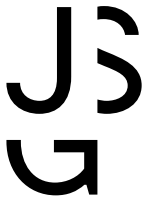


David Shrigley (born 1968, lives and works in Brighton), a prominent figure in the contemporary British art scene, presents his first solo exhibition in the Czech Republic at the Jiri Svestka Gallery. Shrigley is best known for his drawings that combine dark sarcasm and anxiety from contemporary society with modest sincerity and absurd humor. The Jiri Svestka Gallery exhibition will present a collection of 60 drawings that have not yet been exhibited and are loosely inspired by literary images by Franz Kafka.

In his drawings, he is able to engage caustic commentaries on contemporary society and the system as well as introspective and self-reflective thoughts. Image and text always work together within Shrigley's art, and although he refuses to speak of himself as an illustrator, he does not mind the label "cartoonist". The verbal message is in balance with the pictorial and the works should ideally describe and explain themselves. "Because I make work that is image and text, it doesn't really need any explanation" says Shrigley about his own work. The result is decisive, sweeping and deliberately awkward strokes.

Shrigley's obsession with football is a frequent and welcome escape from art, but sport is also reflected in his work. Created by team mascot FC Partick Thistle of Glasgow. The figure, based on the corporate logo of the sun, according to Shrigley captures his own feelings of a devoted fan of a permanently unsuccessful team. The design provoked similar controversies to his sculpture of a giant erect thumb, called "Really Good", which was temporarily installed on the "Fourth Plinth" at London's Trafalgar square. He is also the author of the "LONDON FOR EVERYONE" motif, which was commissioned by the Mayor of London to be posted after the Brexit at the City Hall instead of the European Union flag. In 2013 he was nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize.

In David Shrigley's art, morbid humor, a sense of absurdity and a concise acronym serve as a weapon against persistent anxiety. Suppressed injustices, which gradually float to the surface in far more monstrous forms, is something that bounds Shrigley's work together with Franz Kafka's literary images and drawings. The theme of mental illnesses and sudden attacks of insanity refers to the originally intended idea of conceiving the exhibition as a dialogue with the preserved drawings of Franz Kafka. Here, as in his texts, human figures are faced with various technical devices and systemic pitfalls that make life difficult for actors and create a sense of alienation and detachment from the world around them. "Kafka-esque" mood, however, is latently present in Shrigley's work in general, and the final appearance of the exhibition thus opens up broader motives for the loss of control of our situation and the possibility to influence the sequence of events in which we are thrown around.



Curator: Lumír Nykl

Jiri Svestka Gallery

Janackovo nabrezi 5, 150 00 Prague 5

12 February – 10 April 2020

Shrigley grew up in Britain in the 1980s, when social insecurities and disillusionment were reflected in the cool sound and gloomy lyrics of post-punk bands, most aptly described in their books by cultural theorists like Mark Fisher and Simon Reynolds. Shrigley quite often refers to bands from his teenage years, such as Bauhaus or The Fall. The body and brain of The Fall, a peculiar narrator and lyricist Mark E. Smith, had a major impact on Shrigley, and his poetics are crucial to Shrigley's work. In his texts, Smith linked English folk tradition with dystopian urban poetics from the time when Britain was undergoing major social changes as a result of economic reforms. Driven by traditional folk literature and pub culture, the then urban landscape of abandoned docks with mythical creatures and figures from the underworld occupied Smith's imagination. Today Shrigley's images also often function as bestiaries, in which human characters take on animal forms and assume inhuman qualities (and vice versa).

The scenes in the pictures evoke similar impressions to nihilistic memes and black "millennial" humor. Humorous notes and gloomy messages evoke a similar sense of identity as memes shared on social networks, but the graphics refers more to cartoon jokes from times when social awareness and political debate were dominated by printed newspapers. For example, the often used motive of "dirt" may simply represent pollution, symbolize fake news, or also refer to the proverbial "millionaire crumbs", transformed into negative economic externalities, within the economic theory of "trickle-down" economy. Despite Shrigley's success in the art market, the competition in his work is generally caricature. He is restrained in personal political expressions (with the exception of Brexit-type exceptions) and as a concise commentary on the explicit politicization of his work, he could use his claim that he "is not trying to express anything".

The accompanying program will include two events, one focusing on the social and economic background of football, the other one on the aesthetics and politics of the British post-punk of the 1980s. Dates will be announced soon.