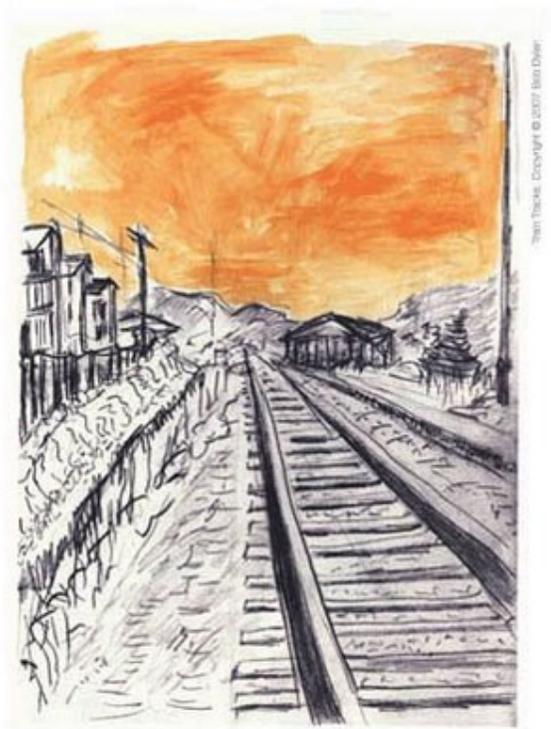
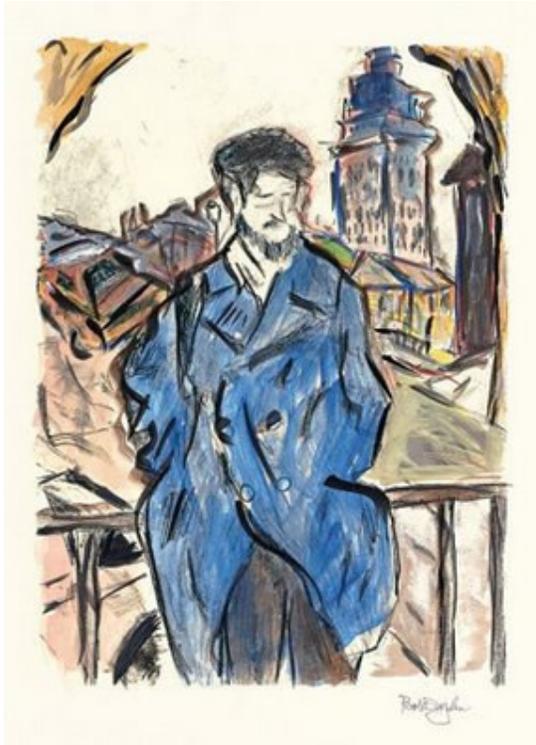


*Sunday, June 08, 2008*



There is an exhibition coming up in an art gallery in London with drawings of Bob Dylan. The singer songwriter of visual poetry, appears to be a visual artist himself. He started exploring fine arts when he was living in Woodstock and invited to the studio of his neighbour. He also followed painting classes by Norman Raeben (the son of Sholom Aleichem). In his autobiography *Chronicles*, vol 1, Dylan writes: "What would I draw? Well, I guess I would start with whatever was at hand. I sat at the table, took out a pencil and paper and drew the typewriter, a crucifix, a rose, pencils, knives and pins, empty cigarette boxes. I'd lose track of time completely Not that I thought I was any great drawer, but I did feel like I was putting an orderliness to the chaos around."



He has decorated the covers of his albums *Self Portrait* and *Planet Waves* and *Music of Big Pink* by The Band, all in an expressionist style. A sketchbook of him is published '*Drawn blank*' (1994) with pen and charcoal sketches made during three years during his concert tours "mainly to relax and refocus a restless mind. Mostly when I was on a train or in a café, just to make sense of what was in my immediate world. I found it relaxed me." Sometimes he also working with models. In the *Biograph* booklet one can see photographs of him drawing the view from a hotel window. During the recording of *Oh Mercy* he has made a charcoal portrait of his producer Daniel Lanois. His portraits show strong shapes and strong contrasts as can be seen on the studio photograph below. For the exhibition he reworked these sketches. The drawings were digitally transferred to bigger sheets of paper, and he added bright colours of watercolour or gouache. These fauvist reworking are not always good, but on the *Trains Tracks* (image above) it really works. The orange sky is a good addition to the black & white print. This drawing is a personal memory of his youth "I'd seen trains from my earliest childhood days. The sound of trains off in the distance more or less made me feel at home"



Some of Dylans songs refer to painting. *A painting by Van Gogh* and *When I paint my Masterpiece*. In the song *Highlands*, a 17- minute 'talking blues' song, he is describing a scene in a restaurant where he is making a portrait sketch of the waitress:

*I'm in Boston town, in some restaurant. I got no idea what I want. Well, maybe I do but I'm just really not sure. Waitress comes over. Nobody in the place but me and her.*

*It must be a holiday, there's nobody around. She studies me closely as I sit down. She got a pretty face and long white shiny legs. She says, "What'll it be?" I say, "I don't know, you got any soft boiled eggs?"*

*She looks at me, Says "I'd bring you somebut we're out of 'm, you picked the wrong time to come "Then she says, "I know you're an artist, draw a picture of me! "I say, "I would if I could, but, I don't do sketches from memory."*

*"Well", she says, "I'm right here in front of you, or haven't you looked?". I say," all right, I know, but I don't have my drawing book! "She gives me a napkin, she says, "you can do it on that". I say, "yes I could but, I don't know where my pencil is at!*

*"She pulls one out from behind her ear. She says "all right now, go ahead, draw me, I'm standing right here "I make a few lines, and I show it for her to see. Well she takes a napkin and throws it back. And says "that don't look a thing like me!" I said, "Oh, kind miss, it most certainly does", She says, "you must be jokin." I say, "I wish I was!"*