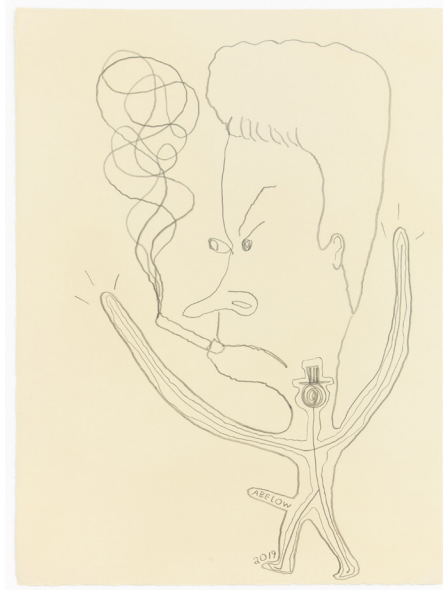


Joshua Abelow: Group Show



Do Beavis and Butthead foreshadow the existence of Donald Trump the way, say, Ubu Roi prefigures the existence of Philip Guston's Nixon? Or maybe they are all one and the same thing, variations on a theme, (slightly) different incarnations of the same monster? I remember being seized by a stark existential dread when first encountering Beavis and Butthead on MTV. It had less to do with the thought, "So it has come to this," than with the bewildering lack of surprise occasioned by their advent in the world. They seemed somehow inevitable, of the order of fate, a curse—ancient, Greek, and yet, inscrutable, like an abstraction. The inverse of hubris, they effortlessly sought to remind me of my basest instincts, my meanest, most un-celebratable self.

Every time I tune into the pettiness of Donald Trump, his colossal self-centeredness, I am reminded of not what a monster, but actually how human he is. Or if not human, then Id-like. Indeed, one could say that he is pure injured Id, ungoverned by any real coherent ego, and wholly ignorant of the remotest notion of super-ego. Not that a Freudian equation would necessarily remedy or justify his existence in the world, but, as much as I hate to admit it, he is definitely in me. Or I in him. And in all of us. Hence his timelessness. His parodic atemporality. For he is a parody. "Always already" a parody, this man, this spiritually squalid and abject crime of a human being, is always waiting to remind us that he is standing much closer to us than many of us are willing to admit. In fact, he is right there.

So is Beavis.

And Butthead.

—Chris Sharp