

HoustonPress

Daniel Adame steals the show at Lawndale

Head Case

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Daniel Adame transformed himself into a blind drawing instrument.

For his drawing/performance, *Marker Head Marker* at Lawndale Art Center, Daniel Adame encased his head in a giant chunk of plaster shaped like a huge piece of chalk. He then made a drawing on a blackboard hung on the gallery wall. The piece is a part of the group exhibition "**Drawing in Space**," curated by J Hill.

It was, by all accounts, an amazing performance and one that people are still talking about — even people who usually hate performance art. I missed it by a few minutes, but the drawing and relics of the performance are still pretty good. The cylindrical plaster helmet lies open, and you can clearly see an exact cast of Adame's head inside. (There are a lot of ways to cast your own head, and none of them are fun.) The only opening on the

helmet is a tiny wooden straw sticking out of the mouth for Adame to breathe through. He can't see; he can't talk. Even if you think you are free from claustrophobic tendencies, just looking at this object will freak you out.

For the 20-minute performance, Adame locked his head inside the massive chunk of plaster. Two wooden handles extended from the side to help him hold and guide the helmet, which weighs in at around 30 pounds. (The handles were a later addition. Apparently the first time Adame stuck his head in the block, it was so heavy he couldn't lift it up.) He approached the blackboard, and then, feeling around the edges, moved his head in a circle over the surface.

As a visual thing, the resulting drawing is a large, halting and vaguely -Twombly-esque spiral scribble. In itself it's nothing to write home about, but as a record of this guy moving the chunk of plaster on his head over its surface, it's pretty incredible. Adame, who is also a dancer, squatted down low, moved side-to-side, and up again, over and over, all the while unable to see the marks he was making. He transformed himself into a blind drawing instrument; the artist became his own tool.

The small group show in Lawndale's mezzanine gallery is filled with drawings created through actions that allow for little control of the finished product. For *Throw (Perfect)* (2006), Cory Wagner dipped a tennis ball in graphite and threw it against sheets of paper, leaving scuffs and splats of graphite on the page. Wagner is a former semipro baseball player, and he created the images by running through relay drills. Audio of the thunking ball is key to the drawings' success.

The Art Guys, Michael Galbreth and Jack Massing, present video documentation of some of their performance drawings. In one work, they draw with a broom made of pencils, scraping it back and forth across a sheet of paper until the leads begin to wear and break. Other works showcase their pyromaniac predilections. In one clip, they stick firecrackers and matches to paper and ignite them. In another, they create self--portraits from matches stuck into the wall and almost torch a Swedish gallery; the piece was lit by both the gallery owner and the building owner. You can hear the Scandinavians stressing out in the video. Apparently, the fire department showed up after a similar performance in Alaska.

Annette Lawrence made rubbings from a stack of every unsolicited piece

of paper she received for a year. The piled layers of paper are reminiscent of the rings of the trees that went into producing all those credit card offers and sale circulars.

John Adelman's work is probably the biggest disappointment. To create it, Adelman painstakingly traced a pile of 13,944 nails, along with the 461 component parts of a typewriter. The traced objects work fine, but the mottled, painterly background he uses is distracting. To set up a drawing with such anal-retentive rigor and then execute it against a lamely "arty" background undermines Adelman's whole endeavor.

Still, Hill has included some strong work overall, with Adame's piece stealing the show. Adame's performance was one of those amazingly great ideas that fill fellow artists with both admiration and envy. The Art Guys, veteran performance artists, were blown away by the piece. Jack Massing echoed the sentiments of a lot of artists in the room when he said, "It was something I wish we came up with, but I'm really glad I didn't have to do it."