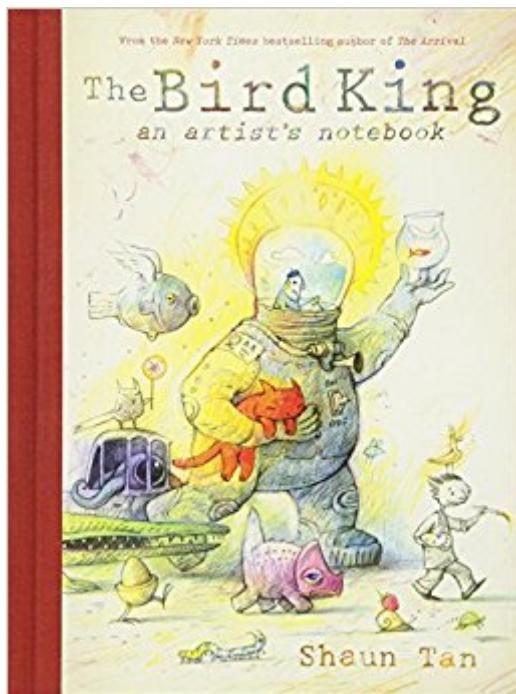


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The Bird King: An Artist's Notebook



Synopsis

"I'm often wary of using the word 'inspiration' to introduce my work -- it sounds too much like a sun shower from the heavens, absorbed by a passive individual enjoying an especially receptive moment. While that may be the case on rare occasions, the reality is usually far more prosaic. Staring at a blank piece of paper, I can't think of anything original. I feel utterly uninspired and unreceptive. It's the familiar malaise of 'artist's block' and in such circumstances there is only one thing to do: just start drawing." -- Shaun Tan And when Shaun Tan starts drawing, the results are stunning. In *The Bird King: An Artist's Notebook*, we find a window into the creative process: the stops and starts, the ideas that never took off, and the ones that grew into something much bigger. Fans of *The Arrival* will recognize the quirky, surreal sensibility that is so distinctly Shaun Tan in this stunning collection, and gain insight into how his many gorgeous books were made.

Book Information

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Arthur A. Levine Books (February 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0545465133

ISBN-13: 978-0545465137

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 0.6 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 40 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #390,138 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Teens > Art, Music & Photography > Art > Painting #27 in Books > Teens > Art, Music & Photography > Art > Drawing #86 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Art > Painting

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 3 Up-A collection of sketches, drafts, and scanned ephemera from the artist who created *The Arrival* (2007) and *Tales from Outer Suburbia* (2009, both Scholastic). The initial section, "untold stories," is a series of visuals and captions, sometimes inspired by the accompanying turn of phrase and sometimes only illuminated by it, like a particularly enigmatic New Yorker cartoon. The "book, theatre, and film" section contains images familiar to readers of Tan's other works, while the "drawings from life" and closing "notebooks" sections are excellent examples of the skill and

practice required of an inventive illustrator. Not only can one see the breadth of Tan's technical ability here, but the reproduction of the originals is also top-notch; the marginalia of its origins intact with creases, scuffs, erasures, and signs of assembly all photographically preserved. These show the work and the physical reality of getting to an end product, as well as revealing, by implication, the gradual process of creative invention. While not so much a graphic novel or an illustrated book, this is an excellent archive of what might be found if one peeks into the recesses of an artist's portfolio. For those interested in illustration as a career, it could be a superb, if daunting, inspiration.-Benjamin Russell, Belmont High School, NH (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Starred Review Tan, the mastermind behind the incomparable *The Arrival* (2007) and *Lost and Found* (2011), opens up his sketchbooks and offers up an array of drawings, doodles, and visual experiments. Separated into works for books, theater, and film; life drawings; notebooks; and tantalizing glimpses of untold stories; the entries all share Tan's unique trademarks. Unmistakable are his flawless craftsmanship, his organically industrial yet timeless aesthetic, and his lyrically haunting style and tone. Given their own page and focus, many details that might have attracted merely a glance in larger works are turned here from a flourish into a full-fledged character or visual idea. Simultaneously, mechanics of his world-building skill come clear, like a penchant for embellishing illustrations to make them appear a part of a larger blueprint or schematic, giving the sense of a small image within a vast tapestry that is itself an infinitely branching world of imagination. The author's stated hope is that, in their evolutionary examination of images and narratives, the sketchbook pages offer a privileged insight into the creative process. So it does, making it an invaluable resource for burgeoning visual storytellers. But even for those interested in little more than pondering and daydreaming, this is a powerful springboard for the imagination. Grades 7-12. --Jesse Karp

It's great to be able to catch a glimpse of an artist's creative process and this collection of ditties from Mr Tan's own sketch books and musings offers such an opportunity. Physically it is a lovely and compact book chock full of full bleed color illustrations that should help inspire your own creative endeavors. Buy it if you're an artist who journals or simply someone who appreciates an inside look into an artist's mind. If you're already a fan of Mr. Tan's work then you will particularly love this piece. This would make a great gift to a budding creative as well. Finally, if you like Danny Gregory's inspirational sketch journals you'll love this offering too. I should know, I'm an artist who

does her own sketch a day! I'm a regular creative journaler myself (look up "400 Mornings" to see a book of 400+ of my own musings). I LOVE this kind of thing!

I love Shaun Tan's work. I'm an adult and now own 4 of his books: The Arrival, Lost & Found, tales from outer suburbia and The Bird King. Shaun Tan's artwork is so dreamy and creative. His books are printed on high quality paper, which I appreciate. When I begin to look at one of his books, I know I will be taken on a wonderful journey and he never disappoints. I see in some of the reviews, there are those who purchase the books for children. Some of them are too complex for a small child, so I'm thinking perhaps he's not necessarily drawing for only children? I can't say enough about The Bird King - it's a book with only drawings and sketches and they are incredible.

Shaun Tan is one of my all time favorite artists/authors currently working today. "The Arrival" remains one of the top books I give to new graphic novel readers. This book doesn't share a complete story like Shaun's other works, instead it gives the reader insight into how he creates his works and what some of his inner thoughts are. It gives us a chance to see the stories from their bare beginnings, mere sketches and doodles beginning on the page that grow into something more wonderful as it progresses. This book is a gem and a must have for any fan of Shaun Tan.

Wonderful art from a great artist. I have all of Shaun 's books, they are all worth viewing and enjoying.

This is a book full of concepts, rough-drafts and interesting ideas. There are "sneak-peeks" that can be recognized in Shaun Tan's other published works and definitely in his most recent publication. :) This item is a must have for all fans and especially aspiring artists interested in the work-in-progresses of this amazing artist.

Never disappointing, you'll love the book whether you are an anime fan or an art fan, or a fantasy fan. Beware, however, that the same book with the same title and author but different cover is also on sale elsewhere. I love Shaun Tan, so I gave the other to someone else as a present, but I was left to wish Shaun Tan had made two books.

Curious about what goes into the pages of an artistÃ¢Â™s notebook? I was. I was curious enough to buy this little book with snippets from TanÃ¢Â™s pre-publication scribbles in his

sketchbook. And it was worth the price to see the cleverness and amazing-ness of these rough draft drawings.

Great insight into the artist process. Inspirational.

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