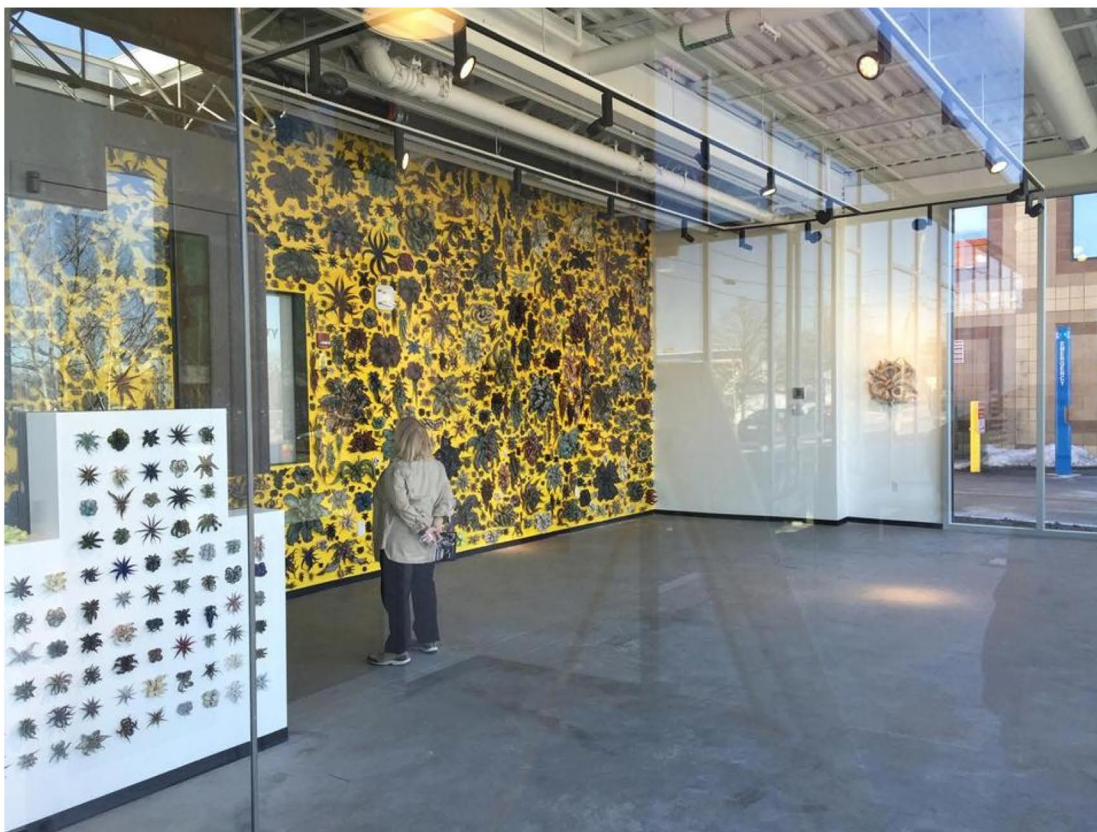


## Scale, detail, bravado in Adams show at Gallery 224



Christopher Adams's "Life, or Something Like It" installation at Gallery 224 at the Ceramics Program at the Office for the Arts at Harvard.

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 31, 2015

Christopher Adams has made close to 5,000 ceramic pieces using one template: limbs radiating from an internal frame. Same number of limbs, same frame structure. You might think this could get dull.

Not at all. Adams's installation "Life, or Something Like It," at Gallery 224 at the Ceramics Program at the Office for the Arts at Harvard, captivates with its immense variety. Monumental, vibrant, and odd, the installation, culled down to more than 1,000 works, mimics adaptive radiation — the tendency of a species, when moved to a new, hospitable environment, to diversify wildly.

Adams's critters could be starfish or octopi, roses or heads of lettuce. Most of them spin, squiggle, and bloom over one large, sultry yellow wall. There are also two smaller grids of organisms, a single big work alone like a wreath, and a gray one on the floor, languidly reaching its many arms up the wall and around the corner.

The smaller grids might be exhibits in a natural history museum, but on the yellow wall, Adams abandons the grid, and the organisms proliferate. The big ones dominate and the small ones squeeze in where they can — a suggestion of survival of the fittest.

Keeping to his basic structure, Adams experiments with different types of clay (terra cotta, porcelain, stoneware), a range of sizes, a sliding scale of firing temperatures, and what he calls in his artist's statement "a promiscuous approach to glazing."

The variety is breathtaking. Among those that caught my eye: a fist-sized pile of pillowy knobs in yellow underscored with smoky black, looking like fruit ripe for picking; a large, leafy piece in gray, fringed and drizzled with glistening black, its leaves thin as paper; a veined, tentacled, fleshy creature in silver pink, dangling down the wall.

"Life, or Something Like It" impresses with its sheer scale, intimate detail, and technical bravado. Ideally, Adams will find somewhere he can install all 5,000 organisms, and they'll expand onto ceiling and floor, surrounding viewers with a rampant evocation of evolutionary biology.

## **CHRISTOPHER ADAMS:**

### **Life or Something Like It**

At: Gallery 224, Ceramics Program, Office for the Arts at Harvard,

224 Western Ave., Allston, through April 24.

617-495-8680, [www.ofa.fas.harvard.edu/ceramics](http://www.ofa.fas.harvard.edu/ceramics)