

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Forbes

According To British Artist David Shrigley, His Artworks Make Themselves

Y-Jean Mun-Delsalle

20 September 2020

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David Shrigley has made art for as long as he can remember. “I think that as a child I was quite easy to look after; I was happy to entertain myself,” recalls the Brighton-based artist, 52. “All I needed was some blank paper and a pencil and I was happy for hours, so my mother said. Making art is still the thing that affords me the most pleasure; maybe it is my ‘default setting’. Even though the art I made in childhood no longer exists, in my recollection it was very similar to the art I make now: comic images with text.” He’s recognized for his rudimentary illustrations interlaced with cheeky words of wisdom, satirical commentaries about the absurdity of contemporary society that make us view the world around us in a fresh way.



Image: Be Nice by David Shrigley. Photo Courtesy of David Shrigley Studio.

Shrigley starts a new piece with a blank sheet of paper that he fills up entirely, often based on a list of items to draw. His artwork occurs as a result of a process, as if it made itself. Looking back on what he has just produced at the end of a day at the studio, he wonders how he made it. Sometimes he’s unsure what a work means even when it’s finished, and that meaning changes as he goes along. In fact, in his manner of working, all his creations are a kind of work in progress because he always projects his own meaning onto them.



Image: I'm Dead, taxidermy cat, by David Shrigley. Photo Courtesy of David Shrigley Studio.

“I have a motto: ‘If you put the hours in, then the work makes itself,’” Shrigley notes. “My work is created through the very process of making it. That’s just how I function. I adapt. I never have a plan.” Starting with a blank sheet of paper, he usually writes a list of things to draw, then draws everything on that list. Once that’s done, the story has begun, and he sometimes adds more words or pictures until eventually the entire page is full and the artwork completed. A keen observer, his crude drawings paired with poignant messages resembling scribbles by a cheeky schoolboy use humour to poke fun at daily life and tackle serious problems like global warming, unemployment and child welfare.

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Image: A David Shrigley exhibition of giant inflatable Swan-things at Spritmuseum in Stockholm. Photo Courtesy of David Shrigley Studio.

This year, Shrigley collaborates with champagne house Ruinart for its 2020 carte blanche art commission, which sees it welcoming celebrated international artists annually to share their vision of the champagne house, thereby following in the footsteps of his peers like Vik Muniz and Liu Bolin. In fact, Ruinart has had a longtime connection with the art world ever since 1896 when it had asked Czech artist Alphonse Mucha to create an advertising poster, and today partners with 37 art fairs worldwide. Ruinart chose Shrigley as he is a provocateur who uses deadpan humor to open our eyes to the issues facing the globe in a direct and accessible fashion. Additionally, he teamed up with Ruinart's cellar master, Frédéric Panaïotis, and French chef Alexandre Gauthier, known for his bold and intuitive cuisine, to conceive a six-hand dinner in response to Shrigley's artworks. The menu is available upon request

at Gauthier's two Michelin-star restaurant La Grenouillère in northern France until the end of the year, and six international chefs offer the Food For Art program locally.

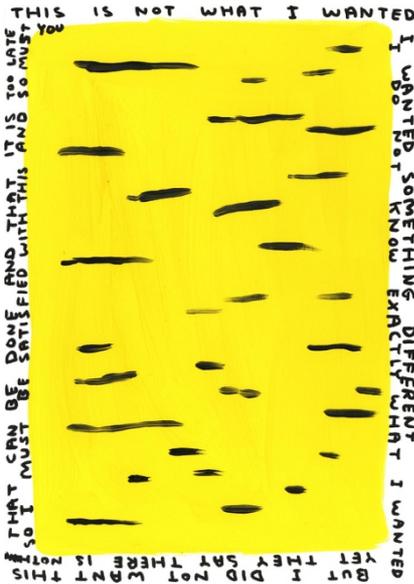


Image: This is Not What I Wanted by David Shrigley. Photo Courtesy of David Shrigley Studio.

Shrigley revealed the secrets of champagne-making, traditions passed down over generations, the relationship with nature and the challenges of climate change through acrylic or ink on paper drawings representing a bird flying over the vineyards, the planet that has been distorted, rain as an essential element to the cultivation of the vine, worms that are essential to soil biodiversity, the fragility of grapes, manual harvesting, the darkness of the cellars, bottles being riddled, champagne being aged or reading the label as a guarantee of quality. "Good wine is for good people. Bad wine is for bad people. But you don't always get the wine you deserve. That's just the way it is", reads one piece. "Put back in what you take out", states another.

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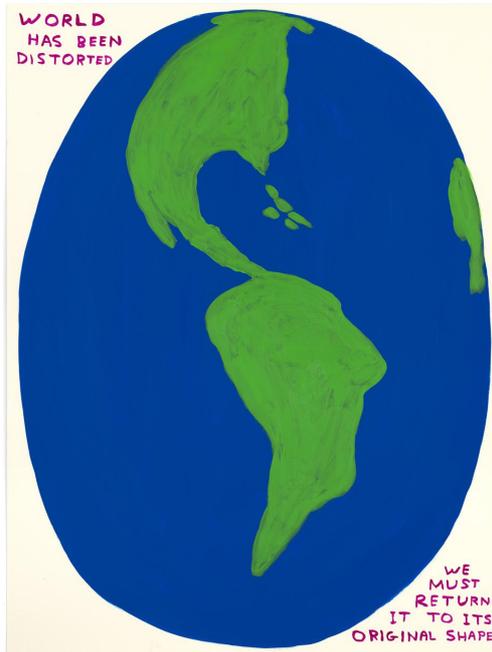


Image: David Shrigley drawing for Ruinart. Photo Courtesy of David Shrigley Studio.

“The privilege of being an artist is that you can do whatever you want; you can change when you feel it is necessary, which prevents you from getting bored,” Shrigley says. “Although generally I have the freedom to do whatever I want, sometimes it is really helpful to be given a structure, to be given a project. I like to think of every work as a project that is separate and different. Complete freedom is difficult to find. Sometimes you need to set your own project; sometimes it is good if someone sets one for you.”