



The Bird King and Other Sketches

Shaun Tan

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The bird king, the anthropologists, the thing in the bathroom, the paraffin-oil koala, the secret birthday party. What do they all have in common? Nothing! Except for the fact that they all come from the sketchbooks of Shaun Tan, acclaimed creator of *The Lost Thing*, *the Arrival* and *Tales from Outer Suburbia*.

Also selected by the artist are preliminary drawings for book, film and theatre projects, portrait and landscape studies, along with pages from travelling notebooks. All off a special insight into the daydreams of a celebrated author and illustrator.

The Bird King and Other Sketches Details

Date : Published 2010 by Windy Hollow Books

ISBN :

Author : Shaun Tan

Format : Hardcover 130 pages

Genre : Art, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Nonfiction, Childrens, Picture Books



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From Reader Review The Bird King and Other Sketches for online ebook

Miriam says

Great stuff. Visually, I liked this as much or more than his finished books. Actually, I tended to prefer the pages that were just sketching to the ones that were work towards a particularly project (which is kind of what the author gives as his opinion also).

"The Bird King" is also the name of Tan's blog: <http://www.shauntan.net/projects1.html>

Eli says

I could have spent more time on this but I haven't read any Shaun Tan in a few months. His artwork is amazing in my opinion and this book really shows that. It's full of titled sketches he didn't intend to publish, separated into a few sections with introductory paragraphs.

I would highly recommend his material to fans of graphic art and children's literature. It's not necessarily for children only. He just usually focuses on the artwork instead of the dialogue and the sentences (if that book has any) are usually brief. My only suggestion is starting with another book (like the Arrival or the Lost Thing) and working up to these unrelated sketches after deciding how much you like Tan.

Parka says

(More pictures at parkablogs.com)

Shaun Tan is one of the most imaginative artists and storytellers around. I love his stories, simple yet always fascinating.

This sketchbook is a little 128-page hardcover. The spine area is clothed and it comes with a wraparound red rubber band and a ribbon bookmark.

The sketches collected are those he created for his other books, like The Arrival, Tales From Outer Suburbia, Lost and Found, and perhaps some other stories I've yet to discover.

There are also many new sketches including some of his drawings from life which look strangely abstract to me.

Many weird and appealing characters live on these pages, all seemingly alive. It's difficult not to be marveled at his sketches. On one page, there's a giant bird treading through an ocean with sharks and octopus, while carrying a cardboard box with a little girl sleeping in it. On another, there's concepts for Aquasapiens,

automobiles crossed with aquatic life that roam the seabed.

His works are best to be seen than described. Highly recommended for sketchbook lovers, those who like doodles and fans of Shaun Tan.

Courtney says

Last night, my brain refused to calm down. I was still trying to make some "sense" of the death of a friend and amazing artist who had passed that morning. I needed something beautiful to soothe my mind. Fortunately, I had *The Bird King* waiting for me in my stack of library books. It was the perfect book at the perfect time - beautiful, captivating, provocative, unselfconscious, honest, and cool - some of the many awesome qualities my departed friend embodied. It was both comforting and inspiring, which was exactly what I needed.

I loved reading about Tan's creative process. His art continues to astonish and delight, but it was also great to see the wide range of works and their respective styles. Shaun Tan is rapidly becoming one of my all-time favorite artists. :D

Rebecca says

Talk about a book to make you want to sketch more.

"The artist Paul Klee refers to this simple act as 'taking a line for a walk,' an apt description of my own basic principles: allowing the tip of a pencil to wander through the landscape of a sketchbook, motivated by a vague impulse but hoping to find something much more interesting along the way. Strokes, hooks, squiggles, and loops can resolve into hills, faces, animals, machines -- even abstracted feelings -- the meanings of which are secondary to the simple act of *making* (something young children know intuitively). Images are not preconceived and then drawn, they are conceived *as* they are drawn. Indeed, drawing is its own form of thinking, in the same way birdsong is 'thought about' within a bird's throat."

"I was also interested in a spontaneity that can sometimes be missing from more finished paintings, which can suffer from excessive revision, polishing, and commercial compromise, leading to a familiar lament: 'Why isn't the finished work as good as the sketch?'"

Josh says

A sketchbook of Shaun Tan's art, which is fun to look through. Much of it is unfinished ideas, spontaneous sketches, and landscapes. I am always fascinated by those who can sketch with such skill; sketches in their raw form have a certain roughness that appeals to me. Maybe it's because I get a glimpse of the creative mind that I admire so much.

Tan's Drawings often remind me of the art in the game " Machinarium," which I also loved. Anyhow, if you enjoy these things as much as me, you're in for a treat with this one.

Eh?Eh! says

Found while browsing. Tan's haunting *The Arrival* made me a fan (of Tan, har har). These are unfinished sketches and brainstorming doodles that are still bounds better than what I might draw. Most are cute, a few are beautiful. I liked seeing some of his thought processes, the notes that accompanied some of these drawings - the way art, Ahhhhrt, gets described sometimes, the kind of lofty symbolism and almost pop psychology-speak, makes me impatient. But his slight notes made sense to me. Hah, my favorite note was a placeholder written over a yellow-green patch, 'grassy type stuff.'

Francesca says

Disappointing, but mostly just because these were drawings, each unrelated to the next one, not following an actual plot. It doesn't compare to *The Arrival*.

Barbara says

Having a glimpse into the mind and creative process of someone so unique as Shaun Tan is to marvel at the way he blends reality and fantasy. This artist's notebook contains brief introductory comments to the different sections--Untold Stories; Book, Theater, and Film; Drawings from Life; Notebooks; Endpapers--from the artist himself. Fans of Tan's work will be delighted to recognize some of the artwork contained here from their reading of *The Arrival*, *Tales from Outer Suburbia*, and *Lost & Found*. This is one to savor and from which to gain insight into one man's artwork.

Clay says

This one really spoke to Clay the artist. In the drawers, flat files and cabinets of my studio, I have hundreds of tissues, drawings in notebooks, unpainted pen and ink drawings, unfinished book illustrations. This is Shaun Tan's collection with brief explanatory textual introductions--maybe more for adults artists--but the drawings will certainly speak to and draw in any artists of any age, doodlers, art teachers, fans of Tan--everybody really. A delightful and true glimpse of the creative process and the many ways to take a line for a walk, Paul Klee's definition of drawing.

Elizabeth A says

Everything about this little book makes me happy. I love the author's art, and work, and was delighted to get my hands on this collection of art from unfinished projects, finished work, and sketchbooks. I really enjoyed getting a glimpse into the mind and creative process of this artist/author, and flipping through this book is like exploring a delightfully curated art installation.

David Schaafsma says

Shaun Tan may be best known for his wordless fantasy masterpiece about the wonders and horrors of immigration, *The Arrival*, but he is also generally known for the invention of all these bizarre creatures—his own “Fantastical Creatures and Where to Find Them,” let’s say. The bird king. The heart bell. A mechanical penguin. Where did they come from?

This book is first and foremost an artist’s sketchbook, but it’s one with a purpose, to show you early versions of his creations, and the process of getting there. It’s also a portrait of an artist and how he came about to be one. This would be a 3 star book for the sketches alone, a sampling of twelve years of work, but Tan earns another star for his elegant commentary throughout. If you are teaching *The Arrival* or another of Tan’s book, this seems like a must for a companion text, and a source for getting students to also create as they responsively read.

Wondering how you get started, facing the blank page? I especially loved his anecdote about Paul Klee’s idea of “taking a line for a walk.” Strokes and squiggles develop into faces, animals, hills.

I steal this from Miriam’s review; thanks, Miriam:

“The Bird King” is also the name of Tan’s blog: <http://www.shauntan.net/projects1.html>

Tasha says

This book opens the curtain to Tan’s creative process, allowing readers to view art from stories that have not yet been full formed, art from books that have been completed, and beautiful illustrations that may not be stories at all. The courage this book took to produce is to be applauded. Allowing readers and other artists to see a process of creativity is raw and soul baring.

This book is stellar. One turns the pages slowly, lingering in worlds undreamed of, wondering at ideas, and pausing to allow a particular image to sink in more deeply. It is a journey, specially designed for a young creative to see that mistakes can be joyous, that creation is messy, and that works in progress are breathtaking.

This is a book to get in the hands of teens who enjoy art and writing, for it is a look at the unformed and the just formed. It is a book of pure creativity and the creative process. Beautiful. Haunting. Inspiring. Appropriate for ages 10-18.

Ben says

A lovely little sketchbook that’s beautifully bound and well presented. It’s divided into sections and each has a nice introduction to lead you in and there’s a full list of media used on each piece at the back. There’s a

good variety in pieces and process, and the primary focus of his work seems to be a fusion of nature, machinery, and dream logic. There's a great amount of imagination on display here and the pencil sketches were a particular highlight for me. I feel a little harsh only giving it three stars, but whilst I enjoyed my time with it, it didn't engage me enough to want to hang on to it.

Lydia says

Aw.

This was lovely.

This was just what I needed to 'read'. While it has no actual plot, this carefully-chosen selection of drawings is very evocative of Shaun Tan's style. I loved the sections where he talked about inspiration, why he'd chosen this selection of pieces and how he worked through certain processes as an artist. It's comforting although unfortunate that Tan too, suffers from artist's block as all artists do.

I loved his feathery art style of his pencils and the passionate colour of his pastels. I love the melancholy, surrealist mood of his artwork and fell in love with his spidery handwriting. I know Tan is technically a 'junior' book but the fact that it's relegated to the children's section of my library makes me think so many people must've missed it.

I really enjoyed this. I'll always read Shaun Tan.
