

Tim Hawkinson

PaceWildenstein

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Tim Hawkinson's *How Man Is Knit* is a convoluted sensory playground, where one walks amongst a web of humorous physical manifestations of human receptors and their triggers. Every work articulates our personal association to our surroundings by giving form to the corporeal and perceptual systems that we employ to decipher them.

To the uninformed eye, the "iconic" work of this exhibition, *Scout* (2006-7), appears at first glance as just an amusing cardboard character with oversized body parts. Yet, Hawkinson's intent becomes evident when understood within the exhibition's overall sensory context. The figure represents a 3D rendering of a "sensory homunculus," a figure whose limb proportions are determined according to the space allocated for it in the sensorimotor cortex, the section of the human brain that is responsible for our motor and sensory abilities. Accordingly, the greater the area accessed in our brain, the larger the body part. Hawkinson's version of the sensory homunculus is slightly more comical than the original, as he gave the figure a fringed outline and eliminated its head altogether.

As in the past, Hawkinson utilizes his own body in many of the works on view, thus taking on a unique method of self-portraiture. In *Foot Quilt* (2007), the artist enlarged his footprint by twenty times and sewed it into silver polyester fabric. As hand and foot impressions are the most exclusive and identifying elements of one's body, this work is the artist's ultimate self-portrait. In five 3D photo collages (*Smelling Collage*, *Seeing Collage*, *Hearing Collage*, *Tasting Collage*, and *Touching Collage*, all 2006-7), each of the senses is represented throughout the pieces via images of Hawkinson's receptors. Rather than appearing side by side, the sense organs are growing out of one another at the exact point in which the stimuli would transpire (i.e. tongue, fingertip, nostril, etc.).

Other works are less of a direct manifestation of the human sensory system and more of a challenge to it. In *Gimble Klein Basket* (2007) and *Fresnel Klein Bottle* (2007), Hawkinson experiments with optical phenomena. A mathematical property cultivated by Felix Klein in 1882, the term "Klein Bottle" represents a non-orientable object that is fashioned in such a way so that its inner and outer surfaces are continuous. In *Gimble Klein Basket*, Hawkinson weaved a volume of this sort from bamboo and mounted it on gimbals, allowing the object to tilt freely in space. Serene and meditative, this work allows one to study this optical illusion as it unfolds repeatedly before our eyes.

Additional optical games are dispersed throughout the gallery. Upon close observation, a twelve-foot totemic tower appears to be composed of papier-mâché plastic gasoline containers that are stacked one atop the other (*Totem*, 2007). A sixteen-foot high scroll of paper with a gradient of ink ranging from white to violet and gray (*Sunrise*, 2007) is, in effect, a condensed time-lapse photograph of the sunrise as viewed from Hawkinson's own home in Southern California. The subject of the photograph *Veil* (2007)—receding rows of tissue boxes—is evident from up close, yet from afar, it assumes a morbid association to grave markers in an overcrowded cemetery. Whereas the previous works toy with the actual sensory organs, these pieces challenge the very manner in which we employ them.

While the network of Hawkinson's self-imposed problems disorients and confuses us, reverses our perception, and questions our relationship to our surroundings, it also awards us an enlightened and elastic approach to experiencing our environment, which demands the democratic utilization of our entire sensory system.

Written by Yaelle Amir
 Images courtesy of PaceWildenstein, New York

Left: *Gimble Klein Basket*, 2007. Bamboo, motor, pulley, drive belt. 110" x 140" x 54". Photo by: Joshua White

Below: *Scout*, 2006-2007. Cardboard, box strapping and urethane foam. 2" x 8" 4" x 58". Photo by: Joshua White.

