

Karmel. Pepe. "Art in Review:  
'Withdrawing.'" *The New York Times*,  
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### **'Withdrawing'**

*Ronald Feldman Fine Arts  
31 Mercer Street, at Grand Street  
SoHo  
Through Feb. 17*

The artists in this large group show certainly aren't withdrawing from anything: on the contrary, they're working "with drawing" to make a statement about the alarming century we live in. Joseph Beuys is represented by a cryptic manifesto on "Ireland: The Heart of Europe": chalk inscriptions on a dark slab of concrete encased in a glass vitrine. Helen and Newton Harrison document Brazilian air pollution with photographs and text. The Russian duo Komar and Melamid contribute two studies for their 1981 painting "I Saw Stalin Once When I Was a Child." Among the numerous lesser-known Russian artists here, Ilya Utkin stands out with two Saul Steinberg-like drawings reworking Vladimir Tatlin's 1920 "Monument to the Third International" as an ominous "Monument of Labor."

More surprising are the pieces by artists better known for their outrageous performances than for their works on paper. A very funny photomontage by Chris Burden from 1980 documents his troubles with a big truck he once owned and, it seems, with his girlfriend of the time. The late Hannah Wilke is represented by a delicate line drawing of flowers and by an exquisitely fuzzy wash drawing of "East Hampton Bees."

Other artists straddle the border between abstraction and the real world. In Terry Fox's 1991 work "Le Décapité Parlant" ("The Headless Speaker"), metal strips lettered with enigmatic words form concentric circles in front of an alphabetic grid. Doug Davis's 1979 "Film Drawings" reinvent Barnett Newman's abstract "zips" as 8-millimeter film strips pasted to a ground of what appears to be floral wallpaper or gift wrap. But the prize for wittiest drawing goes to Jim Anderson, whose 1996 "Bedpan Animation" uses the curved grids of a computer drawing program to depict a mysterious, sensual object tumbling through space.

PEPE KARMEL