

## Round and round

*David King uncovers spherical lyricism on paper and at the Dump*

By Johnny Ray Huston



*Bacterium #1*

David King and I are staring at a baseball, some screws, and some bolts. More specifically, King and I are looking at *Satellite #2*, a nine-inch pointy yet round sculpture he constructed from those ingredients for an upcoming show. "To me, this is one of the more successful pieces," King says, as we look around the warehouse art studio at SF Recycling and Disposal Inc. To our left, Christine Lee — who, like King, is an artist-in-residence at the Dump — is working with James Sellier on a wood-based project. To our right, there are many spheres, some suspended, others on pedestals.

A few of the spheres are made of green floral tubes, cassette tapes, lanyards, and balls. A couple brightly colored ones incorporate hair curler ends and board game pieces. "This piece made from curtain rod brackets is one of the first," King says, pointing to an 11-inch silver mass. "I thought I'd try to glue them to a ball, but then I began using string and fishing lines. It looks like a death star." He picks up a huge circular mass of Cliffords, teddy bears, and other stuffed animals that is akin to the work of Mike Kelley (or locally, Matt Furie). A Tickle Me Elmo laughs. "A guy drove up and dropped off two huge bags of stuffed animals. It's so random. You wonder, 'Did your daughter no longer want these? Or did someone die?'"

The sense of mortality and waste in those questions is present in King's new work, particularly through titles that refer to allergens, viruses, and bacteria. But his latest pieces also possess a strong current of playfulness. It manifests via comic shapes and bright cartoon or sleekly attractive colors. King's sculptures are a departure from his 2-D collages in a series such as last year's "Beneath All We Know," but they're also linked to such past projects through a recurrent use of circular shapes that have scientific or metaphysical connotations. With the cellular structures of "Beneath All We Know," King began to foreground floating energy masses that had previously taken the form of jeweled grapevines or crochet patterns. Now those patterns seem to have leapt off the paper of his collages into the three-dimensional world.

In fact, though, they've been gleaned from the Dump. "I wanted the challenge of doing something new, of finding a new way of being creative," King says, when asked what motivated him to seek out a residency at the site. "On a personal level, I wanted to put myself out there more and step outside my own studio. The first couple of weeks, it was pretty daunting to witness the sheer volume. I thought, 'Oh, what have I gotten myself into?' But over time, I realized you shouldn't look for a particular thing. Whatever ideas you come in with, you have to let go of — the whole thing is about responding to the waste stream. It was very intuitive. I like to find a lot of one thing: plastic lemons or icicles, bits from chandeliers. When I saw a lot of one thing, I grabbed it."

The sheer volume of material at SF Recycling and Disposal is indeed daunting, if you're looking for one very specific object. Micah Gibson from the site — who might have been referencing the trash compactor aesthetic of *TV Carnage* when he titled his 2008 Art at the Dump show "Casual Fridays" — leads me on a quick tour through a small portion of its 40 acres. We walk by enormous seagulls, around a hill covered with carousel horses and capped by a giant ice cream cone, through transfer and sorting stations, and past a pit as big as football field and 15 feet deep, until we reach a sculpture garden designed by Susan Steinman.

We pause by *Bench Curl*, a recent piece made by Scott Oliver during his residency. The scent of trees is strong, yet Gibson says it isn't from the surroundings, but rather a large number of trees in the IMRF (Integrated Materials Recovery Facility). Earlier in the day, when I first showed up, a different mega-pungent smell had been dominant. "It happens whenever food from cruise ships is boiled down," Gibson says, noting that kids on school trips enjoy coming up with descriptions for the occasional olfactory assault.

When Gibson and I return to SF Recycling & Disposal's main building, I spot a sculpture by Henri Marie-Rose, who has exhibited at the de Young Museum, and who has a long-term artistic relationship with the site. Back at King's show-in-progress, there are tetrahedrons- and icosahedrons-in-progress, made of

cardboard, and a wreath comprised of Chinese food containers is mounted on a wall.

King has discovered a certain joy in multiplicity — he's capable of cutting 1,000 diamonds out from a waist-high stack of Sotheby's auction catalogs. Through dedication to repetition, he has used collage to transform the 1980s men's exercise magazine pinup Scott Madsen into a Shiva figure. With its wide-open skies and mammoth hills — whether green or trash-strewn — his latest creative stomping ground makes for an interesting contrast from the gardens he tends when isn't making art. It resembles a parody of the Arcadian vistas in his earliest collages. "Sometimes I feel like I want to be narrative, and sometimes I want to be looser," he says, discussing elders and contemporaries he admires, such as John O'Reilly and Fred Tomaselli. "I like the effect of a shift in perspective from a microscope to a telescope, between the tiny and the super large."

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