

## Roz Chast

### Theories of Everything

*Julie Saul*

535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea,  
Through Feb. 10

To coincide with the publication of a book, Roz Chast, the popular cartoonist of *The New Yorker*, is presenting a miniature retrospective of her drawings from the 1970s to the present. It is always instructive to view Ms. Chast's captivating pen-and-ink drawings in the original rather than in a magazine reproduction because you can better appreciate the deftness of her short, squiggly lines; the marvelously abbreviated detail; and the luminosity of her colors. You might also witness mistakes and modifications; a few drawings here are stained with correction fluid, and others are patched with slivers of paper where the artist wanted to change bigger things.

The range usefully marshals a sense of how her drawings have changed stylistically; the early designs are usually minimal, black and white, and with an indefinite, conceptual link between the drawing and language elements. They tax the brain more than the eyes. By contrast, more recent drawings tend to confront, often very precisely, the humdrum trials of ordinary Americans coping with parenthood, work and growing old.

In a cartoon from 1998 titled "Nancy Drew Mysteries: The Later Years," a confused elderly woman appears on a mock book cover asking herself: "How did I gain eight pounds? I eat nothing!" On another book cover, as she looks for keys, she says, "I know I left them right there." This is droll, but it is also deeply touching because it encapsulates the lapses and petty indignities of aging.

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