

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

Designboom

Interview: David Shrigley On His Artistic Interpretation Of Maison Ruinart

Nina Azzarelli

6 April 2020

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### Interview: David Shrigley On His Artistic Interpretation Of Maison Ruinart

Every year, Maison Ruinart — the first established house of champagne — invites an internationally-celebrated contemporary artist to its headquarters to collaborate on a bespoke project. Following Liu bolin and Vik Muniz, 2020 saw british artist David Shrigley offer his unique take on Maison Ruinart through an ensemble of 36 drawings and gouaches — as well as three neons, two ceramics, and one door. Titled ‘unconventional bubbles’, or ‘bulles singulières’, Shrigley’s artistic interpretation provokes conversations about the wine-making process as well as the broader topics such as environmental challenges.

To learn more about Shrigley’s creative approach to the project, we spoke with the artist who also explained the evolution of his work to date and who he creates his artwork for. Read the interview below.



To create the artworks, David Shrigley visited Ruinart’s headquarters in Reims, France, where he roamed among the vines, explored the cellars, and noted each expression and gesture. Guided by this natural curiosity, Shrigley wanted to see everything and understand the whole system of production during his artistic residence. He wanted to answer the question: what hides behind the developmental process of this exceptional beverage? The series of 36 drawings, in black-and-white or in color, underlines the importance of savoir-faire, of nature’s transmission, and the respect the land deserves.

In particular, Shrigley was fascinated by the underground world of *crayères* — man-made labyrinths that date back centuries. Here, in these cellars which function as chalk quarries and places of production and aging for bottles, Shrigley wanted to make his own mark. Sculpted faces in the brittle walls, or quirky graffiti documenting his experiences more than 30

meters (100 feet) underground, address passing visitors as well as the men and women who work in the cellars every day.

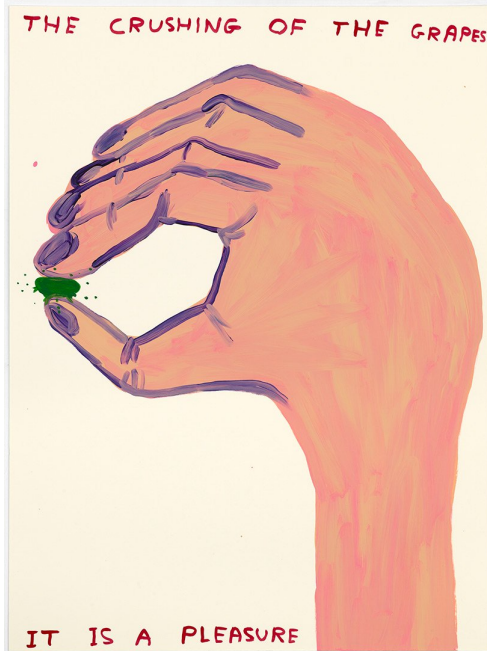
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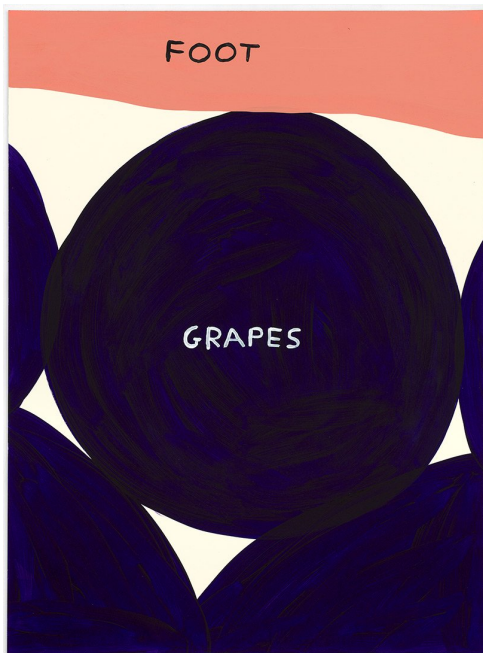
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Designboom (DB): You must get a lot of offers for collaborations. How do you decide which ones you want to take on?

David Shrigley (DS): Every project, every collaboration is an opportunity to learn something new, but also to see your work differently because it's through someone else's eyes. While collaborating with Ruinart, I got to learn a lot about champagne which is something that I really like and have come to appreciate in recent years. And in a way, it makes me feel intelligent and sophisticated. It was very much a voyage of discovery, so I had no expectations other than that I would learn something. So the possibility of discovery is what makes me accept a collaboration.

DB: How has your work evolved over your career to date? do you want your work to evolve?



DS: I have memories of making drawings at maybe 4 years old. my parents never kept any of these artworks though. so it's just a childhood memory. I'd like to think there was some continuity between those drawings and those I make now. I have realised there are a lot of drawings that I made in the 1990s that I have no record of. I used to make photocopies of them and only started to record things digitally in the early 2000s. occasionally I get asked to verify the authenticity of my drawings from the 1990s: even for me, it's actually quite difficult.

DS (continued): I guess the topics of the works keep evolving over time and are influenced by the evolution of society. But when I make art sometimes I think that you don't really know what a work means, even when it's finished. That meaning changes as you go along. In that way, all work is a kind of 'work in progress', because you always project your own meaning.

DB: who do you create art for?

DS: my artworks don't target specific groups of people. But I'm used to discussing art with people who are hostile to it. I worked as a gallery guide for about 5 years when I first left art school and it always surprised me that art often provoked such a negative response. I think a lot of people misunderstand what art is and they misunderstand what their relationship with it should be. So in a way I create art to make those people react.

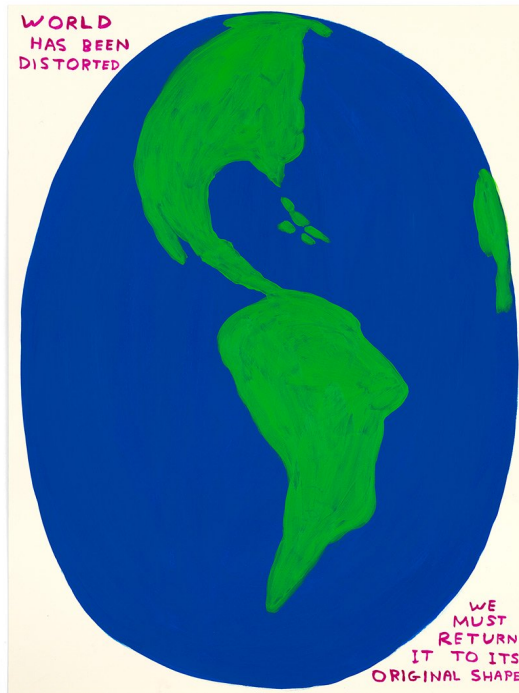
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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Shrigley and Ruinart have dedicated the above illustration. This pandemic is stressful for billions of people around the globe, and his message elaborates about having a collective experience that everyone is going through at the same time.

DB: what are you afraid of regarding the future? What are you optimistic about?

DS: I think it's the job of the artist to try to tell the truth and not hide behind bad politics. Broadly speaking I'm very disappointed about the political path the UK seems to have chosen. Brexit is a mistake and everyone (almost everyone) will suffer for it, but what can I do about it?

I guess I have a bigger voice than most people do because of being an artist. so I will continue to say what I think and to encourage positivity. it's easy to be negative in these dark times, but I've decided to be positive. and to drink more champagne.



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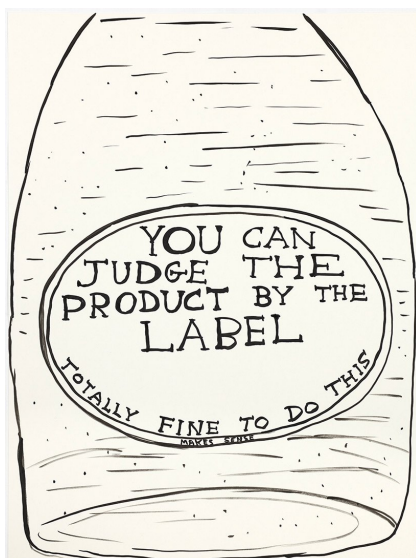
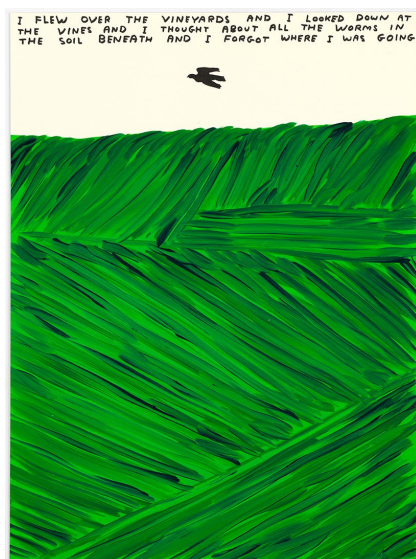
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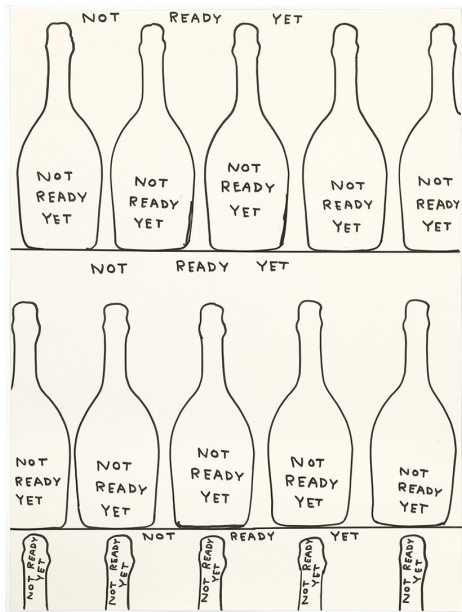
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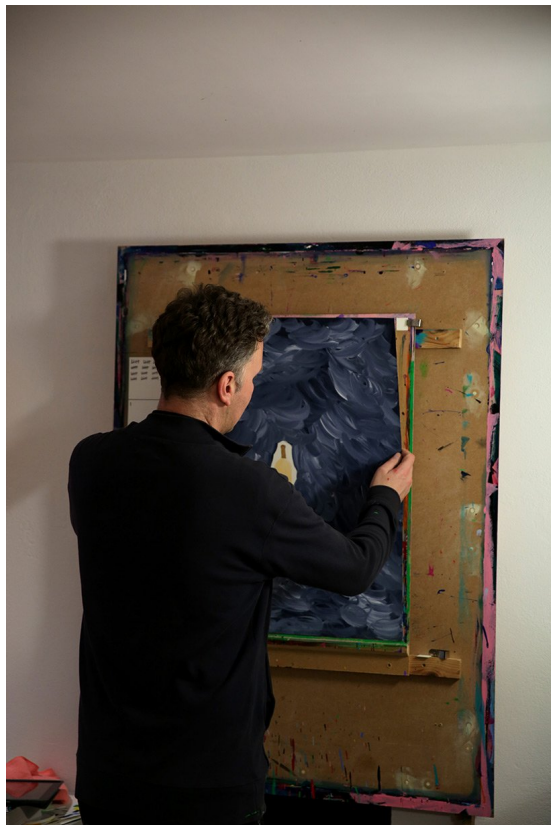
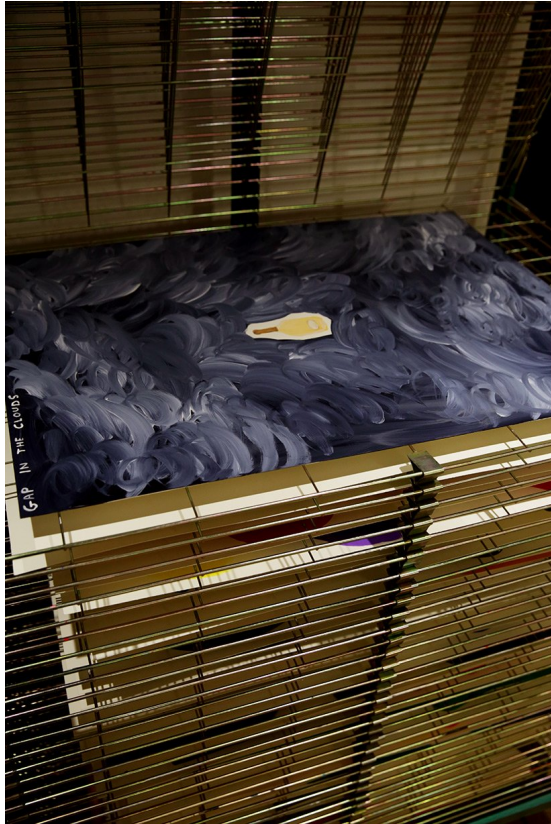
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