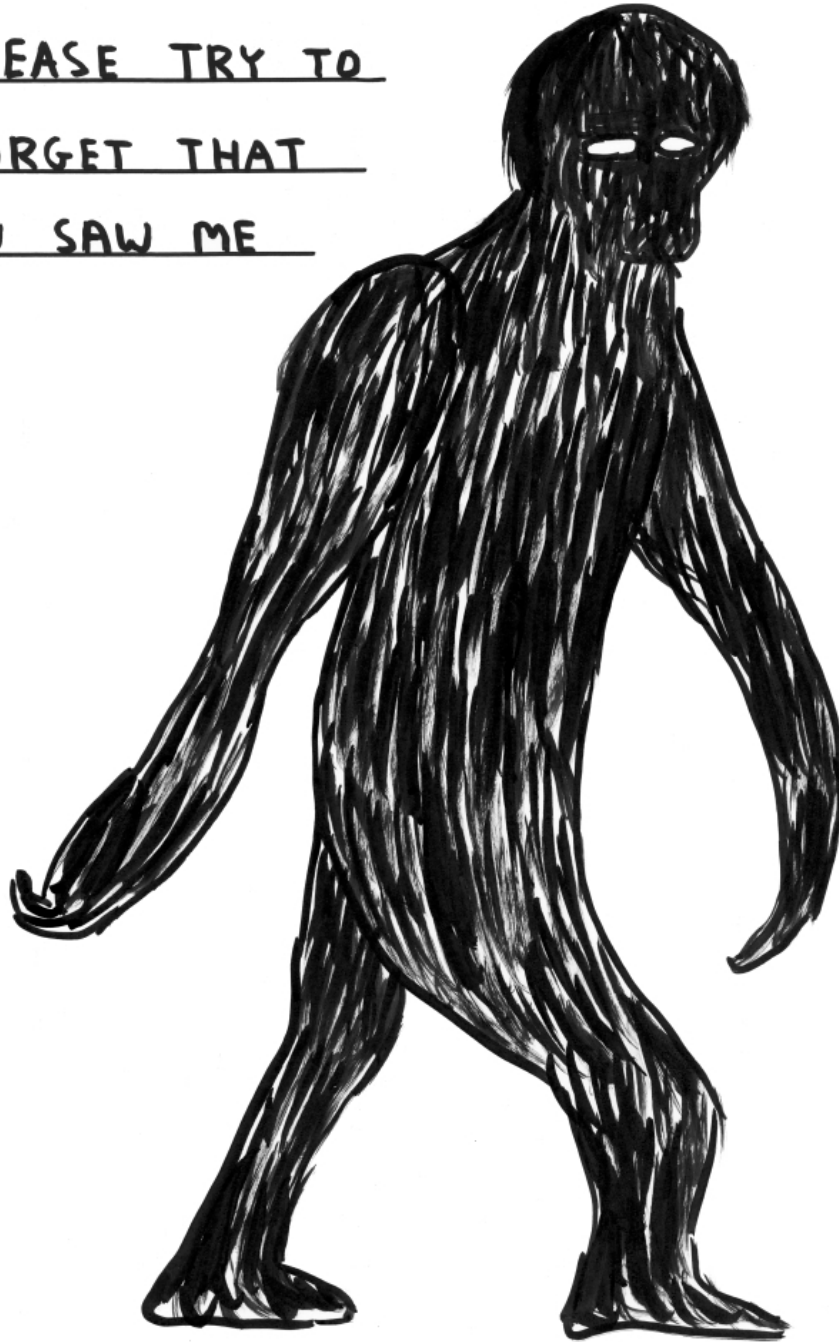


PLEASE TRY TO
FORGET THAT
YOU SAW ME



DAVID SHRIGLEY
LIFE AND LIFE DRAWING
14 NOV 2014 - 1 MAR 2015

MEDIA KIT

**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION, IMAGES
AND INTERVIEWS,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

NGV Media and Public Affairs

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EXHIBITION INFORMATION

David Shrigley: Life and Life Drawing

14 November 2014 – 1 March 2015

NGV International

180 St Kilda Road

Open daily, 10am – 5pm

Free entry

ngv.vic.gov.au



(cover)

David Shrigley

*Untitled (Please try to forget
that you saw me) 2014*

acrylic on paper

75 x 56 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

© David Shrigley

(right)

David Shrigley

Untitled 2014 (detail)

synthetic polymer paint on paper

153.0 x 111.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

© David Shrigley

DAVID SHRIGLEY

LIFE AND LIFE DRAWING

14 NOV 2014 - 1 MAR 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

12 NOVEMBER 2014:

Internationally renowned artist and Turner Prize finalist David Shrigley will hold his first major survey in Australia at the National Gallery of Victoria. *David Shrigley: Life and Life Drawing* presents new and recent work by the Glasgow-based practitioner, who has developed a cult following for his stripped back, darkly humorous and deliberately simple drawings that explore existential dramas, human dysfunction and anxiety.

Opening on 14 November, the exhibition encompasses drawings, paintings, sculpture, animated videos, artist books and multiples, and a new sculptural commission for NGV International's Waterwall titled *General Store*. The artist's omnipresent sense of humour lies at the heart of these works, which are manifest in tragicomic narratives that reflect on the banality and absurdity of everyday life and objects.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said, 'David Shrigley is one of contemporary art's most unique conceptual artists; his works are renowned for their humour and ability to convey in stark black and white the most complex as well as trivial moments of human experience. *David Shrigley: Life and Life Drawing* is the artist's first comprehensive Australian exhibition and is sure to delight his avid fans in Melbourne and beyond.'

Shrigley was a finalist in the 2013 Turner Prize following his critically-acclaimed major retrospective exhibition, *Brain Activity*, at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 2012. He was recently awarded the prestigious Fourth Plinth Commission, to be unveiled in Trafalgar Square in 2016.

At the centre of Shrigley's exhibition at the NGV is *Life Model* 2012, most recently presented in the Turner Prize. This participatory work takes the form of a life drawing class, comprising a large sculpture of a naked, ungainly man upon a plinth – who blinks at irregular intervals, and urinates into a bucket every two or three minutes – surrounded by a field of chairs and easels so that gallery visitors are able to sit and draw the figure. The subsequent drawings, by usually anonymous, amateur people (but also including notable artists and celebrities) are displayed upon three walls of this sculptural installation.

The exhibition also includes the major installation *Beginning, middle and end* 2009, which involves a group of participants working under the direction of the artist himself. Together, they have fashioned over two tonnes of clay into an expansive 'clay sausage' that is rolled out and arranged in the gallery space where it will slowly dry and crack over the course of the exhibition. The intestine-like mound of clay humorously reflects Shrigley's interest in the human body and internal processes.

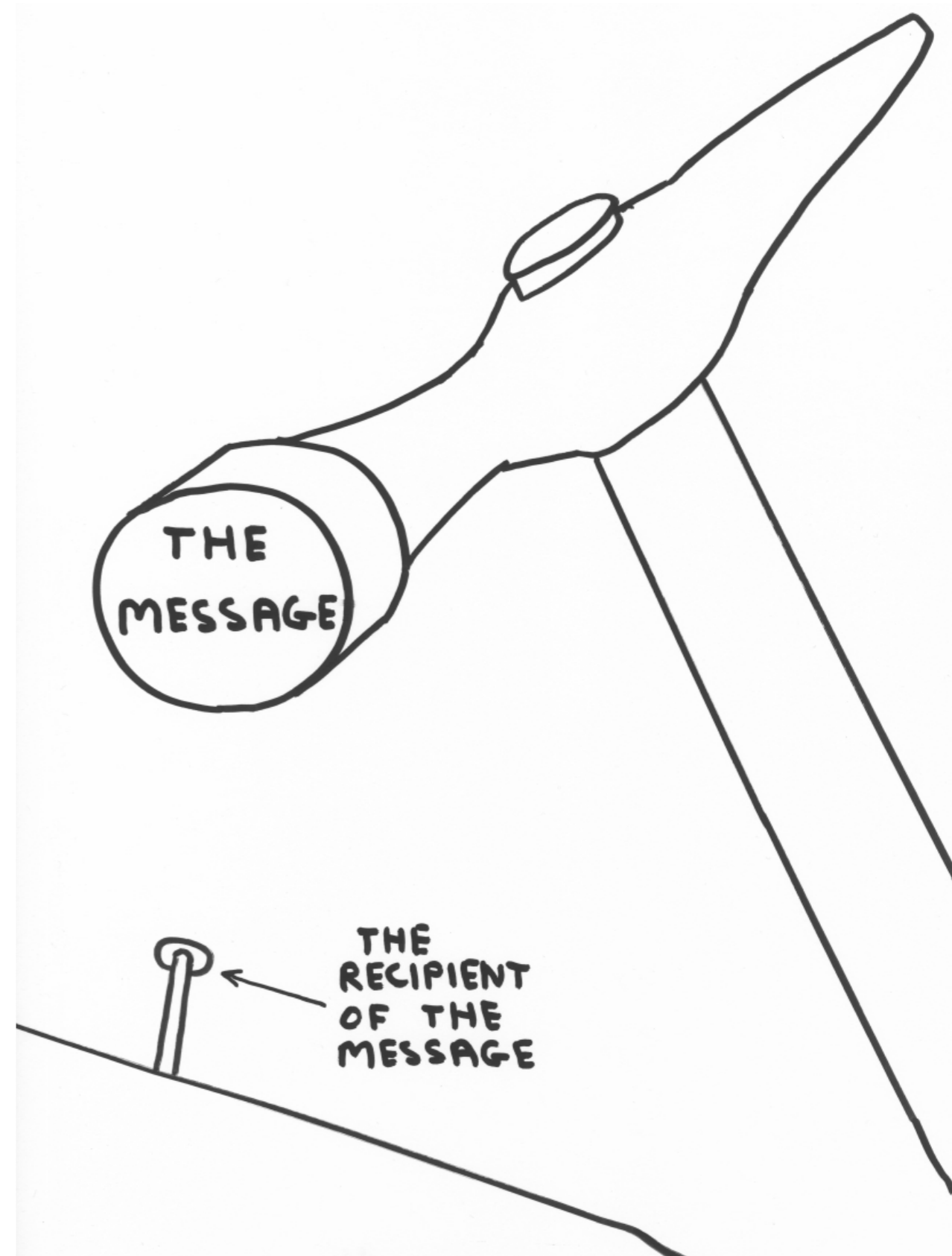
As English art critic Adrian Searle has noted, 'Shrigley's work is very wrong and very bad in all sorts of ways. It is also ubiquitous and compelling. There are lots of artists who, frowning their brows and trying to convince us of their seriousness, aren't half as profound or compelling.'

Born in Macclesfield, England in 1968, Shrigley studied at the Glasgow School of Art, graduating in 1991. From 2005-2009 his drawings appeared weekly in *The Guardian's* weekend magazine. He has published over 40 artist books to date, including *What the Hell Are You Doing?: The Essential David Shrigley* (2010), *How Are You Feeling?:* *The Essential David Shrigley* (2010), *How Are You Feeling?* (2012) and *Weak Messages Create Bad Situations* to be launched by Canongate Books in November this year.

The NGV has produced a standalone publication, *David Shrigley: Life and Life Drawing*, focusing exclusively on *Life Model*, to accompany the exhibition. The publication includes responses from a selection of artists, critics and audiences members including Will Self, Justin Clemens, Chris Kraus, Anastasia Klose and Jess Johnson, along with NGV curators Max Delany and Serena Bentley.

An engaging series of public programs accompanies the exhibition including an artist talk by David Shrigley on Saturday 15 November, 2.30pm, to be followed by a book signing for the launch of his latest book. Visit ngv.vic.gov.au for tickets and further information.

David Shrigley: Life and Life Drawing is on display at NGV International from 14 November 2014 to 1 March 2015. Open 10am-5pm, closed Tuesdays. Free entry.



David Shrigley
Untitled (The message) 2014
acrylic on paper
75 x 56 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
© David Shrigley

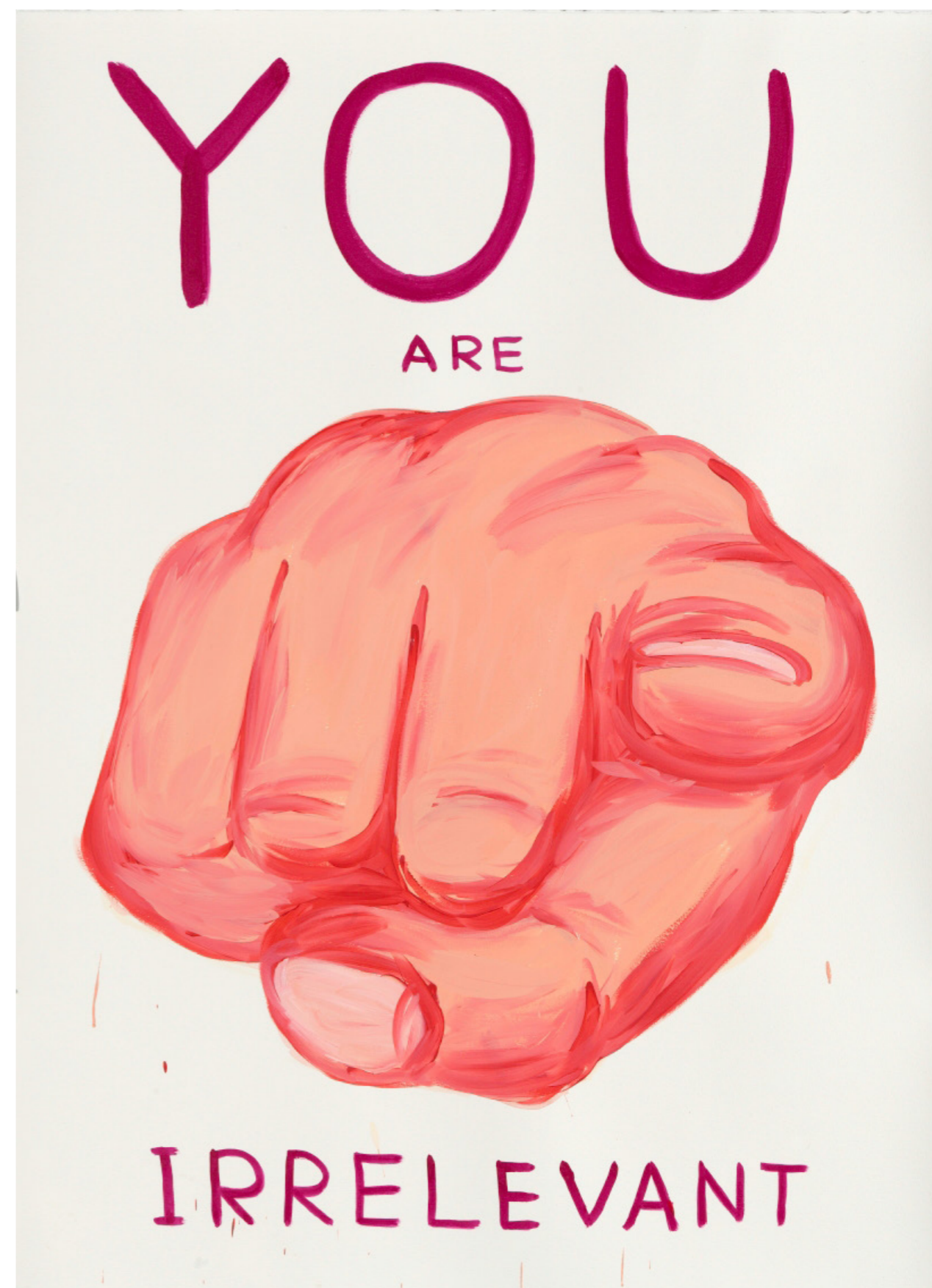
DAVID SHRIGLEY LIFE AND LIFE DRAWING

MAX DELANY

Extract from *David Shrigley: The Life Model*, RRP \$29.95, National Gallery of Victoria

'Man is condemned to be free', said Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*.¹ With each and every thought, action and gesture we create meaning in our lives, all the while forestalling the inevitability of death. With an anxious smile and philosophical bearing, British artist David Shrigley relentlessly explores such existential conundrums – the absurdity of the human condition, the contest between free will and fate, the logical problem of Go(o)d and Evil. Shrigley's portable sculptural object *A burden*, 2012, takes the form of an oversized backpack that looms like a psychic shadow, dark cloud or thought bubble over its wandering carrier. As a container for the psychic load we carry around in our daily lives, the sculpture is outsized and out of place in the gallery, transgressive and absurd, reducing its porter to an insignificant scale, as if overcome by a burdensome load. With backpack on, and clenched fist raised, the artist exclaims: 'Fight the nothingness!'

David Shrigley: Life and Life Drawing brings together new and recent drawings, paintings, sculpture and animations, along with *General store*, 2014, a custom-made architectural installation of the artist's books, limited-editions and multiples. The centrepiece of the exhibition, *Life model*, 2012, is typical of Shrigley's tragicomic approach, whereby conceptual art is presented in ways that are playful and misshapen, curious and comedic, awkward, anarchic and deadly serious. The installation takes the form of a life-drawing class at the centre of which stands a large sculpture of a naked man on a plinth, who blinks at irregular intervals and urinates into a bucket every few minutes. The ungainly figure is surrounded by chairs and easels, allowing gallery visitors to sit and draw from the model, their concentrated efforts very much part of the theatre unfolding before us. The resulting drawings are displayed on the three walls delineating the gallery space, reiterating the unfortunate existence of the hapless model from multiple viewpoints and perspectives.



(left)
David Shrigley
Life Model 2012
Installation view at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, 2014
Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
Photo: Stephen White
© David Shrigley

(above)
David Shrigley
Untitled 2014
synthetic polymer paint on paper
153.0 x 111.0 cm
Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
© David Shrigley

As likenesses of the model multiply and proliferate – an ironic play on strategies of repetition and seriality characteristic of minimalist art – we become aware of the stoic resistance of the naked figure, and its *inscrutability*. Despite the best collective efforts of participants to render something intelligible from the absurd image of life that confronts them, the resulting drawings, while dutiful and sincere, nonetheless tend towards disappointment and inadequacy – there is an inescapable gap between intention and outcome, aspiration and achievement, art and life. ‘No matter’, Samuel Beckett might have said to the gathered accomplices whose lives, hopes and laboured efforts Shrigley displays before us: ‘Try Again. Fail again. Fail better’.²

The truth of human fallibility is in stark evidence in Shrigley’s drawings, animations and installations, in which we encounter a procession of ‘failed romances, failed careers, failed politics, failed humanity, failed failures’.³ Shrigley’s *Life model* fits happily into a pantheon of flawed characters he describes as ‘slightly psychotic, dysfunctional, sociopaths’.⁴ The idea of failure is equally underscored by Shrigley’s purposeful technical approach. As Michael Bracewell has noted, ‘Shrigley’s dominant aesthetic is the crude vernacular of graffiti, doggerel, doodles and vandalism’,⁵ and it is this embrace of the errant and the vulnerable that gives his work an all-too-human comedy and pathos, arousing amusement and empathy, judgement and antagonism in equal measure.

Embedded within Shrigley’s deceptively amateurish, wonkily rendered drawings is an apparent rejection of competence and mastery, an embrace of failure as a critical rejoinder to repeatedly hollow claims of technical skill as a primary measure of artistic achievement. His drawing *Untitled (I will show the world how brilliant I am)*, 2014, for example, is a simple yet withering critique of the idea of the artist as genius and creator of masterpieces. *Untitled (I will find a lump of rock and I will bash the crap out of it until it looks like you ... it will be a celebration of your life and work)*, 2006, is a desperate yet hilarious denunciation of self-importance, pomposity and ostentation and, like much of Shrigley’s work, an antidote to the triumphalism and false ideals of progress ubiquitous in modernity and contemporary life. In a world of ever-increasing boosterism and spin, Shrigley’s art keeps the ego in check, unsettling images, language and power from assumed positions of authority.

Drawing our attention to minor, overlooked and incidental moments, we are reminded of the simple joys and strange beauty of quotidian existence.

In its blunt directness, Shrigley’s anaemic, notational line wavers between drawing and handwriting, where stream of consciousness is matched by incisive observation, the work hovering between the poetic and the political.⁶ The artist’s embrace of failure and vulnerability might even be seen as an act of courage – open to uncertainty, doubt and experiment, welcoming the unexpected and summoning the unknown so that new insights might materialise. This rawness, in both style and content, is equally apparent in Shrigley’s sculptural practice. *Beginning, middle and end*, 2009, fabricated from two tonnes of clay, is composed as a giant, three-dimensional doodle, a seemingly endless, knotted sausage-form meandering as a tangled mass across the gallery floor. Fashioned from unfired clay – suggesting a scatological, bodily register – Shrigley’s kinder-constructivist approach here is akin to drawing in the raw, primary nature of clay, in the grappling with form and in the haptic evidence of the artist’s body and touch. While the behaviour of the clay – which slowly transforms from wet, fresh, pliable and compliant to dry, stiff, ossified and crumbling – is a metaphor for life itself, its base materiality might also be understood as a critical counterpoint to the super-slick surfaces of cultural products which increasingly pervade contemporary art and capitalist production.

A macabre sense of mortality is equally apparent in *The spectre*, 2014, an installation of anonymous drawings variously depicting the same upstanding skeleton from multiple points of view, displayed en masse upon the walls of a small gallery so as to envelop the viewer. At the centre of the room is an empty plinth and stool, a vacant stage for the now absent skeletal figure whose likeness, repeatedly displayed, reminds us of our own mortality. In a moment of recognition the viewer becomes aware that he or she is standing in for the misplaced figure, and that, in the most uncanny, dreaded of ways, these skeletal drawings represent the essence of our being and destiny.

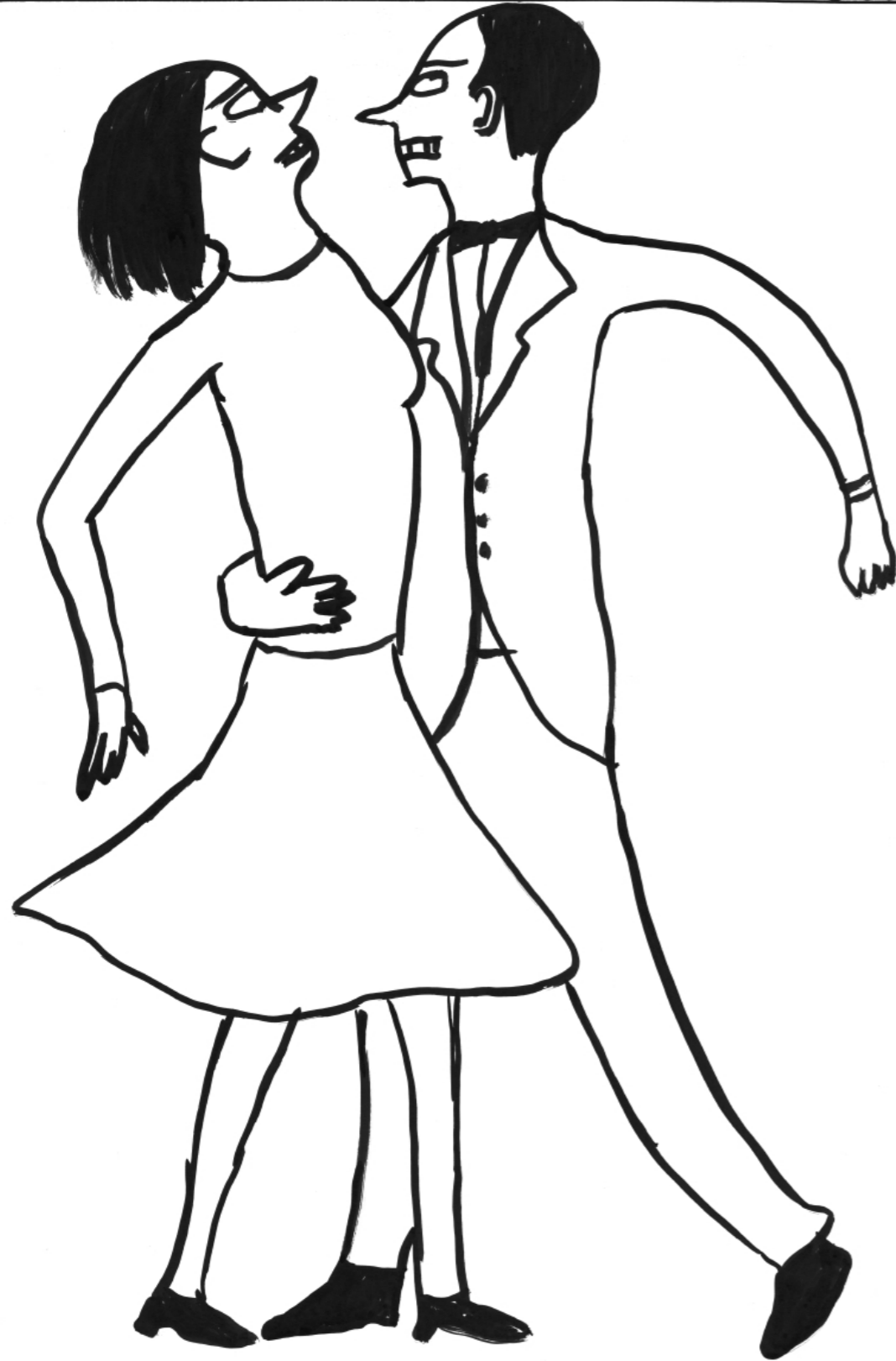
David Shrigley
Untitled 2014
synthetic polymer paint on paper
153.0 x 111.0 cm
courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
© David Shrigley



TEXT SHOULD NOT DESCRIBE THE IMAGE

IMAGE SHOULD NOT ILLUSTRATE THE TEXT

WE KNOW THAT WE ARE FOOLS



(above)
David Shrigley
Untitled (We know that we are fools) 2014
Ink on paper
42 x 29.7cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
© David Shrigley

(right)
David Shrigley
Beginning, middle and end 2009
unfired clay
500.0 x 500.0 cm (variable) (installation)
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



Shrigley's work is, of course, marked by a darkly humorous comedic register. Replete with unexpected juxtapositions, sight gags and wordplay, Shrigley's theatre of the absurd variously adopts modes of situational and observational comedy, slapstick and black humour and an existential grappling with melancholy and doubt.⁷ In the drawing *God chose me to make decisions on his behalf*, 2006, the idea that 'we are masters of our own destiny' is met by transgressive, taunting laughter. God and Death are, indeed, key protagonists in Shrigley's anecdotal drawings. Michael Bracewell has suggested that the artist's humanism and humour 'is derived from religious allegory and the deep absurdities which accompany notions of moral edification or social conditioning'.⁸ Eroticism, embarrassment, grief and shame are also recurrent motifs. Pleasurable yet pessimistic, delightful yet despairing, Shrigley's drawings depict a litany of abuses which, more often than not, are inflicted upon the body – falling, drowning, sex, perversion and violence. In the best traditions of tragicomedy, it is hard to know whether to laugh or cry.

Notwithstanding the strong vein of humour which runs through modern and contemporary art – from the wordplay of Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia; the black humour of André Breton and the Surrealists; the absurdity of Antonin Artaud and Samuel Beckett; the uncanny, transgressive laughter of feminism; the incisive wit of Barbara Kruger and Richard Prince; to the regressive humour of Mike Kelley and Martin Kippenberger, to cite but a few historical precursors – humour and jokes continue to sit awkwardly within the art establishment.⁹

If Shrigley's work underlines the hypocrisy and futility of moral sense in a world racked by disasters and war, his critique also extends to the self-importance of the art world itself. Shrigley's adoption of the idioms of cartoons and caricature serves both as cultural critique and anti-art gesture, opening art up to wider frames of reference.

Reflecting on art and life with lightness and gravity, Shrigley's theatre of the absurd allows for cathartic venting, mirth and sharing the burden. If his work articulates our darkest fears and desires, its sincerity and scepticism is delivered with a comedic edge and a generosity of spirit. In the variously touching and painful narrative observations Shrigley presents before us we recognise idealism and doubt, conflict and paradox in the awkward ways we fashion our existence.

1 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Gallimard, Paris 1943, first English translation 1956, trans. Hazel Berg, Philosophical Library, New York.
2 Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, John Calder, London, 1984.
3 Lisa Le Feuvre, 'Introduction: strive to fail', in Lisa Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, and MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2010, p. 12.
4 David Shrigley, 'A long-distance conversation between Dave Eggers and David Shrigley', in Cliff Lausen (ed.), *David Shrigley: Brain Activity*, Hayward Publishing, London, 2012, p. 149.
5 Michael Bracewell, 'Jesus doesn't want me for a sunbeam: David Shrigley's drawings and sculptures', *Frieze*, no. 25, Nov.–Dec. 1995, <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/jesus_doesnt_want_me_for_a_sunbeam/>, accessed 26 Aug. 2014.
6 See 'A long-distance conversation between Dave Eggers and David Shrigley', pp. 150–1.
7 For a detailed, perceptive analysis of the comedic registers in Shrigley's work, see Cliff Lausen, 'David Shrigley: larger than life (and sometimes death)', in Lausen, pp. 25–32.
8 Bracewell, 'Jesus doesn't want me for a sunbeam: David Shrigley's drawings and sculptures'.
9 For a detailed consideration of the role of humour in art of the twentieth century, see Jennifer Higgin (ed.), *The Artist's Joke*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007.



DAVID SHRIGLEY

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Macclesfield, England in 1968, David Shrigley studied at the Glasgow School of Art, graduating in 1991. From 2005-2009 his drawings appeared weekly in *The Guardian's* weekend magazine. He has published over 40 artist books to date, including *What the Hell Are You Doing?: The Essential David Shrigley* (2010), *How Are You Feeling?* (2012) and *Weak Messages Create Bad Situations: A Manifesto* to be launched by Canongate Books in November this year.

Shrigley was recently awarded the Fourth Plinth commission for his proposal *Really Good*; a 10 metre tall bronze hand clenched into an elongated 'thumbs up', that will be unveiled in Trafalgar Square, London, in 2016. In 2013 he was a finalist in the prestigious Turner Prize; and was the subject of a major career retrospective *David Shrigley: Brain Activity* at London's Hayward Gallery in 2012. Shrigley has created animated music videos for the likes of Blur and Bonnie Prince Billy, created album cover art for Deerhoof and in 2010 collaborated on an opera called *Pass The Spoon*. In 2007 artists including David Byrne, TV On The Radio, Hot Chip, Liars, Grizzly Bear and Franz Ferdinand interpreted his writings as lyrics on the album *Worried Noodles*.

Shrigley's work is held in major public collections including the Tate Gallery, London, and MoMA, New York, and he has held major international solo exhibitions at institutions including: Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow; Hammer Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Camden Arts Centre, London; Kunsthaus Zurich; Malmo Konsthall; M Museum, Leuven; Museum Ludwig; and Pinakotek, Munich.

David Shrigley lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland.

DAVID SHRIGLEY GENERAL STORE

2014

David Shrigley's *General Store* 2014 is a new commission conceived especially for the Waterwall foyer space at NGV International, and one of a number of new works produced for the exhibition.

The installation takes the form of an artist-designed shop full of Shrigley's inimitable artist's books, multiples and limited-editions, in keeping with the informal, playful and democratic impulse of his work.

It includes new sculptural and video works as well as rare items from the artist's archive including over 80 T-shirts, CDs and mugs, among other paraphernalia.

David Shrigley in collaboration with the NGV and Third Drawer Down has produced a new range of merchandise exclusively for the *General Store* including hanging signs, soft toys, postcards, stubby-holders, pool floaters, Frisbees, mugs, playing cards, iron on patches, bracelets, tote-bags, T-shirts and a pillowcase set, all imbued with the artist's signature dark humour.

Shrigley's *General Store* will feature two new publications: *David Shrigley: The Life Model* and *Weak Messages Create Bad Situations: A Manifesto*.

David Shrigley has published more than forty books to date, including *What the Hell Are You Doing?: The Essential David Shrigley* (2010) and *How Are You Feeling?* (2012) and a back catalogue of his publications will also be available.

MERCHANDISE



Tea Towel
Exclusive to the NGV
RRP \$40.00



Soft Toy
Exclusive to the NGV
RRP \$26.95



Mug
Exclusive to the NGV
RRP \$22.95



Cap
Exclusive to the NGV
RRP \$39.95

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Artist Talk

Sat 15 Nov, 2.30pm

Join Glasgow-based artist David Shrigley as he gives an overview of his work, which reflects on everyday life and objects, and its sense of humour – from one-liners to tragicomic narratives. Followed by a book signing at Shrigley's work *General store*, 2014, installed at the NGV Waterwall.

Cost \$15 Adults / \$10 Members / \$8 Concession

Venue Clemenger BBDO Auditorium, Ground Level, NGV International

Information & bookings Ph +61 3 8662 1555
10am-5pm daily

Sharing a burden

Saturdays from 10 Jan, 2pm

Comedians and artists offload their burdens in this series of talks navigating the rocky terrain of human dysfunction, anxiety and existentialist crises.

Visit ngv.vic.gov.au for details.

Cost Free

Meet Exhibition space



David Shrigley

Untitled 2014
synthetic polymer paint on paper
153.0 x 111.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
© David Shrigley

PUBLICATIONS



David Shrigley: The Life Model

Max Delany and Serena Bentley with various contributors

Publisher: National Gallery of Victoria

260mm x 190mm, portrait, paperback

104 pages

Fully illustrated in colour

ISBN: 9780724103966

Published: November 2014

RRP: \$29.95

David Shrigley is internationally-acclaimed for his stripped back, darkly humorous and deliberately crude work that explores existential dramas, human dysfunction and anxiety. His works are simultaneously humorous, unsettling and irreverent: a combination that is always just right. *The Life Model* is a comprehensive look at Shrigley's Turner Prize-winning work, *Life Model*, 2012.

Art and literary luminaries such as Will Self, Jess Johnson, Chris Kraus, Justin Paton, Justin Clemens, Anastasia Klose, Laure Prouvost, Kieran Cox and Lisa Radford, along with NGV co-curators Max Delany and Serena Bentley, contribute texts that touch on the diverse, poignant and bold subjects presented in Shrigley's unsettlingly funny and accessible *Life Model* work.

The Life Model also includes extensive illustrations and imagery of the *Life Model*, 2012, and the countless drawings it has inspired.



Weak Messages Create Bad Situations: A Manifesto

David Shrigley

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

Imprint: Canongate

hardcover

384 pages

Fully illustrated in colour

ISBN: 9781782114031

Published: November 2014

RRP: \$59.99

Published to coincide with the National Gallery of Victoria's exhibition of Shrigley's new and recent work, *Weak Messages Create Bad Situations: A Manifesto* is David Shrigley's biggest book yet with over 400 new works.

In his own words:

Lots of individuals in society today are feeble-minded. They don't know what the HELL is going on. Unfortunately many of these people are responsible for running THE COUNTRY. They don't know the difference between a PRECIOUS JEWEL and piece of animal turd. Their ideas are MEANINGLESS, illustrated using RUBBISH imagery (often made by a computer). The stupid words they write are always in BAD FONTS. Yet still people HEED this nonsense. Maybe YOU are one of these people?

It's alright. I am here to HELP you. I have a FULLY-COMPOSED WORLD VIEW. I have STRONG opinions about EVERYTHING. And my ideas are HAND-ILLUSTRATED and use REAL HANDWRITING that you can trust. I know exactly what's going on and am WILLING to share my thoughts with you. If you LISTEN to what I say then things will quickly improve. No more weak messages. No more bad situations. Shall we proceed?



David Shrigley

Untitled 2014

synthetic polymer paint on paper
153.0 x 111.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

© David Shrigley

