



# The Villager

\$1.00

Volume 77, Number 46

West and East Village, Chelsea, Soho, Nobo, Little Italy, Chinatown and Lower East Side, Since 1933

April 16 - 22, 2008

20 April 16 - 22, 2008

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## Not a lot of shows like this

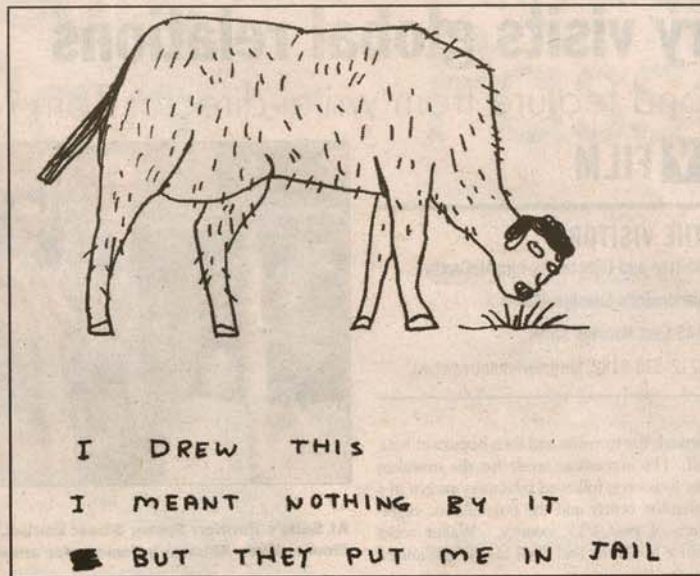
### Dave Eggers curates a droll exhibit of drawings

BY JAIME JORDAN

The recent opening of "Lots of Things Like This," an exhibition curated by Dave Eggers, much-loved author and founder of McSweeney's literary journal, was mobbed with Fort Greene-esque hipsters in electric blue Keds and skinny jeans, nary a soul over 35. They lined up around the block, and waited many, many minutes to see the art—or maybe to rub shoulders with Eggers. Kerri Schlottman, apexart's Director of Operations, said, "We generally have good attendance for openings, but this show was spectacular. We opened at 6pm, and hit our gallery capacity at about 6:05." At one point, Eggers popped his head out of the studio, and appeared surprised by the turnout, even saying, "I'm sorry about this." Regardless, the show is fantastic, amusing, perverse, recommended, and free.

Months earlier, Eggers was approached about putting together a show for the gallery. Perhaps influenced by his experiences writing a comic strip called "Smarter Feller" for SF Weekly, he thought of "this particular kind of art, which combines image, text and humor." Eggers has some additional related experience; he ran a gallery when he was a student at University of Illinois, and was even on track to become a curator.

Once the criteria for the show were established, Eggers enlisted the help of co-curator Jesse Nathan, a former McSweeney's intern. When selecting pieces, Nathan and



Courtesy of the artist

David Shrigley, Untitled drawing from "Ants Have Sex in Your Beer" (2007)

Eggers looked to cartoonists, but also found works that fit the established formula by artists considered more traditional, such as Goya. Actually locating originals for the show proved more difficult. Schlottman explains, "Since the show involves a great

diversity in the types of artists, not all of the works were readily available through galleries or typical requisitioning. Some of them, such as those by George Schneeman and Ron Padgett, were storage boxes that the artists spent hours wading through to find the particular works that Dave Eggers wanted to include. Others, like the works by David Berman, arrived as a stack of papers, ranging from sketchbook pages to lined notebook paper. So the show really blows open the boundaries of what is typically thought of as art work."

Eggers writes that the exhibit includes "about 100 works that subscribe (unknowingly) to the following criteria: a) they're drawings, usually very basic or crude; b) these drawings are accompanied by hand-drawn text on the artwork, and this text refers to the drawing, much like a caption; c) this caption-text is funny. Kurt Vonnegut's Trout's Tomb shows the words "Life is no way to treat an animal" written on a tombstone. In an untitled drawing by David Mamet, a medicine bottle is labeled with the caption "Not tested on Animals" and on the bottom of the bottle, another smaller label reads, "Tested on Orphans."

While Eggers refuses to categorize this

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kind of art, he does draw a parallel to cartoons. The majority of pieces are by men (35 out of the 38 contributors), including Raymond Pettibon, Marcel Duchamp, and Shel Silverstein. Every element of the show was carefully selected; even the music. For the show's duration, "Worried Noodles," a compilation of songs with lyrics by David Shrigley, plays almost without interruption.

Eggers refused an interview, insisting that he would like the show to speak for itself. The exhibition brochure suggests some (often quite funny) questions that "might occur to you and might help the show blow your mind completely." For example, "What is the line between a doodle, a cartoon, a gag, a work of fine art, and will there ever be a time when someone doesn't insist on writing a similar kind of silly and rhetorical sentence in an art catalog" and "Why is it that so many of these artists aren't so great at spelling? And why is it that when they screw up one of their words, instead of starting over they just cross the word out and write it again? Many people would choose to start over." As a sort of addendum, Eggers and Nathan are working on a 72-page book that will be incorporated into the next McSweeney's, and represent some of the works that weren't included.

Ultimately, Eggers and Nathan wanted to create a pleasurable exhibition. They explain that their motivation of the show was to put together an enjoyable exhibit and "to cover the walls with strange and funny things." According to gallery staff, visitors have been "chuckling around the gallery." By utilizing the guiding construct of a specific formula as opposed to a visual art movement (such as Dada or Pop Art), the curators succeeded in assembling a rich variety of artists and pieces that are witty, bold, and certainly satisfying.



Courtesy apexart

The gallery displays about 100 drawings that include hand-drawn text by Kurt Vonnegut, Marcel Duchamp, and Shel Silverstein, among others.