

Stephen Friedman Gallery

David Shrigley: *Exhibition of Old Rope*

5–6 Cork Street
London, W1S 3LQ

Friday 14 November –
Saturday 20 December 2025

Opening:
Thursday 13 November, 6–8pm

Gallery hours:
Tuesday–Friday 10am–6pm
Saturday 11am–5pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present **David Shrigley**'s ninth solo exhibition with the gallery, *Exhibition of Old Rope*, marking over twenty-eight years of fruitful collaboration with the celebrated British artist. Expanding his conceptual practice, Shrigley showcases a 10-ton installation made entirely from discarded rope and a large-scale four-part neon.

To create the installation, Shrigley spent months searching the UK for unwanted lengths of rope destined for landfill. Much of the discarded rope previously served maritime purposes, from thick cruise ship mooring lines, to slim cords on marker buoys, longlines and crab and lobster pots. Others have been salvaged from climbing schools, tree surgeons, offshore wind farms, scaffolders and window cleaning firms. Shrigley collected the shorter lengths himself from shorelines across the UK. All gathered rope was treated and cleaned to prepare it for the exhibition — a particularly important step for the rope rescued from the sea.

The UK has a centuries-old rope-making tradition, from the hemp and jute ropes historically used in fishing and the Royal Navy, to today's synthetic polyester and nylon lines. These modern materials make marine rope and fishing nets notoriously difficult to recycle and a major environmental issue.

Discussing the origins of this work, Shrigley explains: "This exhibition started with an idiom. Old rope has no use. It's also hard to recycle, so there's a lot of it lying around. I thought: what if I turn that into a literal exhibition of old rope. And then say, yes, this is art, and yes, you can buy it for £1 million." He expands: "The work exists because I'm interested in the value people place on art, and the idiom gave me an excuse to explore that. I think £1 million is a fair price, partly because of the idea and partly because it is quite a lot of rope."

As a result the gallery is transformed with vast coiled mounds of reclaimed rope, unveiling a myriad of colours, textures, thickness and condition — from almost new to frayed, sun-faded and weather-beaten. Demonstrating his caustic sense of humour, a huge bright orange neon hangs in the window with the exhibition title. Rendered in Shrigley's distinctive handwriting, the neon adopts the aesthetic of a sign or advertisement as he humorously undermines its formal associations. *Exhibition of Old Rope* playfully toys with notions of commerce and disrupts the conventions of a commercial gallery.

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Contact Us

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Notes to editors

About David Shrigley

David Shrigley was born in 1968 in Macclesfield, UK and lives and works in Brighton.

Though widely recognised for his quick-witted drawings and hand-rendered texts, Shrigley's practice spans an extensive range of media including sculpture, large-scale installation, animation, painting, photography and music. The artist consistently seeks to widen his audience by operating outside the gallery sphere, including producing artist publications and creating collaborative music projects.

Shrigley's monumental sculpture *Really Good* was unveiled in Trafalgar Square, London for the Fourth Plinth Commission in September 2016. The sculpture travelled to Melbourne, Australia in 2023 to be included in the NGV Triennial, alongside his evolving installation *Tennis Ball Exchange*. In 2021, his *Mayfair Tennis Ball Exchange* opened at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. Visitors were invited to bring an old ball to swap with a new one from the numerous shelves that lined the walls. Gradually the rows of yellow spheres were replaced with misshapen and discoloured forms, celebrating the joy of trade and exchange.

The Mantis Muse, a three-metre-tall animatronic praying mantis, was installed at his former school in Leicester in October 2024. Intended for students to respond to in art classes, the sculpture aimed to spark a national conversation about the vital importance of arts in education.

The artist's major solo exhibition *What the Hell Was I Thinking?* will open at Kunsthall Rotterdam, Netherlands, in December 2025. Other recent solo museum exhibitions include those at Copenhagen Contemporary, Denmark (2020); Newstead Abbey Historic House & Gardens, Nottinghamshire, UK (2019); Museo de arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico (2019); Art Omi, Ghent, New York, USA (2019) and Spritmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden (2018). From 2015 to 2018 the British Council-organised exhibition *Lose Your Mind* travelled to six venues including Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China; Storage by Hyundai Card in Seoul, Korea and Instituto-Cultural-Cabañas in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Shrigley's works can be found in prominent collections internationally, including Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark; Thyssen-Bornemisza Contemporary Art Foundation, Vienna, Austria; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland; Tate, UK; British Council, London, UK and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery is a contemporary art gallery that was founded in 1995 with a focus on representing exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration, the gallery has been based in Mayfair, London. In October 2023, the gallery expanded and relocated to Cork Street. In November 2023, the gallery opened its first location outside the UK at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca, New York.