

## Tim Hawkinson: Ace • New York, New York

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Walking into the world of Los Angeles artist Tim Hawkinson at Ace Gallery New York is not unlike a stroll along the bottom of the ocean or inside the human body. A “spacelessness” and timelessness permeate the gallery. The slow, deliberate movement of many of the pieces, the odd compositions of sound, and the inventive material explorations create a pulsing and breathing that transform gallery space into organism. The nuances and subtle sounds and movements are so essential to experiencing Hawkinson’s work that neither word nor image can even begin to depict the richness and fullness of an actual encounter.

### BATH GENERATED CONTOUR LACE

I lay in a bathtub which was filling slowly with black paint, photographing every few minutes as the paint crept up and over, diminishing islands of skin. Superimposing these images, I developed a contoured pattern which I then rendered in the meandering lace drawing. —Tim Hawkinson

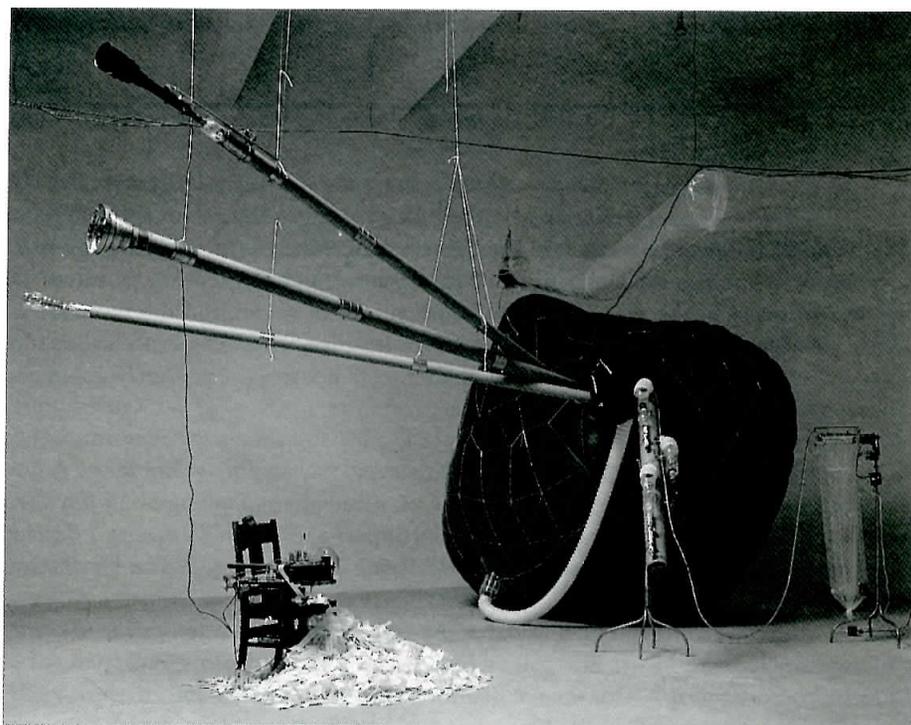
Entering the cavernous rooms, it becomes evident that the gallery is just an extension of the artist’s studio—a studio transported, not dramatically transformed, into gallery space. Rather than an over-conceptualized or cautious presentation, the exhibition becomes a metaphor for the continuum between art-making and art-showing. This continuum does not assume a lack of thoughtfulness in the installation, but instead puts the emphasis back on the art and the art-making. This bountiful, unedited, and lively exhibition transforms interior or gallery space into animated space. One of the more animated pieces in the show, *BAGPIPE*, 1995, made from cardboard tubes, plastic water bottles, a green tarp, string, electric motors, and reeds, bellows deep hollow sounds from the cardboard horns. Eventually, one gets the feeling that this collective body of work, an ecosystem unto itself, is so alive that it might grow and expand out of Ace’s enormous and chilling rooms.

### HEAD

I painted latex rubber over all the surfaces of our bathroom, peeled this skin away and inflated it.  
—Tim Hawkinson

A larger-than-life, inflated, manila-colored latex bathroom, *HEAD* remains inflated only by a generous source of oxygen keeping it “alive.” As you walk into the room where *HEAD* has been temporarily housed, the inflated bathroom hovers several feet over the ground like a Goodyear Blimp. A latex imprint of the interior walls of the bathroom including windows and doors, the immense sculpture is the “skin” of the bathroom peeled away and inflated. “Bathroom” has been transfigured into oxygenated body with plumbing. *HEAD* is accompanied by other inflated latex pieces, including a pregnant-looking latex wall and a man with genitalia.

Hawkinson’s work has a Yankee ingenuity and a pioneering quality with few imposed restrictions or boundaries. Yet within this boundary-less methodology exists a very rigorous structure and approach to working. A wooden school desk, *SIGNATURE* 1993, is transformed into a home-spun writing machine that only writes one name—Tim Hawkinson. It then chops off each signature, creating a mound of scraps of paper bearing “the artist’s signature.” Hawkinson is totally self-reliant, seeking no technical assistance. Equally important to Hawkinson’s commitment to invention and discovery is his commitment to accessibility. Even though the work itself is not conceptually, materially, or spiritually simple, what you see is what you get. Whether what you are “seeing and getting” is a large doily made of caulking compound on the floor or a music box made from a clear five-gallon plastic water bottle, the evolution and execution of the pieces are exposed and evident. As Hawkinson has implied, “the me in the work is us.” The process of figuring out how he makes his pieces, including movement and sound, is exposed and readily available if the viewer is willing to even passively participate. Simple and straightforward, no mysterious technical wizardry or tricks are employed.



Tim Hawkinson • Installation view, 1995.

#### HUMONGOLOUS

is a map charting all the surfaces of my skin which I could see directly. Starting with my left hand, I gridded off my palm and painted it square by square onto the larger grid drawn on the paper. In this way I wound around my hand, up my arm and across the rest of my epidermis, detailing and expanding the areas which were more accessible.—Tim Hawkinson

In the tradition of a long line of artists preceding him, Hawkinson employs humble materials like the ordinary, commonplace, or waste materials we encounter daily. Not unlike other Los Angeles artists who, because of freeways and distance, become prisoners to the barrios and studios in which they live, he uses the materials that are most accessible or immediately available to him. A semi-hermit and homebody who prefers not to venture out of his downtown loft space, Hawkinson often collects materials that are geographically desirable—in other words in his alley, block, or neighborhood.

More than a political, theoretical, or even specific thematic positioning, Tim Hawkinson concerns himself in a very Zen way with the “present moment”—his present thoughts and environment. His work is informed by a very primal relationship to “body.” Rather than conceptually challenging or cynically critiquing, his work engages and invites. Materially and conceptually, there is a sense of immediacy and improvisation about the work—what’s at hand is what he makes art out of and about. Despite the apparent casualness of the scavenging, his assemblages are meticulous, thoughtful, and highly detailed. With a spirit of humor and inventiveness, he transforms the decaying urban environment around him into a world that is as disquieting as it is fanciful.

Terri Friedman  
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