



Jean-François Moriceau + Petra Mrzyk,
Only for Your Eyes, 2003. Installation view.

**JEAN-FRANÇOIS
 MORICEAU +
 PETRA MRZYK**

MARCUS RITTER

The art world is having a love affair with drawing. In the span of a year, we've had MOMA's "Drawing Now," the UCLA Hammer's "International Paper," and the traveling exhibition comprising Marcel Dzama, Neil Farber, and the rest of the Royal Art Lodge gang. And now, with a collective spirit and Surrealist-inspired wit similar to Dzama et al. comes Jean-François Moriceau and Petra Mrzyk's multidrawing project "Only for Your Eyes." From the marvelous combined imaginations of these young French artists sprang 120 ink-on-paper works and three drawings done directly on the wall (all works untitled, 2002-2003). This was the second show in New York for Moriceau and Mrzyk, who have been collaborating since 1998 (and currently share the French slot at P.S. 1's International Studio Program). Like last year's "Diamonds Are Eternal," their well-received debut at the same gallery, "Only for Your Eyes" refers to a James Bond film of close to the same name. These slightly off appellations mine the humor in the mis- or literal retranslation of the movies' French titles back into English and are also fine metaphors for art's demands: What is "only for your eyes" but an invi-

tation to come closer and really *look*?

Moriceau and Mrzyk's "mistakes" also suggest the foreigner's keen awareness of the mutability of language, and there is much in the way of innuendo, fertile juxtapositions, and mordant wit in their visual vocabulary as well. Many of their drawings speculate on the secret life of art (here, mostly represented by paintings): In a gallery, a group of pictures (personified with hands and legs) huddle conspiratorially while one keeps watch at the doorway; others, relegated to the gulag of deep storage, sit around and play cards, ticking off the weeks (years?) on the wall of their "prison." Museumgoers, too, are the artists' subject and object: They're portrayed moving through a gallery in a roller coaster, arms raised; craning ridiculously to see art installed on the ceiling; and, in one particularly unfortunate situation, being poisoned by a painting releasing toxic fumes. Following a green, yellow, orange, and red painted lightning bolt as it zigzags around the gallery, one could luxuriate in the drawings' wealth of detail while remaining mindful that each element fitted somehow into a multilayered whole.

Each sight gag is funny, but, of course, some are no more than one-liners—a bald-headed Mr. Clean picking his nose; a man digging under the couch cushions for the remote control that is actually stuck in his butt crack. There's plenty of sexual humor and distorted or stylized penises and breasts (square, and other shapes), signaling the artists' admiration for R. Crumb and the adolescent humor behind his kind of comic-book, doodle aesthetic. And, like Crumb, Raymond Pettibon, and others, Moriceau and Mrzyk have skills that cannot be dis-

guised by any strategy of deskilling. One dense work, a narrative of incessancy reminiscent of early animation, includes cascading reams of paper, a malevolent-looking Bic logo, a pencil practically strangling a woman, someone in a superhero costume at a drafting table, as well as two hands holding pencils in an Escher-esque never-ending drawing of a heart. With their sweet and knowing takes on artistic obsession and giddy love for fast and furious word- and image play, Moriceau and Mrzyk offer us golden-fingered micro-narratives of the absurd.

—Meghan Dailey