004 Bucksbaum Award, the largest prize in the world designated for an individual in the visual arts. The \$100,000 award is given every two years to support an artist, chosen from the Whitney Biennial, whose work demonstrates a singular combination of talent and imagination and who has already made or promises to make significant contributions to the visual arts in the United States. The artist selected is one considered by the jurors to possess the potential to make a lasting impact on the history of American art, based on the excellence of past work as well as their work in the Biennial.

"Raymond Pettibon has created a visual universe that cuts to the core of the American experience and layers it with a collage of voices that combines Mark Twain, Raymond Chandler, Studs Terkel, and Walter Winchell," says jury member Richard Flood, Deputy Director and Chief Curator of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. "His contribution to popular and high culture is extraordinary—I don't think there has ever been a campaign of drawing like Raymond's. What I find so remarkable in Raymond's work is that he manages to engage in an immediate dialogue with the culture, to express the moment we are living in. Very few artists find a way to do this. In selecting Raymond Pettibon, we hope to encourage a reconsideration of his gift, which has so far been more recognized in Europe than in the United States."

In addition to receiving a \$100,000 grant, each Bucksbaum laureate is invited to present an exhibition at the Whitney. Pettibon's solo Whitney show will take place in late 2005 or early 2006, shortly before the 2006 Biennial Exhibition.

Whitney Director/Bucksbaum juror Adam D. Weinberg notes, "If The Bucksbaum Award has come to be seen as an 'emerging' artist's award, this year's selection of Raymond Pettibon makes clear that this prize is really not only about honoring an artist's potential, but also the full range of his or her accomplishment and likelihood of making a lasting contribution to American art. In the case of Raymond Pettibon, we acknowledge an individual who has created a generous, obsessive, relentless river of work, using the supremely direct and ancient medium of drawing. Raymond's marvelous graphic immediacy has brought him recognition as one of the country's most eloquent visual and visionary poets."

The Bucksbaum jury selected Mr. Pettibon from among the 108 artists and collaborative teams included in the 2004 Biennial. The jury included the Whitney's director, Mr. Weinberg, and the Museum's three Biennial curators – Chrissie Iles, Shamim M. Momin, and Debra Singer – as well as three jurors from other museums: Elizabeth Armstrong, Deputy Director for Programs and Chief Curator, Orange County Museum of Art; Richard Flood, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Walker Art Center; and Paul Ha, Director, Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Raymond Pettibon was born in 1957 in Tucson, Arizona, and currently lives in Hermosa Beach, California. He has worked almost exclusively in the medium of drawing since the beginning of his artistic career in 1977, although he has also produced videos, and most recently has created room-size installations by rearranging, clustering, and combining his works on paper with drawings made directly on gallery walls. His work is characterized by a prolific output of monochromatic graphic-style drawings of ink on paper, sometimes mixed with crayon, pencil, or watercolor.

Pettibon creates a highly personalized universe with a few recurrent themes, characters, and icons. His combinations of visual and literary information bring together image and text in sometimes ironic or sinister, but highly original ways. Images of trains, baseball players, villains, and nuclear explosions cavort with surfers on the cusp of enormous waves, Elvis, J. Edgar Hoover, or his two favorite characters: Vavoom, a companion of Felix the Cat, and Gumby, the 1950s rubber-eraser claymation cartoon character. His literary references include everything from William Blake, Henry James, and John Ruskin to the Bible, Mickey Spillane, baseball lore, and comic books.

Throughout the 1980s, Pettibon produced small, self-published booklets with his drawings, album covers, and concert flyers, invoking the autonomous production methods of fanzines and Punk culture, with which he has frequently been associated. The work may be seen as a highly personal evolving commentary on American culture: its visual and literary manifestations, its suppressed desires and fears, its political and religious beliefs, and its often violent, sexual and criminal transgressions. Pettibon's focus on 1950s America makes reference to a national consciousness that predates the protest movements of the following decade.

While remaining largely consistent, Pettibon's style has become more fluid and all-encompassing, resulting in his most recent room-size wall drawings and installations, such as his work in the 2004 Biennial. For these works, Pettibon often layers older drawings and pages torn from books and magazines over murals and notes scribbled directly onto the wall. The thematic range of these works is increasingly topical, addressing current political concerns, as often as his previous themes.

## ABOUT THE AWARD

Any artist working in the United States is eligible to participate in the Whitney Biennial and is therefore a potential candidate for The Bucksbaum Award. The laureate must be a living artist who has produced or promises to make exceptional work in the United States. The Bucksbaum jury further refines the selection by identifying an artist who – as evidenced by past and current work – has the potential to make an enduring contribution to American art.

Melva Bucksbaum, a Whitney trustee since 1996, launched The Bucksbaum Award in 2000. Ms. Bucksbaum and her family have long been devoted international patrons of art and culture. In addition to being a trustee of the Whitney, she serves on the boards of The American Friends of the Israel Museum; The Drawing Center, New York; The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and Save Venice. She is also on the Visiting Committee to the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, and the International Committee of the Tate Gallery, London. Since 1995, Ms. Bucksbaum has managed the Martin Bucksbaum Family Foundation. She is also a director of the Robert I. Goldman Foundation. Both Melva and her husband, Raymond Learsy, are co-chairs of the Anderson Ranch National Council, Aspen, Colorado.

The previous recipients of The Bucksbaum Award are Paul Pfeiffer (2000) and Irit Batsry (2002)

## ABOUT THE WHITNEY

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is the preeminent collection of American art and includes the entire artistic estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O’Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney’s signature show, the Biennial, has become a measure of the state of contemporary art in America today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

***Inside Out: Portrait Photographs*** Through May 23, 2004

***2004 Biennial*** Through May 30, 2004

***Benton Murals: The Arts in America*** Through January 2, 2005

***Benton and America: Works on Paper*** May 20–September 5, 2004

***Art and Photography 1960-1975*** May 29–September 5, 2004

***Ed Ruscha Drawings*** June 24–September 26, 2004

***Ed Ruscha and Photography*** June 24–September 26, 2004

***Ana Mendieta*** July 1–September 19, 2004

***LOT-EK: Mobile Dwelling Unit*** July 1–September 19, 2004

***Jennifer Pastor*** October 6, 2004–January 2005

***Romare Bearden*** October 14, 2004–January 9, 2005

***Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor*** October 28, 2004–January 16, 2005

The Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday,