



## Goings On About Town: General Idea

Oct. 7-Jan. 15

The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Downtown

212-219-2166

Two hundred and fifty charming, campy yet serious drawings are on view in “Ecce Homo,” a focused retrospective devoted to this three-person collective, formed by the artists AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal, in Toronto, in 1969. (The trio moved to New York City in 1985, where most of these pieces were made.) All the drawings were made by the quick, fluid lines of Zontal’s hand, but they are signed with the initials “GI,” for General Idea, because they resulted from a group process and reflected a common lexicon. Recurring images—poodles, magic mountains, amoebas—are rendered in graphite, watercolor, and gouache. Some display a gestural, cartoony economy; others are constructed from doodlelike scrolls and frenetic crosshatching. The show has a deceptively playful air: the spectre of the AIDS epidemic is ever present. (Both Partz and Zontal died of H.I.V.-related causes, in 1994.) A wall of cockroach drawings, in which the insects seem to crawl over speckled abstractions, had a special significance for Zontal: they represented the floaters that impaired his vision as he went blind. Intimate and born of a daily practice, the material in “Ecce Homo” is a profound counterpart to the trio’s better-known works, notably their activist update of Robert Indiana’s iconic red, green, and blue “LOVE” statue, reimagined to read “AIDS.”

— [\*Johanna Fateman\*](#)