

NUMBER OF DRAWINGS IN
"DAVID SHRIGLEY: BRAIN ACTIVITY": 165
NUMBER OF NEW PAINTINGS: 45
DIMENSIONS OF "VERY LARGE CUP
OF TEA": 11 INCHES BY 15 INCHES
AMOUNT OF TEA BREWED FOR "VERY LARGE
CUP OF TEA": 10 LITERS EVERY OTHER DAY

THE ART OF THE DOODLE

By JONAH WEINER

David Shrigley is a master of the incompetent line. An English artist based in Glasgow, he has made photographs, sculptures and animations, but he's best known for hauntingly funny drawings, rendered in an exquisitely unsteady freehand. His output is prolific: his drawings, in addition to appearing in galleries and museums, festoon T-shirts and greeting cards; he wrote the libretto for an opera about cooking; he has published dozens of books and released a spoken-word CD. But lately he has been under particularly intense pressure to produce. In February, London's Hayward Gallery will mount a major survey of his work. To stuff the show with new art, he says, he had to trick himself into thinking he wasn't actually making art at all.

In a spiral notebook, he jotted down 180 ideas for 180 pieces. Most consist of a few

Shrigley in his studio in Glasgow, Scotland.



IT'S OK TO
RUN AWAY
FROM YOUR
PROBLEMS

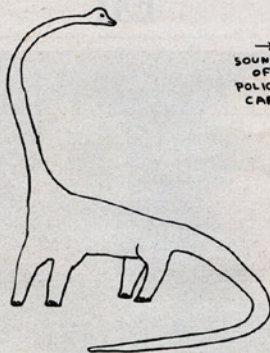


IT'S A
SAD IDEA

FOOTPRINT



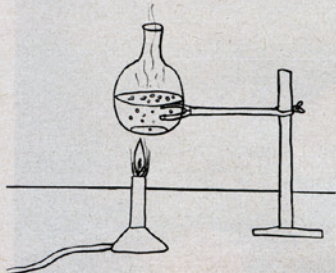
→
SOUND
OF
POLICE
CAR



BIG FISH



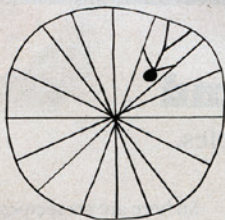
I WILL PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD



KILLED FOR WEARING SHORTS



LET ME OFF THIS
CRAZY WHEEL



MAGAZINE
COVER



IT'S A STUPID
GAME BUT WE
LOVE IT



From the pen of David Shrigley.

purposely cryptic words, intended as jumping-off points. No. 116 is "sea monster smiling"; others are equally open-ended: "sword fight," "dog on its hind legs," "William Shakespeare." "I try not to think too hard about what I'm doing," Shrigley says. "I'm just crossing things off a list and filling a page, and the work gets made as a byproduct of that task."

Shrigley's best work seems to emanate from some stunted but unrestrained part of his psyche, and it plumbs and tickles the recesses of our own. The mood in his drawings can swing from lighthearted absurdity to a queasy bleakness — death, weird sex, cruelty, victimization, waste and shame are recurring themes — always presented in the same childlike scrawl. Sometimes it's hard to say whether they're meant to be humorous, and if they're not, why you're laughing anyway. "There aren't a lot of tangible jokes," Shrigley says. The overall effect is like discovering the sketchbook of a boy who taught himself to draw while locked in a basement. "I'm not trying to draw badly," says Shrigley, who graduated from the Glasgow School of Art. "I'm just trying to draw without any consideration of craft."

Faced with a space as large as the Hayward, Shrigley wanted to include some sculpture as well. He produced a range of homely little talismans, fashioned in wax and cast in silver and bronze, that capture the idiosyncrasy of his line: a gnarled skeleton key ("like the key to the jail cell in some fairy tale"), a chain affixed to a chubby bronze skull ("something the mayor would wear, but with a kind of bling, gangster quality to it"). He also created a preposterously large ceramic tea cup "that will contain actual tea." Shrigley's original notion was that the tea would grow moldy over the exhibit's run, but there was resistance to placing a vat of mold in the gallery. Now "there will be a gallery assistant making a giant bucket of tea every few days," Shrigley says. "Which I think will be funny." ♦

I LIVE HERE
THERE IS NO DOOR
I AM AN ANIMAL



I USED TO SURF BUT THEN
I GOT EATEN BY A SHARK



FILTH

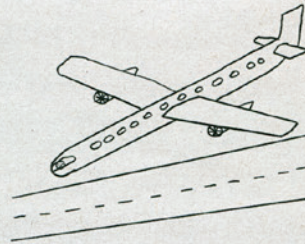


NOW THAT YOU HAVE TO
MY HEART YOU MUST
YOUR HANDS

UNKILLABLE BUG
MOVES WITH
IMPOSSIBLE QUICKNESS



I FIND IT HARD TO
CONCENTRATE WHILST I AM
PERFORMING IMPORTANT TASKS



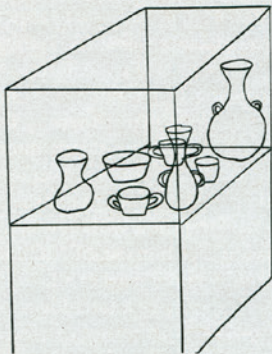
SUMO



I HATE BALLOONS



MUSEUMS ARE FULL OF CRAP



I AM A CAT-
WALK MODEL



CAN I TAKE
YOUR PHOTO?



I AM VERY UGLY BUT NOONE SEEMS TO
NOTICE