



## Bob Dylan: The Drawn Blank Series

*Bob Dylan*

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### **Bob Dylan: The Drawn Blank Series** Bob Dylan

The visual arts have always played a significant role in Bob Dylan's worldview, and drawing and painting served as an outlet for his huge creative energy. Exquisitely reproduced, these intensely colored works are variations of sketches Bob Dylan completed while touring America, Europe and Asia, revealing a new facet of the artist. Bob Dylan's watercolors and gouaches recreate scenes of everyday life in riotous color: hotel room and apartment interiors; land- and cityscapes; views of sidewalk cafes, train tracks and wandering rivers. This beautiful collection, which reveals yet another dimension of Bob Dylan's poetic vision, will be treasured by all who respond to his extraordinary talent.

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## **Bob Dylan: The Drawn Blank Series** Bob Dylan Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This volume, which accompanies an exhibition in Chemnitz, Germany, contains new versions of Bob Dylan's pencil and charcoal sketches originally published in a book called *Drawn Blank*; here they are reproduced along with color versions, digitally transferred to fine art paper and reworked in watercolor and gouache. In *Drawn Blank*, Dylan described his drawings as an effort to refocus a restless mind, a statement that captures the atmosphere of the drawings,. They seem to be the work of a man who sees many new cities, hotel rooms and other people's houses. Color, however, brings very little to them, despite the inflated claims for their high artistic value made by the four contributing essayists. Jens Rosteck, a Dylan biographer, places him among a group of multi-talents who range from Goethe to Jean Cocteau, but the comparisons run up against the indifferent quality of most of the 170 color reproductions. While Dylan's interior studies can be intriguing and psychologically fraught, his portraits and nudes seldom come off as more than earnest imitations of the Expressionist works he admires. Such judgments, however, may be beside the point for the Dylanologists, as Rosteck describes them, to whom the book will appeal. (Feb.)

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### Review

In Bob Dylan's extraordinary collection of paintings, *Bob Dylan: The Drawn Blank Series*, we are given insight into the expressive, unvarnished way this artist approaches the world and reminded he is that rare person who can move effortlessly between music, word, ink, paint, as if he's just futzing around with a few different instruments in the studio. Yet again and again, he reflects life back to us with a truth and simplicity that defy words. He shows us views from his hotel and backstage dressing room, a playground slide that caught his eye, a fat curtain in his room, an inquisitive young man named Nick Leblanc. He riffs with color across the same simple black-and-white sketches the way he plays songs in concert, sometimes making subtle changes, other times brutally overhauling them. His brush strokes are like his voice: straightforward, rough, occasionally fragile, but always intent on illustrating the treads of human experience. Seemingly unworried about how something looks, he's not after artistic perfection but something larger, a moment, a feeling. The effect is entralling.

Dylan drew the moody black-and-white sketches while on tour between the years 1989 and 1992, and in 2007 turned some of these drawings into more than 200 paintings (170 reproduced here) by adding vibrant watercolors and gouaches, as well as titles like *Feet* and *Cupid Doll*. The naturalistic scenes record the world around him, observed between performances, and illustrate how his eye relentlessly pursues usually ignored people, buildings and common objects. He wrenches objects from the background an outdated TV, Venetian blinds, empty doorways and alleys and puts them center stage, unearthing a beauty in the bland.

In the crowded Rooftop Bar, no one but the artist notices the solitary woman staring off the balcony, her back to us, face unknown. And the lady waiting at the bar in *Woman in Red Lion Pub* would never have dreamt her broad back would become the electric-red subject of a painting. But in her slanting, voluptuous silhouette, her choice of dress and hat, Dylan points out her power and sturdy elegance, qualities she herself seems unaware of. *Motel Pool* features the kind of sad swimming hole that without hyper children wearing Floaties and screaming Marco! Polo! goes instantly stale. In one version it's a viciously sunny day, achy on the eyes, a saggy palm garnishing the patio like speared fruit hanging off the rim of a Mai Tai. Rendered in the plum colors of night, however, that same scene goes lush and secretive. You really wouldn't be surprised if, after brushing your teeth, you glanced outside and saw thieves by that pool conspiring to rob the main office, or maybe drunken lovers lurching past it, trying not to fall in.

And that is the best part of *The Drawn Blank Series*. There are the overt joys of Dylan's framing; he hacks off heads, shoulders and legs to home in on an expressive mouth, belly and three-fourths of an armchair.

There's also his wonderfully gleeful perspective. His cities are built not on rock but on waterbed. Porches undulate toward us. Roads swell. Telephone poles, cars and guardrails all stretch toward Dylan like fans hopeful for a glimpse of him without his sunglasses. And his portraits are what passport photos should be: neat square headshots in strong colors and a few strokes revealing the person fundamentally. No, the true joys of Dylan's art derive from his bird's-eye view of our world, his understanding that a splash of purple will turn an ugly pool romantic. In the series *Rose on a Hillside*, he keeps the rose but restlessly changes the background a European town, a country cottage, a cluster of skyscrapers underscoring an interconnectedness that most of us, without the help of an artist, will never fully recognize. By MARISHA PESSL --The New York Times, June 1, 2008

#### About the Author

Jens Rosteck is the author of several books, including a biography of Bob Dylan. He lives in Nice. Diana Widmaier Picasso is an art historian and the author of *Picasso: Art Can Only Be Erotic* (Prestel). She lives in Paris. Frank Zollner is a professor of Renaissance and Modern Art at the University of Leipzig and the author of numerous books, including *Botticelli* (Prestel).

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