

[Share](#) [Email](#) [Permalink](#)

8+1

## Artist David Adey's Ambitious New Solo Exhibit At La Jolla Gallery

Friday, January 17, 2014

By [Angela Carone](#)



David Adey, with two works in his new solo exhibit at Scott White Contemporary Art in La Jolla.

To come up with the number of seconds he has left to live, Adey worked with an actuary. They developed an excel calculator that determines life expectancy. You can punch in everything from your family history, age, whether you eat red meat and if you exercise. There's even a category for attending religious services, which according to studies they looked at, impacts mortality.

[Local art critic Robert Pincus](#) said Adey is "like an experimenter, or a tinkerer or an inventor." He quickly added "quasi-scientist" to the list. Pincus has written about Adey's work in the past and has seen the new solo exhibit at Scott White Contemporary Art, titled "Hither and Yon," where "Life

One of the most unassuming pieces in [artist David Adey's](#) new body of work is also the most foreboding.

It looks like a computer motherboard hanging on the wall. It displays neon numbers that measure Adey's life in seconds. At the moment we meet in the gallery, he has exactly 1,262,155,874 seconds left to live.

That may seem like a lot, until you watch the numbers rapidly ticking away. "Of course the hundredths of a second are flying off really fast, so it gives you this sense of urgency," Adey said with complete calm.

"It's really like a doomsday clock, a personal doomsday clock."

Adey is not the kind of brooding artist who might devise a doomsday clock. He's really genial. A glass-half-full kind of guy, which is why he called the artwork "Life Clock." After all, he could have just as easily made the case for "Death Clock."

"It's a constant reminder of how much time you have left," Adey said. "But I look at it in a positive way, one of being more aware of how you spend your time."

Clock" is on view.

"I think he's really interested in ideas that seem almost outlandish or hard to achieve and to see if he can do it," Pincus said.

A good example of this is the tower in the middle of the gallery, titled "Fill My Cup." It's a 14-foot tower made out of cups and buckets stacked one inside of the other. But what makes it an architectural feat is that the tower's base is a tiny communion cup that balances all of the increasingly larger cups on top of it. It looks like a giant telescope.

The communion cup holds a McDonald's creamer cup, then a Nyquil cup, and each cup is filled with a slightly larger cup until it goes all the way up to the largest garbage can Adey could find. Symbols of consumerism pop from various stages in the tower — a Starbucks cup, a KFC bucket and a Home Depot pail.

"Fill my cup" is a euphemism from Christianity, explained Adey. "It's this idea of filling the cup with a larger cup and this insatiable appetite for more. You know, really longing for more and never being satisfied."

Adey has spent the last year on sabbatical from teaching, which has allowed him to work full time on his art. And because he experiments with materials and processes, that time came in handy.

Just to give you a sense of the range of materials Adey is willing to employ, years ago in grad school he worked with lamb meat. He was interested in the idea of resurrection and the first cloning experiments, so he sewed a lamb together using cuts of lamb meat, making the head and hooves from ground lamb.



Adey made "The Lamb" in graduate school out of lamb

meat.

Skipping ahead to today, I didn't find any ground meat in Adey's studio, but it's clear the ambition around his ideas hasn't waned. Adey spent five months on an artwork called "Hide." It's the centerpiece of the new exhibit.

[Gallery owner Scott White](#) gave Adey an artist-in-residency to create "Hide" and the other 25 pieces in the show. "'Hide' is really as high-tech a version of a self-portrait as you can imagine," White said. "We have an artist today who is using the tools of our times."

Adey has worked with images of skin for years, cutting them out and arranging them in new ways and exploring what it means to take a 2D image and make it 3D. But with "Hide," he's turned the process on his own skin.

"Hide" is the geometry of Adey's own body, flattened, printed, laser cut and assembled in one piece then pinned in place like delicate paper taxidermy. The finished piece is a diptych that looks like two intricate maps with peninsulas and jetties at every angle.



"Hide" is the centerpiece of Adey's new solo show. It's made from a 3D model of Adey's body.

To create "Hide," Adey shaved his entire body and then scanned it, creating a 3D model. Using software, he then flattened it onto a 2D plane.

"It's all the same information of the geometry of my body, just expressed a different way," said Adey. Through all the experimenting, (before lighting on the digital process, Adey tried silicone and rubber for the 3D model) Adey wondered what the entire human form would look flattened out.

For a while, he called the project the "Dymaxion Man," after the Dymaxion Map created by one of his heroes, architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller.



The Dymaxion Map, devised by Buckminster Fuller, is the world flattened onto a 2D plane.

"The Dymaxion Map was the first ever flattened map of the globe in which the land masses were not distorted. And what you see then is that the major land masses are essentially one big island," explained Adey. The transition from 3D to 2D offers this whole new way of seeing global geography. Adey was looking for the same insight about the human body through his transition from 3D to 2D.

By flattening the human form, Adey realized the complexity of the body's geometry. That, and that fact that our bodies are all quite similar. If he did the same scanning/flattening process on somebody else, it will likely look the same. "Genetically speaking, we're nearly identical," Adey said. "We spend so much time focusing on the things that define us as individuals, but really there's so much more that we have in common with other human beings."

David Adey's artwork will be on view through Feb. 15 at Scott White Contemporary Art in La Jolla. A documentary about him titled "Art By Constraint" will air Friday, Jan. 17 at 9 p.m. on [KPBS-TV](#).