

INTRO *spective*
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Tim Hawkinson



The subject of a show on view through June 29 at New York's Pace Gallery — which includes *Do-Si-Do*, 2013 — Tim Hawkinson creates thoughtful, often existential works that reveal a unique sensitivity to his materials. Unless otherwise noted, all photos by Joshua White, courtesy of Tim Hawkinson and Pace Gallery ([Click here](#) to explore more Tim Hawkinson on 1stdibs.)

ON A SPRING AFTERNOON
IN NEW YORK'S CHELSEA,

TIM HAWKINSON

stood regarding a bronze sculpture of a stooped man in chains, one of the ten recent works in his new show at Pace Gallery. Hawkinson created the figure using casts formed from his own body, and he fashioned the links that bind the creature's hands, tongue and feet with molds of his tongue and lips.

The suggestion seems to be that a man can be fettered by his own senses — or, as Hawkinson points out, his own words. "The utterance of an idea forms a direction," he says. "And link by link you have this heavy object that you carry around. These are chains of my own making."



Perhaps that's why Hawkinson, who sometimes leaves his works untitled, struggled to name this piece, as well as the others in the show. He spurred himself on by reminding himself that while a title can "feel like it's committing the piece to something, it's not," he says. "It's just a way of identifying it."

In the end, Hawkinson named the sculptures for Girl Scout cookies — a nod to his home life in Altadena, California, where he lives with his wife of many years, the artist Patty Wickman, and their nine-year-old daughter, Clare. The chained man is titled for his favorite, the coconut-caramel confection known as a Samoa. "Actually if you do a Google image search of a Samoa, and you scroll down far enough," Hawkinson says wryly, "you'll find a guy who looks like this."

Using parts of his own body to create many of the molds that form his pieces — including *Samoa*, 2013, seen here — allows the California-based artist to become, in his words, "a stand-in for the viewer." Photo by Carol Kino



Spend some time with Hawkinson, 52, and you soon learn that though he is reluctant to pin down the meaning of a piece, he's completely fluent with many different materials. He seems to know everything about building things, whether a 180-ton, 23.5-foot-high teddy bear fashioned from granite boulders (*Bear*, 2005) or a two-inch-tall bird skeleton made from his own fingernail parings (*Bird*, 1997). In conversation, he'll suddenly launch into a technical explanation of how a lens is made, or casually riff on the many uses for different viscosities of Cyanoacrylate, the basic ingredient in Superglue.

Animal Treasures, 2013

“TIM TAKES THE WORLD AND ALMOST LITERALLY TURNS IT UPSIDE DOWN AND INSIDE OUT.”

But the chief allure of Hawkinson's work has always been its reach beyond the material world. “Tim is the great existential artist of our time,” says Lawrence Rinder, who curated the artist's retrospective, which debuted at the Whitney Museum in New York in 2005 and traveled to LACMA. “He has consistently gone back to those fundamental questions of the nature of reality, being and identity, and he has explored them in ways that are fascinatingly mind-blowing and accessible.”

Linda Johnson Dougherty, chief curator of the North Carolina Museum of Art,

in Raleigh, puts it somewhat differently. “I feel like he takes the world and almost literally turns it upside down and inside out,” she says. She recently included a work by Hawkinson in the group survey “0 to 60: The Experience of Time through Contemporary Art.” (Co-organized by the Penland School of Crafts, the show runs at the NCMA through August 11.) Hawkinson created four clocks, each made with different materials — including a decayed banana peel and a knot in a two-by-four — to convey the passage of time in unconventional ways.

Two views of the 2005 Hawkinson retrospective at the Whitney. Photos by Jerry L. Thompson



Like *Samoa*, many of the other sculptures in the Pace show (through June 29) are modeled on Hawkinson's own body. Take *Tagalong* (2013), a translucent seahorse hooked to a strand of clear bubbles. The creature's concave planes, made from amber resin, were modeled on parts of his anatomy "that are kind of rounded out," Hawkinson says, "like my knees and my chin, the crown of my head, elbows, heels and ball sack." His head and buttocks were the prototype for the curved lenses of two 2013 lamps, *Shout Out (Butt-head Fresnel lens lighthouse)*, which sends a searchlight-like beam around a darkened room, and *Double Dutch (Butt-head Fresnel lens switch lantern)*, a blue-and-red railway-style lantern that hangs outside the gallery door. Hawkinson sometimes refers to works of this nature as self-portraits, but only in the sense that "I become a stand-in for the viewer," he says. "I mean, you can put yourself in that position — just thinking of the body as its surfaces."

The artist with *Tagalong*, 2013, made of amber resin and modeled on his own body parts. Photo by Carol Kino



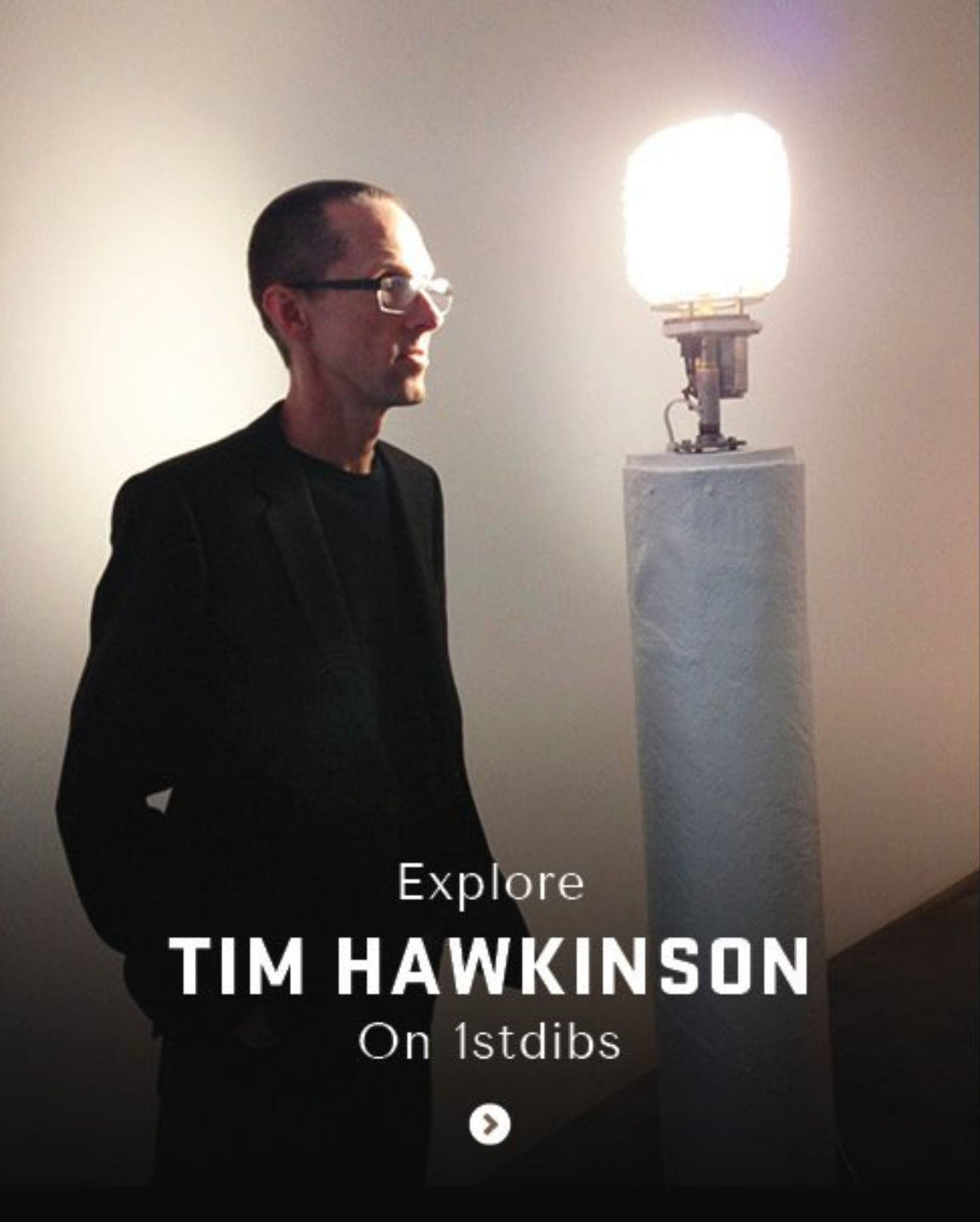


The Pace show includes such large-scale works as *Kookaburra*, 2012 (in foreground), made of palm fronds, acorns and steel.

The show includes several works that riff on the nature of chains, which can connote emotional attachment as well as slavery. Hawkinson began exploring the theme with *Daisy Go Round (Chain)*, made in 2011 from his daughter's outgrown bicycle. He cut the frame into cross-sections, transformed the loops into links and reassembled them into a floppy structure that shifts shape depending on how it is displayed. (In its current incarnation, the piece hangs from the gallery's ceiling like a spider web). Another chain turns up in *Animal Treasures*, 2013, an eight-foot-high mammal dangling a string of diminishing cubs from its mouth, like a Russian nesting doll turned upside down and inside out. Built from urethane foam and burlap, you can read it as an image of motherly love run amok, or as an allegory of history.

The supersized *Cartwheel*, 2013, features spinning wheels on each toe and on the heel.





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TIM HAWKINSON

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Finally, there's *Trefoil* (2013), Hawkinson's reworking of a tiny sculpture that his daughter made when she was three. Tall, slender and nine feet high, it presents a sort of totem pole created by three intertwined elements — a vine, a figure made of pinecones and a jacaranda branch that the artist split into pieces and reassembled with tongue-in-groove joinery. Built so the parts spiral tightly around each other, it suggests two figures linked in an embrace.

"Clare said her sculpture was a snake, but I figured, What do three-year-olds know?" Hawkinson says, laughing. "This is two figures hugging each other." In his rendering, he adds, it has become "sort of a crucifix, with the cross hugging the Christ, and the Christ hugging the cross."

The artist stands beside *Shout Out*, which, like the other pieces in the show, takes its title from the name of a Girl Scout cookie, an homage to Hawkinson's domestic life with his wife and daughter. Photo by Carol Kino