

Artillery Magazine Gallery Rounds  
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Tim Hawkinson  
*Drip Drawings*  
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by Jody Zellen



Tim Hawkinson is full of surprises. He is an idiosyncratic artist who is at once a master craftsman, a scientist and a tinkerer who has an amazing facility with a wide range of materials and mediums. His works are precise and cerebral, yet often about the imprecisions of the body (specifically his body) and how it relates to space. Hawkinson embraces and elaborates upon the process of creation. He has filled galleries and museums with mechanically wondrous machines that are simultaneously humorous and complex. His latest project — *Drip Drawings* — is a series of works on paper where black ink is applied large sheets of synthetic paper via a hand-made “contraption” Hawkinson devised for this very purpose. The machine approximates a modified tattoo gun and allows Hawkinson to control the flow of ink as documented in a short video that accompanies the exhibition. Once the process is revealed, the works become more rather than less fascinating.

The vast gallery is filled with single works, as well as grids of drawings, each with a specific pattern made from a combination of precisely spaced horizontal and vertical parallel lines. The patterns oscillate while also forming complex shapes that when presented in combinations appear to become letters or words. The pieces pay homage to Op art and share a kinship with works by Bridget Riley, Victor Vasarely and even Yayoi Kusama— artists interested in patterns and the creation of kinetic illusions. Hawkinson appears to follow suit, however his *Drip Drawings* are just as much about the mechanics of their making and how a succession of lines become shapes and how those shapes in turn, become complex dynamic forms. The drawings have the appearance of ruled lines, but are wavy because they are drips that rely on gravity and the smoothness of the paper surface, as well as the viscosity of the ink.

It is usually a somewhat futile exercise to try to reconstruct Hawkinson’s process. For example, in seemingly simpler works like *Sulus* (2019) and *Valival* (2020), it is possible to imagine Hawkinson moving from left to right across the large paper applying dripping ink lines gradually become shorter as they reach the center, then become longer again as they approach the right edge. The video depicts how Hawkinson spins the paper 90 degrees to finish the drawings and connect all the lines which then cohere into curvilinear shapes creating an illusionistic form. Similarly, when trying to reverse engineer *Valival*, it is possible to imagine Hawkinson gliding his machine across the surface making shorter and longer lines and then filling in the spaces with more lines that flow in a perpendicular direction.

While each individual work is a marvel to view and a puzzle to deconstruct, together (as many are hung in large grids that span the length and height of the gallery walls) the scope and complexity of Hawkinson's endeavor becomes apparent. It is a pleasure to get lost in the lines and ponder the patterns, as well as marvel about how he created a machine that seemingly defies gravity and precisely stops ink from its inevitable cascade down the page. These works play on notions of control and reveal the endless possibilities within a fixed system.

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