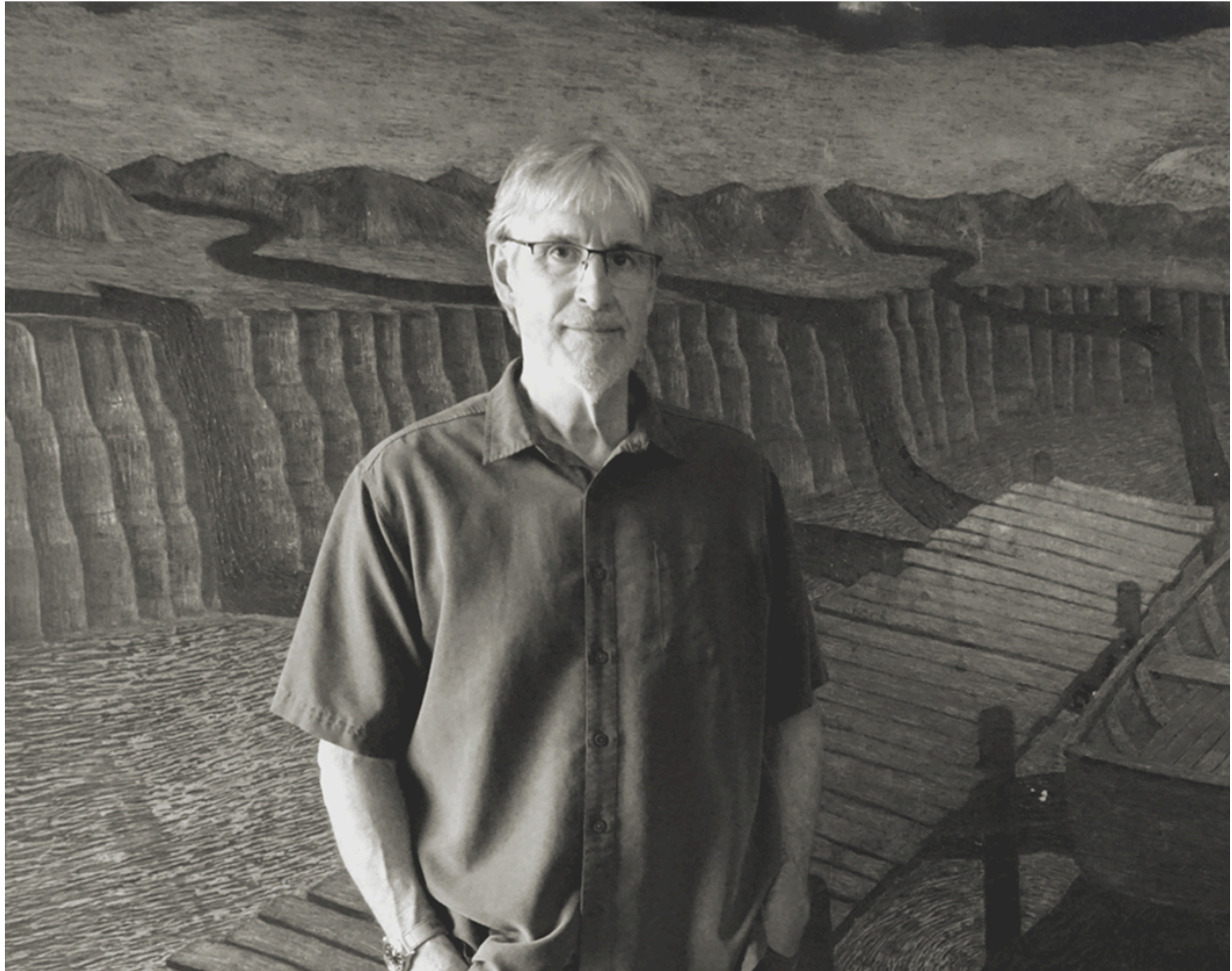


Full Biography

Stephen Adams



Stephen Adams is a Texas born painter, printmaker, and sculptor. He began his art career in Houston, Texas after completing a degree in Fine Arts at Rice University. From 1977 –1995, Adams exhibited his work at various group and one-person shows throughout Houston.

From 1995-2002 Adams lived in San Francisco and changed his focus to digital visual imagery. When he moved to Portland, Oregon in 2002, Adams transitioned completely to sculpture, working primarily in glass and wood, but also including stone, concrete, and other found objects in his work.

The body of Adams' work is an exploration of both idea and technique and reflects a profound interest in the relationship between humans, nature, and artifice. Each Adams piece, painting, image, or sculpture is an in-depth study requiring months of work that is a discovery process that involves playing with objects that eventually realize themselves into a finished work. The ideas are rendered first as mock-ups in, for example, foam core for the glass pieces or as preliminary drawings for larger pieces.

In the 80s, Adams' process at times led to vast textural creations that create reliefs with thick paint on Masonite and at other times to flat but intricate creations of layered paint that are scraped, glazed, repainted, and reglazed. Adams' subjects during this period included brick tree trunks breaking through wooden floor planks, trees emerging from rivers, their roots holding up a boat and pier and then reaching out into the distance, hands that look like mountains, a sleeping figure whose dream is projected around him. As Adams explains, *"People have called my work surrealism with texture, but the surrealists were concerned with chance, dreams, and the unconscious. I am interested in the conscious manipulation of forms and symbols."*



Dreamer, 1983
Oil on canvas, 72 ¼" x 97 ¼"



The encroachment, 1980
Oil on panel, 48" x 68"



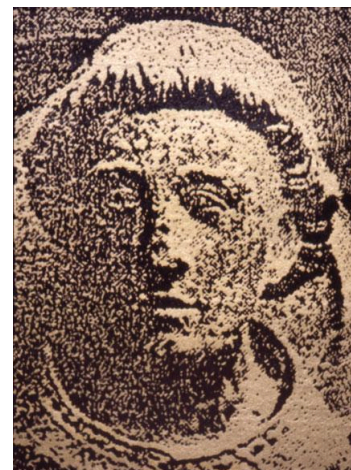
The Landing, 1979
Oil on panel,, 1979, 70" x 80"

Each of these painted works is a panoply of color, texture, and images, that fill and satisfy the viewer's senses and provide an alternative to the art of that time that strove for "pure abstract form" and was emptied of content and meaning. For Adams, *"Art must be about things that have meaning, that are important, timeless, that have human content."* And yet, the irony of the 21st century is not lost on Adams when now art is ALL content but must be "the right kind of content" and "of the moment," obviating the need for timelessness.

In the early 1990s Adams began experimenting with computer-generated and photocopy elements in his paintings and mixed-media pieces. Adams was of the mind that the innovations in computer science provided a portal through which he could see and comment about how contemporary technology impacted art and culture. As he puts it, *"The technological processes I was using were an invention of civilization, and I wanted to investigate how these were affecting our depiction of other important cultural artifacts of the same civilization."* During this "iconographic period," Adams chose *religious* figures: Christ, Buddha, Greek gods, Christian saints because in art history, the greatest effort of artists was to depict the sublime—the noblest, highest, and most beautiful aspects of human life. The depiction of these icons was an intentional one to react against the art created by prominent artists at the time, which included painting graffiti, cartoon figures, advertising imagery, etc., as high art. Adams viewed this focus as a mistake and as a cultural wrong turn in the road.



Ruined Apollo, 1991
Acrylic on panel, 48"x63"



St. Stephen, 1991
Acrylic on panel, 64" x 47"

The digital images of the mid-90's until the new millennium, stay true to the muse of human/nature/artifice that instructed so much of Adam's work even while leaving aside the physical manipulation of texture and media.



Existingman3



Rules of order 1



Valentine 2

The sculpture work that has defined Stephen Adams since the beginning of the millennium defies possibility. His mixed media creations are a communion of materials, most often wood and glass, that slip across each other, suspending and supporting the individual parts with invisible and unknowable connections. Green glass spills, oozes, puddles from wood that vainly tries to contain it, glass wraps itself around mirror smooth wooden surfaces, mirrors fool our perception, cardboard seems like wood and wood seems like stone, and dozens of layers of glass are kept together by an invisible force field. According to Adams, these pieces in wood and glass owe a lot to the language of abstract formalism and minimalism. Though some might consider Adams' pieces abstract, to him they are symbolic and representational even though he will deny the idea that content, symbol and representation can EVER be extirpated from art.



Expulsion, 2019
Mixed media, 11½" x 12" x 7½"



Intimacy, 2013
21½" x 16½" x 21½" x 14"



Right Angle #1, 2008

Mixed media sculpture, 21½" x 21½" x 5½"

Adams refers to the relationship between his materials as an intimacy. In intimate relationships there often exist moments of, as Adams puts it, "*encroachment, violation, and submission... [experiences which make it] possible for us to bend and not break, to endure difficulties, and to make the best of our flawed circumstances, i.e. to be resilient... Th[e] invocation of nature, and its juxtaposition with the precise geometry of the glass forms, continue my recurrent interest in the many intimacies and unities between the human and natural worlds.*"

Stephen Adams continues to create and exhibit, primarily at the Portland Art Museum's Rental Sales Gallery in Portland, Oregon, and at Ellio Fine Art in Houston, Texas.

Adams has generously donated six of his original works to The Limits and Proximities Foundation of the Art. These works will be exhibited in the gallery.

Fernando Casas and Stephen Adams met in 1977 at Rice University in Houston, Texas. They have been close friends since then. Together they built the house that Casas still lives in today. They have influenced, critiqued, and supported each other's works and endeavors for the last 50 years.

For more information about Stephen Adams:

<https://www.stephenadams.com/>