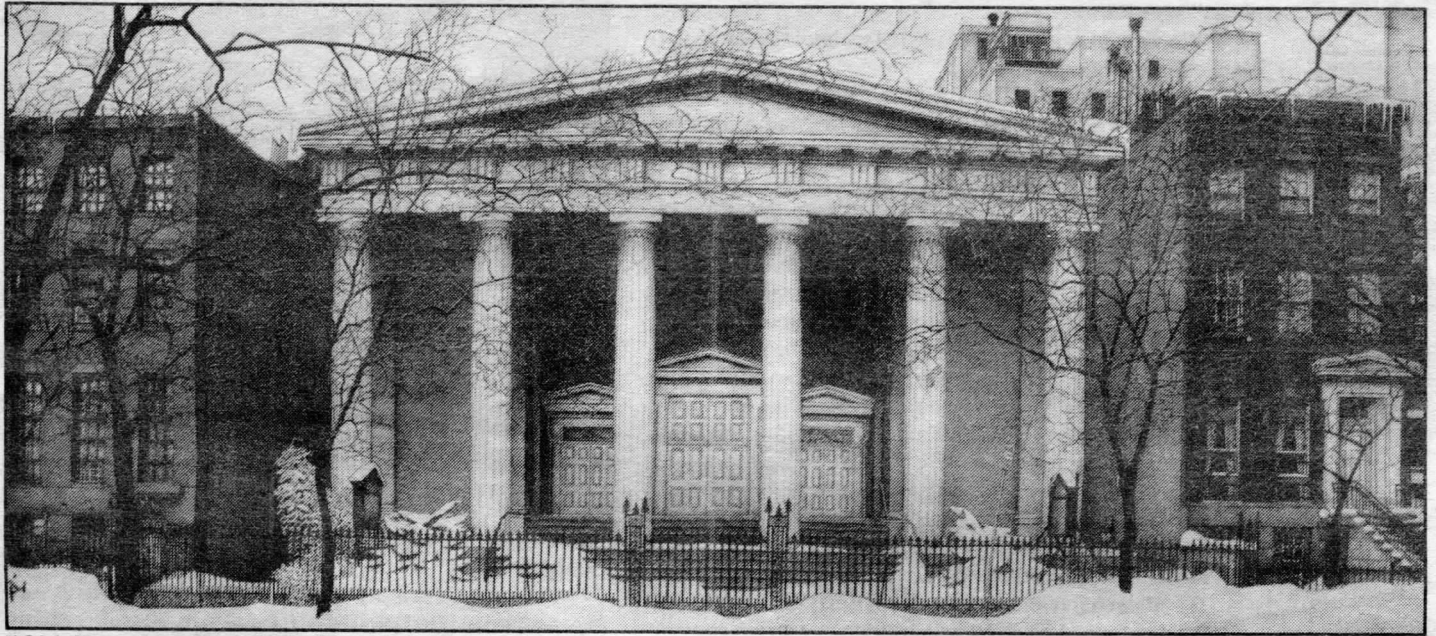


# The Villager Preview

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



"Old Church on West 13th Street," by David Schofield, ink on parchment, 36 x 84 ins.

## *Drawings are true to life but also fiercely original*

BY TRACI KAMPEL

David Schofield is a master of drawing whose first concern is locating a quality banana for breakfast. His second concern is that he'll sound pretentious and arrogant, or in a cleaned-up version of his words, like a certain part of the human anatomy. Such fear dates back to an incident several years ago in which a writer for Interview allegedly took his words out of context and portrayed him in a less than flattering light. Schofield is actually completely unpretentious and easy to talk to, but it's ironic that he would focus on this manipulation of reality, since there's an element of that in his works.

Thirty of his razor sharp drawings of assorted Manhattan sites -- many that lie below 14th St., like a former church on W. 13th St., Jack the Ripper's

Pub, the Mariner's Temple, blocks of Wooster St., the Eldridge St. Synagogue -- have hit the walls of Gallery Henoch, and at first glance you'll find yourself double checking to make sure they're really not

his Key West studio, where he completes the task of identically recreating a scene relying only on his naked eye. The end products are fiercely original, reminiscent of no one and devoid of strong atmosphere but mesmerizing because of their painstaking intricacy.

But then there are what he calls the "secondary" elements -- the graffiti, the litter on the sidewalk -- which pay homage to the artist's friends or whatever may be going on in his personal life, and exist only because he wants them to exist.

"I play with it," he says, pointing to the sign that sits next to one of his religious institutions and would normally provide service schedules. "That's from two sonnets by Edna St. Vincent Millay, which I've used a few times at funeral services." He turns to another drawing, which features an elaborate doorway on 14th St. next to the awning of "Guiles Grocery."

"Guiles is a friend of mine. I gave him his own discount bodega," Schofield says. Another friend, Marty Starr, appears in the form of "starrs" spray-painted onto the sides of buildings. When Schofield planned a trip to Egypt, his fictional graffiti artists chose to paint pyramids and palm trees. Advertisements and storefronts often bear

on them, so I always do one pretty work in case my parents come to see the show. But I'm not really interested in painting pretty landmarks, I like to show the mutilation of physical things. They're a mute testament to all those lives in New York."

For the record, in the Gallery Henoch exhibit, it's the drawing of the former church on W. 13th St. that's meant to satisfy Mom.

His "apopleptic" father believed "marine biology was the career of the future," so Schofield, who was born in Meriden, Conn. but moved all over the Eastern Seaboard with his family before they landed in the Chicago suburbs, went off to the University of Miami to study sealife. That didn't last long, and he spent two years supporting himself by going door to door and offering to draw family pets. He managed to build a network of art world characters who eventually commissioned him to complete bigger projects. At his first-ever show, held on Key West, he met a married couple from New York who owned the now-defunct gallery Iolas Jackson, or Park Ave.

"I was [the wife's] little baby thing. She'd bring her friends by when they were in Key West -- she sort of wanted to show off her 'weird friends' in Florida -- and they'd

The Villager

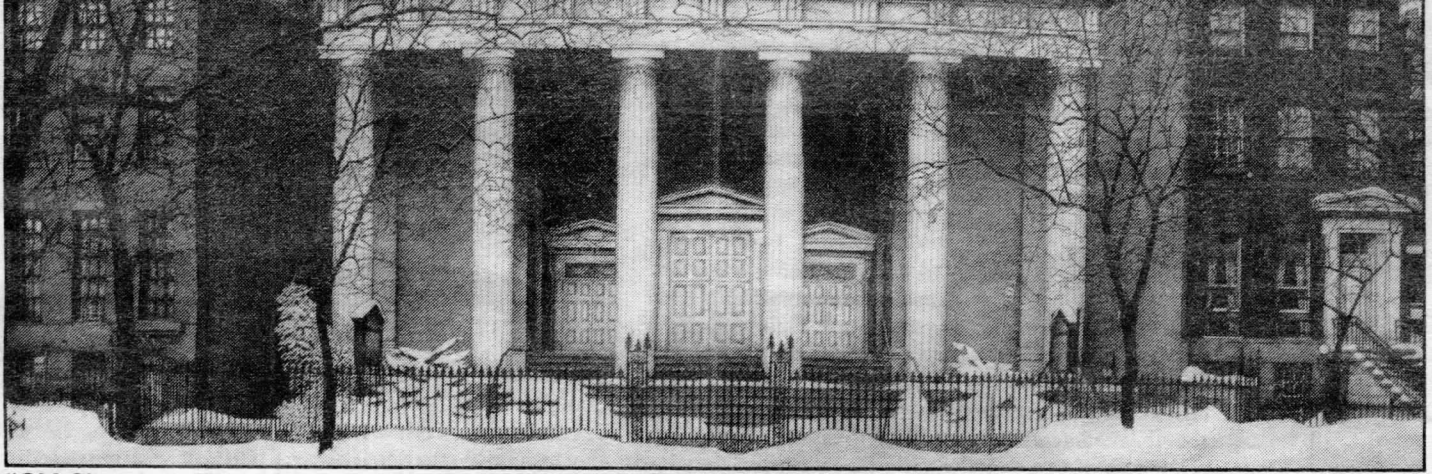
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Thirty of his razor sharp drawings of assorted Manhattan sites -- many that lie below 14th St., like a former church on W. 13th St., Jack the Ripper's Pub, the Mariner's Temple, blocks of Wooster St., the Eldridge St. Synagogue -- have hit the walls of Gallery Henoch, and at first glance you'll find yourself double checking to make sure they're really not photographs. Each is created over a period of several months, one at a time, in black and white, via rapidograph pen with a double O point "finer than a human hair," onto snowflake parchment.

Compare the depicted locale to its actual counterpart and you'll see Schofield hasn't missed a speck. He accounts for every spoke in every fire escape ladder, every detail of every iron fence, every piece of molding, every single brick, every cobblestone, every window decoration, every illuminated light and every paint chip, rendering them precisely as they appear in real-life. Dividing his time between Manhattan and Florida, he finds his subjects by walking the streets, mostly at night when he feels he can see things better and sketching what captures his attention. He then takes those rough drawings back to

his Key West studio, where he completes the task of identically recreating a scene relying only on his naked eye. The end products are fiercely original, reminiscent of no one and devoid of strong atmosphere but mesmerizing because of their painstaking intricacy.

But then there are what he calls the "secondary" elements -- the graffiti, the litter on the sidewalk -- which pay homage to the artist's friends or whatever may be going on in his personal life, and exist only because he wants them to exist.

"I play with it," he says, pointing to the sign that sits next to one of his religious institutions and would normally provide service schedules. "That's from two sonnets by Edna St. Vincent Millay, which I've used a few times at funeral services." He turns to another drawing, which features an elaborate doorway on 14th St. next to the awning of "Guiles Grocery."

"Guiles is a friend of mine. I gave him his own discount bodega," Schofield says. Another friend, Marty Starr, appears in the form of "starrs" spray-painted onto the sides of buildings. When Schofield planned a trip to Egypt, his fictional graffiti artists chose to paint pyramids and palm trees. Advertisements and storefronts often bear the name "Baby M," which stands for a friend's newborn daughter, pre-christening.

"They're sort of like diaries. There are 20 works, and they represent five years of my life," he notes.

Hiding the personal references somewhere in his works plays on a theme that pops up from time to time as Schofield discusses his chosen medium.

"My family wasn't very supportive. I think one of the reasons I draw and don't paint is that drawings are hide-able. I remember once my science teacher found a bunch of drawings in my book, and when my father found out he went apopleptic," he recalls. Today he's still not sure his parents can appreciate what he does.

"My mother would always rather I paint nice bowls of fruit with a ray of light shining

on them, so I always do one pretty work in case my parents come to see the show. But I'm not really interested in painting pretty landmarks, I like to show the mutilation of physical things. They're a mute testament to all those lives in New York."

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"I was [the wife's] little baby thing. She'd bring her friends by when they were in Key West -- she sort of wanted to show off her 'weird friends' in Florida -- and they'd buy drawings," he says with just a hint of exasperation. But it was worth it; when one of the shows at her gallery fell through, she and her husband recruited the then 25-year-old Schofield to fill the void.

Now 39, he says he can't imagine what he'd do if he didn't draw, and suggests the only possibility would be working at McDonald's. And it's okay with him if he doesn't earn notoriety.

"To really be a celebrity you have to have the desire. You have to work at it," he says. "I'll never be Keith Haring. Recognition is nice, but I just really like to draw."

**"Recent Drawings" by David Schofield at Gallery Henoch, 80 Wooster St.; through Nov. 8. Tue.-Sat., 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. or by appointment. 966-6360**



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