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Something else.. By Rupert Shrive

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Paris – When walking through Rupert Shrive's show *Something Else*, expect several moods. The first room offers euphoria via his brightly colored Configurations – large framed collages of slashed beauties with doe-like eyes and cherry lipped mouths. However, the second room suggests the agony and the ecstasy via his *Congregation (After St. Theresa)* installation - sculptured heads inspired by Bernini's 17th century masterpiece: *The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa*. Scattered over the large room's walls, their facial expressions conjure up an arresting range: erotic, melancholic and anguished.

Something Else represents Shrive's second solo exhibition at [Galerie Orel Art](#). The British artist's work is divided between Configurations – collages of his recycled paintings – and Sculptures – crushed paintings. [Michael Peppiatt](#), the noted critic and [Francis Bacon](#)'s biographer, describes Shrive's Configurations as: "very tender, sensitive things, as if you are peeling back the skin of appearance to show the strangeness of a human face and the head beneath" and his Sculptures as "frozen and full of fragility."



Shrive's body of work is complex and thought provoking. It reflects the 45-year-old's theories such as the "alchemy of turning painting into Sculpture." His dialogue with Cubism which he describes as "the last potent 'formal' art movement.. recycling after times of excess" and how "an art object returns energy that has been invested in it." Throughout *Something Else*, there are strong elements of death, rebirth and metamorphosis, furthering Pablo Picasso's idea that "every act of creation is first an act of destruction."

It is hard not to be won over by the willowy and 19th century looking Shrive. Not only is he focused – "as an artist, you have to decide, 'these are my concerns' and then stick to them" he says. He is responsible – "if you are going to hang something up and claim it's art, you should at least show something that others can't do" he argues. He also defines diligent, insisting "a lot of work comes from perspiration not inspiration."

Before moving to Paris in 2005, **Shrive** was a classical portrait painter. "It was a way of surviving," he states. Nevertheless, he was always trying out different exercises to explore his creativity such as painting with his "left hand", ever determined to "take portraiture to another place, another level – to find an extra lease for it." Still, his professional watershed occurred after furiously ripping up several figurative drawings. "By pushing around the strips of paper, I realized that all sorts of things were happening." When allowed to morph into strange creatures, "they made their own sense", he says. The body of work was exhibited as *Visual Anagrams*. It was then followed by **Shrive's** acclaimed *Screwed Up Heads* series.

Termining the method as "a more violent and dynamic way of recreating". It consisted of **Shrive** "screwing up" his paintings then "crushing them." "It felt like virgin territory," he says comparing the experience to submerging his foot in unfamiliar liquid. But the highly original and powerfully striking paintings made Shrive's international reputation, quickly leading to exhibitions at top galleries like Milan's **Glauco Cavaciuti**, London's *Scream* and Hong Kong's *Cat Street*.

Proving that little is wasted when innovative, **Shrive** made his present *Composition* collage series out of his failed *Screwed Up Heads* work. Initially, he had plans to bin the old pile of paintings until seeing **Robert Rauschenberg's** *Glut* series. Thanks to the American artist, **Shrive** viewed his failures quite differently. "I started playing around and reassembling them," he recalls. It became "a lot of fun", reminding him of his student days at St Martin's School of Art in the 1980s and how collages equal "a door of surprises."



Rupert Shrive in front of installation, Galerie Orel Art Paris

Something Else succeeds by feeling energetic and journey-like. Although there is contrast between **Shrive's** Configurations and his Sculptures which he describes as "*explosions of nightmare visions*" and "*Hitchcock-like*," it is more subtle than extreme. Well-edited, every piece in **Something Else** has purpose and resonates, giving a sense that much time and care has been taken to choose it. Finally, the exhibition appears refreshingly human and handmade. But then that is Shrive's intention. "My work is very strongly about human hands", he says. "*Nothing is machine made or reproduced.*"

Rupert Shrive – Something Else

Galerie Orel Art

40 rue Quincampoix 75004 Paris.

Mar/Sam 11hr – 19hr

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