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Kestner Gesellschaft

Press Release

Spring 2026

Richard Hawkins

Potentialities

April 24 – August 2, 2026, Opening: Thursday, April 23, 2026, 7 pm

Press preview: Wednesday, April 22 2026, 10.30 am

Artist Richard Hawkins will be present and available for interviews by appointment.

[German and English versions, images and credits available for download.](#)

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Richard Hawkins
Potentialities

The Kestner Gesellschaft is pleased to present *Potentialities*, a major survey of works by **Richard Hawkins**. Since the early 1990s, the Los Angeles–based artist has developed a singular practice centered nerdy research, the dynamics of fandom and desire, and on the intense pleasure of looking. Comprising more than 100 works across eight bodies of work, the exhibition offers the first major institutional overview of Hawkins’s oeuvre in more than a decade. *Potentialities* focuses on works produced over the past twenty years, spanning painting, sculpture, ceramic reliefs, and AI-generated videos that draw on online subcultures and shared memes.

The exhibition opens with a group of paintings made through processes of cutting and pasting imagery from magazines and publications (2017–24). These works bring together sources as diverse as Greek and Roman statuary, headshots of hair models, thirst traps, gay adult film stars, and Hollywood icons, establishing collage and the combination of diverse references as a foundational method.

A second body of work consists of colorful acrylic paintings (2019–24), in which painted portraits of celebrities are combined with fragments of painted text, alongside figures such as vampires and zombies, bullfighters, and shirtless posers. Here, the logic of the scrapbook is no longer based on cut-and-paste collage alone but is translated into painting itself, where fragments are constructed through overlaps and transparencies rather than physical assemblage. This painterly reconfiguration turns the scrapbook into an expanded method: an obsessive vernacular system capable of holding disparate material within a deliberately unstable order. Through this approach, genre, history, popular culture, gay subculture, and art are compressed into a dense, shifting field of references.

Other sections of *Potentialities* more explicitly develop Hawkins’s sustained engagement with the practices and obsessions of other artists. These include the Forrest Bess Variations—paintings and works on paper—which interpret the paintings and theories of the mid-century fisherman-painter **Forrest Bess**; a series analyzing the asylum drawings of French writer **Antonin Artaud** through ceramics (2012–23); collages based on the notebooks of Japanese choreographer **Tatsumi Hijikata**, founder of **Ankoku Butoh** (“dance of darkness”); and *Death to Mike Kelley* (2019), dedicated to his former teacher, the American artist **Mike Kelley**.

The exhibition closes with a series of recent paintings developed in homage to French painter **Pierre Bonnard**. Taking up Bonnard’s eccentric use of color, overlaps, and transparencies, Hawkins reworks his compositions, recasting groups of young beauties in lush environments filled with beef, blossoms, butterflies, and cats. In an interview, Hawkins

reflects on this process: "I was intrigued by the looseness and clumsiness that Bonnard makes look so easy... getting lost in a fantasy of Bonnardness is my own kind of generative proliferation machine."

The title *Potentialities* refers to the capacity for something—anything—to be or become otherwise: the possibilities of being and becoming are limitless. In Hawkins's work, this idea operates as both concept and method. Across paintings, collages, and videos, images and subjects remain in flux, cut, layered, and recombined into open-ended constellations.

In short, desire and fandom emerge not as fixed themes but as an ongoing, non-teleological field—excessive and in constant formation—in which meaning is continuously produced through relations rather than fixed references. Collage, understood as the bringing together of disparate elements, structures Hawkins's "promiscuously referential" works. It operates as a mode of "cruising" through imagery from popular culture, literature, and the annals of art history, driven by juxtaposition, chance, and intuitive association.

The exhibition in Hannover is curated by Eva Birkenstock in close collaboration with Kunsthalle Wien. It is accompanied by the publication *Richard Hawkins: Potentialities*, with texts by Rhea Anastas, Annie Ochmanek, and Kristian Vistrup Madsen; an interview with the artist by Bruce Hainley; and an introduction by Michelle Cotton and Eva Birkenstock. The book is published in German and English by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Cologne (designed by Dan Solbach; 38 Euro).

Richard Hawkins has created a limited-edition print as part of a new series of artists' editions. *Mystery Cult of Harpocrates (Hannover Version)* (2026) reproduces his 2018 painting of the same name, included in the exhibition.

Short Biography & Selected Exhibitions / CV

Richard Hawkins (b. 1961, lives in Los Angeles) has had solo exhibitions at institutions including Kunsthalle Wien (2025/26); LOEWE's FW24 Men's Show, Paris (2024); Tate Liverpool (2014); Le Consortium, Dijon (2013); the Art Institute of Chicago and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (both 2010); de Appel, Amsterdam (2007); and Kunstverein Heilbronn (2003). He has also participated in numerous international group exhibitions, including Artists Space, New York (2023); Bonner Kunstverein (2019); Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam (2014); and the 2012 Whitney Biennial, New York. His work is held in major international collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Kistefos Museum, Norway; LOEWE Foundation, Madrid; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nevada Museum of Art; Palm Springs Art Museum; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Hawkins is a Professor of painting at ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena.

Education

1988 M.F.A., California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California

1984 B.F.A., University of Texas, Austin, Texas

Solo Exhibitions (selection)

2026

Potentialities, Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover

Galerie Buchholz, Cologne (forthcoming)

2025

Potentialities, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna

Human Non-Human, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago (with Aaron Curry)

New Paintings, Greene Naftali, New York

The Garden of Loves Ones, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong

2024

Blood Everywhere, Reena Spaulings, Los Angeles

Featuring 13 Flamboyant Fiends, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin

LOEWE FW24 Men's Show, La Garde Républicaine, Paris

2023

New Paintings, Reena Spaulings, Los Angeles

The logo for Kestner Gesellschaft, featuring the words "kestner" and "gesellschaft" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, stacked vertically on a black rectangular background.

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2022

Richard Hawkins: Videos, GUZZLER, Rosanna, Australien
The Forrest Bess Variations, Greene Naftali, New York

2020

Galerie Buchholz, Cologne

2019

Bait Paintings, Greene Naftali, New York
Richard Telles Fine Art (with John McAllister)

2018

Hotel Suicide, Greene Naftali, New York
To the House of Shibusawa, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin
Collage Paintings, Gesture Paintings, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin

2017

Richard Hawkins, Richard Telles, Los Angeles

2016

NOROGACHI: Ceramics After Artaud, Greene Naftali, New York
This Anal Crime of Being: New Ceramics, Goton, Paris
Being and its Fetuses: New Ceramics, Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne

Group Exhibitions (selection)**2025**

Gamins de Paris, Les Caves St Sabin, Paris
Reena Spaulings Fine Art Presents: The Family Guns, Galerie Hussenot, Paris
Scenes of Disclosure, Greene Naftali, New York
The Book on the Shelf, Nicolas Krupp, Basel
Sammlung Ringier 1995–2025, Langen Foundation, Neuss

2024

Play It As It Lays, Charim Galerie, Wien
On Landscape, Greene Naftali, New York
Le Contre-Ciel, curated by Olivia Shao, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong
Geometrie A Mano, Corvi-Mora, London

2023

4 Juices, Scheusal, Berlin

True Religion, High Art, Arles

On foot, kuratiert von Jonathan Anderson, Offer Waterman, London (catalogue)

Richard Hawkins, Pati Hill & Artur Varela, Ampersand, Lisbon

Artists for Artists Space, Artists Space, New York

Together in Time: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

Ecstatic: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

2022

The Practice of Everyday Life, Derosia, New York

Every Moment Counts – AIDS and Its Feelings, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo

Artists' Books – A Success Story, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main

2021

Sex is Gay: Part Deux, GUZZLER, Rosanna, Australien

The Skin I Live In, Lyles & King, New York

Houseguest: Shadows Fall Down, curated by Monica Majoli, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

GREENE NATFTALI EAST HAMPTON. Viewing Room. Summer 2021, Greene Naftali, East Hampton, New York

From Disco to Disco, Greene Naftali, New York

The Going Away Present, Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles

2019

Masculinities, curated by Michelle Cotton, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn (in cooperation with Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, and Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf)

Open House: Elliott Hundley, curated by Elliott Hundley and Bryan Barcena, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

Pacific Rim Job, Richard Telles, Los Angeles

Machine of Instant Utility, Cabinet, London

Dirty Protest: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Art Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

The Orchid and the Wasp, Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington

My Head Is a Haunted House, curated by Charlie Fox, Sadie Coles, London

Dracula's Wedding, curated by Charlie Fox, RODEO, London

2018

Tom House: The Work and Life of Tom of Finland, Mike Kelley's Mobile Homestead, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit
Sperm Cult, LAXART, Hollywood

2017

Strange Attractors: The Anthology of Interplanetary Folk Art Vol. 1 Life on Earth, organized by Bob Nickas, Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles
Section Littéraire, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern
Living Apart Together: Acquisitions from the Hammer Contemporary Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles
In the Hopes of Not Being Considered, Kate Werble Gallery, New York

2016

Me, Myself, I, China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles
Between Something and Nothing, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles

Awards**2012**

Guna S. Mundheim Fellow in the Visual Arts, American Academy in Berlin

2008

California Community Foundation, Fellowship for Visual Artists

2003

Otis College of Design Faculty Development Grant

2000

US/Japan Creative Artist Fellowship

1995

Art Matters Fellowship

Collections

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway

The University of Chicago Booth School of Business, Chicago

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson

Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami

Kistefos Museum, Norwegen

LOEWE Foundation, Madrid

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

Museum of Modern Art, New York

Nevada Museum of Art, Nevada

Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown

Exhibition Program

Wed, 15.4.2026, 6 pm

Artist Talk with Richard Hawkins and Art Historian Christian Liclair

English

Hochhaus-Lichtspiele, Goseriende 9, 30159 Hannover

Admission: 5 euros / reduced 3 euros / free for members

Thu, 23.4.2026, 7 pm

Opening

Richard Hawkins

Potentialities

With exhibition tour, DJ set by DJ Heatsick, drinks by Broncos Bar

The artist will be present.

Free admission

Thu, 28.5.2026, 7 pm

Eine Welt aus Tau: Book Launch and Conversation

Dr Christiane Hackerodt (Board, Dr Christiane Hackerodt Art and Culture Foundation

Hannover) and Prof Wilfried Köpke (Journalist and Curator)

Admission: 5 euros / reduced 3 euros / free for members

Sat, 6.6.2026, from 6 pm

Lange Nacht der Museen 2026

Admission only with a valid Lange Nacht der Museen 2026 ticket/wristband

6 / 7 / 8 / 9 pm

Performances by Norddeutscher Figuralchor

6–8 pm

Crazy Collage Workshop

Open workshop for children

From 6 pm

Bar, tapas and music

6.30 / 7.30 / 8.30 pm

Short guided exhibition tours

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Sundays, 4 pm

Public Guided Tours

With Gundi Doppelhammer, Gabriele Sand, Kristina Tieke
Admission + 3 Euro, free for members

Thursdays, 5 pm

Kestner Reading Group

Participation included in exhibition admission
Registration required: empfang@kestnergesellschaft.de

Thursdays, 6 pm

Meet the Team – Public Guided Tours

With the team of Kestner Gesellschaft
Participation included in exhibition admission

30.4.2026 with Art Educator Gabriele Sand

7.5.2026 with Curatorial Fellows Berenike Arbeiter and Leonie Funke

14.5.2026 with Art Educator Gabriele Sand

21.5.2026 with Art Educator Gabriele Sand and Exhibition Technician Karsten Bartz

28.5.2026 with Director Eva Birkenstock

4.6.2026 with Curator Alexander Wilmschen

11.6.2026 with Curatorial Fellow Berenike Arbeiter

18.6.2026 with Curatorial Fellow Berenike Arbeiter

25.6.2026 with Curatorial Fellow Leonie Funke

2.7.2026 with Director Eva Birkenstock

9.7.2026 with Curatorial Fellow Leonie Funke

16.7.2026 with Curator Alexander Wilmschen

23.7.2026 with Art Educator Gabriele Sand

Public Program for Children and Families

Thu, 23.4.2026, 3–5 pm

Children's Opening

Haunted House & Body Magic

For art-loving kids, ages 3+

Sat, 25.4. & Sun, 26.4.2026, 3–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunstaussflug

to the Hannover 96 Stadium / Heinz von Heiden Arena

Once a fan, always a fan?

For fan kids, ages 6–12

In cooperation with EDDIs Rudel, the Hannover 96 Kids Club

Sat, 9.5.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst – Goes International

Surprise–Surprise!

Art for kids in English, ages 5–12

Sun, 10.5.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerbanden

Beautifully HEADstrong Pictures & Objects

For portrait-loving families, ages 3+

Fri, 22.5.2026, 2–5 pm

Open Workshop

Make Collages!

For everyone. All ages. No registration required. Free of charge.

Sun, 24.5. & Mon, 25.5.2026, 12–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst at KinderKunstSpektakel

Robot Hands & Pixel Fun

For experimental kids, ages 4+

In cooperation with KunstFestSpiele Herrenhausen

Sat, 6.6.2026, 6–9 pm

Lange Nacht der Museen 2026

Crazy Collage Workshop

For everyone. All ages. No registration required. Free of charge.

Sun, 7.6.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerbanden

Funny Spooky Films?!

For brave families, ages 3+

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Fri, 19.6.2026, 2–5 pm

Open Workshop

Creating Gossip Magazines

For everyone. All ages. No registration required. Free of charge.

Sat, 20.6.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst – Goes International

Surprise–Surprise!

Art for kids in English, ages 5–12

Sat, 27.6. & Sun, 28.6.2026, 11.30 am–1.30 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunstaussflug

to the collective Prinzip Rauschen

Theatre Workshop: Help, I'm a Star!

For stage-loving kids, ages 6–12

Sun, 5.7.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerbanden

Collect, Glue, Paint – The Family Portrait

For colourful families, ages 3+

Mon–Fri, 6–10.7.2026, 10 am–4 pm

Kunstsommer 2026

All Potential Selves – Identity Collages

With multimedia artist SOFF

Sat, 11.7.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst – Goes International

Surprise–Surprise!

Art for kids in English, ages 5–12

Fri, 17.7.2026, 2–5 pm

Open Workshop

Painterly Wallpapers

For everyone. All ages. No registration required. Free of charge.

Sat, 18.7. & Sun, 19.7.2026, 3–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunstaussflug

to Sprengel Museum Hannover

Stills & Stories at the Easel

For paint-loving kids, ages 6–12

In cooperation with Sprengel Museum Hannover

Sun, 2.8.2026, 3–4.30 pm

kestnerbanden

Finissage Workshop

For curious families, ages 3+

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Registration & Information

Katja Krause

Art Education

katja.krause@kestnergesellschaft.de

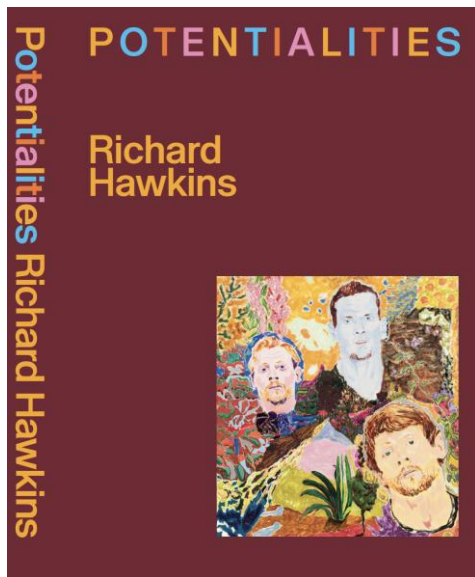
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Further events will be announced on the Kestner Gesellschaft website:

www.kestnergesellschaft.de/en

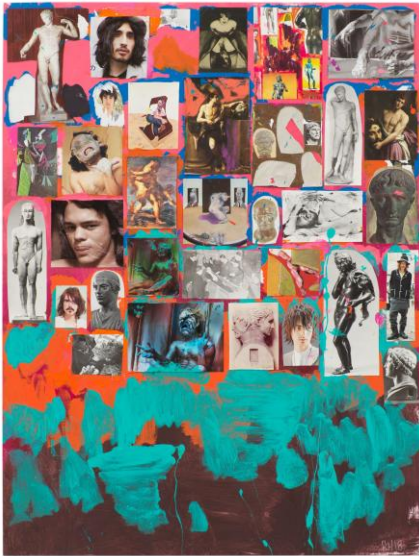
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Publication



The **publication** *Richard Hawkins: Potentialities* is released alongside the exhibition, edited by Eva Birkenstock and Michelle Cotton. It features texts by Rhea Anastas and Kristian Vistrup Madsen, as well as an interview between Richard Hawkins and Bruce Hainley. The book is published in German and English by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Cologne (designed by Dan Solbach, price: 38 Euro). It will be available **in the Kestner Gesellschaft bookshop** from the exhibition opening on April 23, 2026.

Limited Editions



Richard Hawkins

***Mystery Cult of Harpocrates (Hannover Version)*, 2026**

Giclée print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag® Ultra Smooth

53.3 × 40 cm

Edition of 50 + 5 A.P., numbered and signed

300 Euro (framing on request)

The exhibition *Potentialities* by Richard Hawkins at the Kestner Gesellschaft is accompanied by the edition *Mystery Cult of Harpocrates (Hannover Version)* (2026). For this limited print, the artist has created an AI-assisted reworking of his painting *Mystery Cult of Harpocrates* (2018), which is also included in the exhibition.

In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Kristian Vistrup Madsen describes the image as “quasi-scientific” in its “ordered grids” and draws a comparison to Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927–29). He sees it as “the attempt of a human being to construct a coherent worldview. Here, a map emerges of overlapping relations between the powerful marble head of Apollo, the luxuriant manes of guitarists, the particular masculine delicacy found in certain Japanese fashion photography, and Arnold Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* (1883) – all within the same field of vision.” Madsen identifies a sense of “melancholy” in Hawkins’ “image constellations”: “Even where the grid of images falters halfway through [...], we remember the god of silence and secrecy and see in the roughly applied violet nothing other than more flesh. Hawkins punishes the terrible angels by trapping them like flies in his web of paint and giving form to their ephemerality; at the same time, he loves them by granting them a place within the architecture of his art.”

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For the Kestner Gesellschaft edition, Hawkins has altered several faces in the photographs using artificial intelligence: mouths have been distorted, eyes obscured, beards added, and the individuals anonymised.

Exclusively available to members on site or via the online shop:

www.kestnergesellschaft.de/de/seite/online_shop



In addition, a souvenir T-shirt by Richard Hawkins for the Kestner Gesellschaft, originally presented in the Passage Room, is being reissued in a small edition to mark the exhibition.

Richard Hawkins

Souvenir for the exhibition *Potentialities* at the Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover

T-shirt with four-colour screen print featuring an excerpt from Mike Kelley, *Wallflowers* (1988)

Courtesy of the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts (www.mikekelleyfoundation.org)

Edition of 95 + 5 A.P.

45 Euro

Available on site or via the online shop

Membership & Customer Service

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Exhibition List of Works

Room 1

1 *House Capriccio*, 2008

Reworked dollhouse with lighting on table

231 × 74 × 99 cm

Raf Simons Collection, Antwerp

2 *Edogawa Ranpo*, 2025

Digital print on wallpaper

Dimensions variable

3 *Jean Patch*, 2018

Oil crayon and collage on panel in artist's frame

124.5 × 94 × 3.8 cm

4 *Commotion*, 2018

Acrylic, oil crayon and collage on panel

104 × 78.5 × 3.8 cm

5 *"Desire for Redemption, Catalyst of Infatuation"*, 2019

Acrylic, oil crayon and collage on panel

123.8 × 128.9 × 3.8 cm

6 *The Lust for Evil Sequence (Vienna Version)*, 2025

Digital video

8.40 min

7 *0999 pulsional array*, 2017

Collage and acrylic on panel

102 × 76.5 × 2.3 cm

8 *Mystery Cult of Harpocrates*, 2018

Collage and acrylic on panel

101.5 × 76 cm

9 *Purple Melody*, 2018

Collage and acrylic on panel

101.5 × 76 cm

10 *0998 pulsional array*, 2017

Collage and acrylic on panel

102 × 76.5 × 2.3 cm

11 *Golden Calf*, 2018

Collage and acrylic on panel

162.5 × 122 cm

Raf Simons Collection, Antwerp

12 *0994 The Flaying of Marsyas*, 2017

Collage and acrylic on panel

102 × 76.5 × 2.3 cm

13 *Or, Rather, the Adored's Resistance to the Incorporating Undertow of the One Who Adores*, 2019

Acrylic, oil crayon and collage on panel

129.5 × 124.5 × 3.8 cm

14 *Bee's Bumble*, 2018

Oil crayon and collage on panel in artist's frame

155 × 124.5 × 3.8 cm

15 *Unsecure Attachment*, 2018

Oil, collage and sequins on panel in artist's frame

124.5 × 129.5 × 3.8 cm

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York.

Room 2

Acrylic paintings, 2019–2024

1 *Cavalier*, 2022

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame

191.1 × 178.4 × 4.8 cm

Private collection

2 *To Divide Him Vein by Vein*, 2020

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame

178 × 223.5 × 5 cm

Collection Julien Wolf, Paris

3 *Rooster and Cat*, 2020

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame

191 × 179 × 5 cm

Collection Daniel Buchholz & Christopher Müller, Berlin

4 *Melancholy Bleat*, 2019

Acrylic and collage on panel in artist's frame

201.5 × 156 × 5.7 cm

5 *Left to His Own Devices*, 2024

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame
223.8 × 178.1 × 4.8 cm

6 *Soft yet Weirdly Ways*, 2020

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame
178 × 223.5 × 5 cm

7 *With Loathing Strangely Mixed*, 2020

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame
224 × 178.5 cm
Richard Mumby Collection, New York

8 *Many a Whimpering Ghost*, 2019

Acrylic and collage on panel in artist's frame
201.5 × 156 × 5.7 cm

9 *Aschenbach and Beetle*, 2020

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame
223.5 × 178 × 5 cm

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York;
and Greene Naftali, New York

Room 3

The Forrest-Bess Variations, 2022–2023

1 *Young Green Flesh*, 2021

Oil on canvas in artist's frame
39.9 × 39.9 cm (framed)

2 *Legend*, 2022

Collage, oil and pencil on paper
36.8 × 31.8 cm (framed: 50.5 × 45.7 cm)
Collection Martha Fleming-Ives and Lorne Blythe

3 *Red Rain – Pink*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame
47.8 × 63.7 × 2.5 cm (framed: 50.2 × 66 × 3.2 cm)

4 *Red Rain – Original Yellow*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame
48 × 63.7 × 2.5 cm (framed: 50.5 × 66 × 3.2 cm)

5 *Red Rain – Purple*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

47.8 × 63.7 × 2.5 cm (framed: 50.2 × 66 × 3.2 cm)

6 *Passage to Perfection*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

47.6 × 50.2 cm

Collection Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons

7 *Perineal pink*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

65.9 × 50.5 cm

8 *Perineal purple*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

50.5 × 65.9 × 3.2 cm

Private collection

9 *Perineal yellow*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

65.9 × 50.5 cm

10 *Perineal white*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

65.9 × 50.5 cm

Collection Kathleen Miller

11 *An Ascendant*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

60 × 66.5 × 3.9 cm (framed)

Collection Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons

12 *A Lower Enlightenment*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

60 × 66.5 × 3.9 cm (framed)

13 *The Hidden Revealed*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

79.4 × 104.8 cm

14 *The Coming Together*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

89.2 × 104.5 cm

15 *Vas Hermeticus II*, 2023

Collage

29.6 × 21 cm (framed: 41.5 × 32.8 × 2.8 cm)

16 *Vas Hermeticus I*, 2023

Collage

29.6 × 22.8 cm (framed: 41.5 × 34.6 × 2.8 cm)

17 *A Lower Enlightenment*, 2023

Collage

21.6 × 24 cm (framed: 33.5 × 36 × 2.8 cm)

Collection Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons

18 *An Ascendant Legend*, 2023

Collage

33.5 × 36.8 × 2.8 cm

Collection Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons

19 *Perineal yellow study*, 2022

Oil and pencil on paper

33 × 30.5 cm

Private collection

20 *Red Rain Legend*, 2023

Collage

25.1 × 32.8 cm (framed: 37 × 45 × 2.8 cm)

21 *The Bess Compilation*, 2026

Digital video

8.37 min

22 *The Supreme Becoming*, 2022

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

83.8 × 104.1 cm

23 *Crescent – White*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

48 × 63.5 × 2.5 cm (framed: 50.5 × 66 × 3.2 cm)

24 *Crescent – Black*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

48 × 63.5 × 2.5 cm (framed: 50.5 × 66 × 3.2 cm)

25 *Crescent – Original Red*, 2023

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

48 × 63.5 × 2.5 cm (framed: 50.5 × 66 × 3.2 cm)

26 Display cases

Books and ephemera by Richard Hawkins

Dimensions variable

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

Room 4

1 Projection with selection of video works (left)

Left to his own devices, 2025

1.55 min

Bitter blight (skinny remaster), 2025

3.39 min

Disfigures, 2024

3.31 min

The Cult Heads, 2025

1.10 min

2 Projection with selection of video works (right)

Curry & Hawkins – I know a joke, 2025

2.22 min

Manu Rios, Unbeheaded, 2025

3.25 min

Blood Everywhere (2nd version), 2025

12.57 min

Berdella, 2024

5.37 min

The George and Goliath, 2024

4.24 min

All: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

Room 5

Paintings, 2023–2025

1 *The Exalted Origins of Unmanly Mannerism*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

179 × 195 cm

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2 *Fruits on a Scarlet Lake and Vermilion Tablecloth (after Bonnard)*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

130 × 125 cm

Collection of Aishti, Beirut – Lebanon

3 *All Hands on D*ck*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

179 × 194 cm

Stephen Cheng, Hong Kong

4 *3 Jacks for Autumn*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

192 × 179 cm

5 *On the Terrace*, 2023

Oil and acrylic on canvas

127 × 121.9 cm

Collection Joshua I. Silver, London

6 *Dandy Floriculturists*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

192 × 180 cm

Collection Honus Tandijono

7 *"That one night all those cute guys showed up..."*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

179 × 194 cm

Collection Ringier, Switzerland

8 *Fruits with Cadmium Yellow Teapot (after Bonnard)*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

130 × 125 cm

9 *ASMR*, 2023

Oil on canvas

121.9 × 127 cm

10 *Fruits with a Finished Plate of Fish (after Bonnard)*, 2025

Oil on canvas in artist's frame

125 × 130 cm

Collection Eleanor and Bobby Cayre, New York

11 *That one night...*, 2025

Digital video

1.42 min

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

Paintings, 2023–2025 on Edogawa Ranpo wallpaper

12 *To Foam and Froth*, 2023

Oil on canvas
188 × 175.3 cm

13 *Nocturne*, 2023

Oil on canvas
121.9 × 127 cm

14 *The Supermundane*, 2023

Oil on canvas
188 × 175.3 cm
Collection Kourosh Larizadeh and Luis Pardo

15 *Fruits in Mars Black Shadow (after Bonnard)*, 2025

Oil on canvas
125 × 130 cm
Stephen Cheng, Hong Kong

16 *Sprinkler*, 2023

Oil on canvas
175.3 × 188 cm

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

Room 6

Ankoku Butoh & Tatsumi Hijikata, 2012–2025

1 *Ankoku 50 (Resource folder: Redon – Spider)*, 2012

Collage
69.9 × 76.8 × 3.8 cm

2 *Redon Spider Sequence*, 2025

Video
3.10 min

3 *Ankoku 124 (Bacon Branches)*, 2014

Collage
68.7 × 79 cm (framed: 71.2 × 81.8 × 4 cm)

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4 *Ankoku 127 (Dubuffet)*, 2014

Collage

67.3 × 102.7 cm (framed: 70 × 105.2 × 4 cm)

5 *Ankoku 26 (Resource folder: Dotera)*, 2012

Collage

68.6 × 79.1 × 3.8 cm

6 *Ankoku 16 (Danae)*, 2012

Collage

31.8 × 25.4 cm (framed: 45.7 × 39.4 × 2.5 cm)

7 *Ankoku 125 (Spread Eagle 2)*, 2014

Collage

67.2 × 79.6 cm (framed: 69.7 × 82.4 × 4 cm)

8 *Ankoku 27 (Resource folder: Electric hair)*, 2012

Collage

68.6 × 76.5 × 3.8 cm

9 *Ankoku 30 (Dead Baby)*, 2012

Collage

48.9 × 46.4 × 2.5 cm

Collection de Bruin-Heijn

10 *Ankoku 126 (Bug Candy)*, 2014

Collage

68.7 × 104.6 cm (framed: 71.2 × 107.3 × 4 cm)

11 *Ankoku 19 (Resource file: Danae)*, 2012

Collage

68.6 × 80 × 3.8 cm

12 *Ankoku 21 (Danae)*, 2012

Collage

49.5 × 40 × 2.5 cm

**13 *Ankoku 32 (Resource folder: Gaki–Clotho / Old prostitute / Dead mother)*,
2012**

Collage

68.6 × 79.1 × 3.8 cm

14 *To the House of Shibusawa*, 2018

Exhibition poster

42 × 29.8 cm (framed: 47.4 × 35 × 2.8 cm)

Collection Daniel Buchholz & Christopher Müller

15 *Aesthetic Anarchist*, 2018

Collage

44.7 × 32 cm (framed: 50 × 37.3 × 2.8 cm)

Collection Daniel Buchholz & Christopher Müller

16 *Gilles de Rais*, 2018

Collage

42.5 × 32 cm (framed: 50 × 37.3 × 2.8 cm)

Collection Daniel Buchholz & Christopher Müller

17 *Decadent Scholar*, 2018

Collage

69.5 × 60.5 cm (framed: 74.5 × 66 × 2.8 cm)

18 *A Radical Form of Excess*, 2018

Collage

43.8 × 30.8 cm (framed: 50 × 37.3 × 2.8 cm)

Collection Daniel Buchholz & Christopher Müller

31 *Garden of Loved Ones*, 2018

Rubber masks, clay, plaster, string on cardboard, table

101.6 × 91.44 × 91.44 cm

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

After Artaud, 2012–2023

19 *Pestilence*, 2025

Digital print on wallpaper

Dimensions variable

20 *Norogachian Prostitute Priestess of the Sun*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65.4 × 57.8 × 8.9 cm

Collection Jeffrey Rowledge, New York

21 *Norogachi Buttholes of the Sun – grey*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65.4 × 57.8 × 5.1 cm

22 *Castrating Daughter*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65 × 57 × 6 cm

Collection Ringier, Switzerland

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23 *Norogachian Castrated Priest of the Sun*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65.4 × 57 × 6.5 cm

Collection Allison & Warren B. Kanders

24 *Baby Diaper and Dagger Weapon Against Succubi*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65.7 × 57.8 × 6.4 cm

Collection Eleanor and Bobby Cayre, New York

25 *Being and its Fetuses*, 2023

Digital video

10.3 min

26 *Buttholes of the Sun – Brown*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65.4 × 57.8 × 8.9 cm

27 *Execrable Evacuation*, 2016

Glazed ceramic and steel nail in artist's frame

65 × 57 × 16.5 cm

FRAC Bourgogne Collection

28 *Embryos and Scraper*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65 × 57 × 3 cm

29 *Mystical Spike and Cum Rag Defense*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65.4 × 57.8 × 8.9 cm

30 *Execrable Bombardment*, 2016

Glazed ceramic in artist's frame

65 × 57 × 11.5 cm

Collection Ringier, Switzerland

31 *Sperm Trap #4–#9 (after Artaud's "The Sexual Inadequacy of God")*, 2020

Knife, pencil, screwdriver, saw blade, photographs, cardboard box, cigarette box, matchbox, matchbook, safety pins, needles, tweezers, metal clips, wooden skewers, stage blood

17.5 × 17 × 30 cm (#4), 4 × 4 × 7.6 cm (#5), 3.4 × 5 × 8.5 cm (#6), 8.8 × 5.6 × 9.2 cm (#7), 3.8 × 4 × 12.7 cm (#8), 9.7 × 3.8 × 26.5 cm (#9)

Unless otherwise stated: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

Café

1 *Drawn Bitter and Perilous Breath*, 2019

Acrylic and collage on panel in artist's frame
180.5 × 226 × 5.7 cm

2 *Sombre Soul Unsleping*, 2020

Acrylic on panel in artist's frame
223.5 × 178 × 5 cm

Both: Courtesy the Artist; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; and Greene Naftali, New York

Room 7

1 *Death to Mike Kelley (in an attemptedly Peter Saul manner)*, 2019

Oil, acrylic and collage on panel
154.9 × 200.7 × 5.7 cm
Kourosh Larizadeh and Luis Pardo Collection

2 *Mike Kelley is Dead*, 2022

Limited edition, four-colour print on hand-dyed pink T-shirt by Centre d'Éditions, Melbourne
Collection John Kelsey, New York

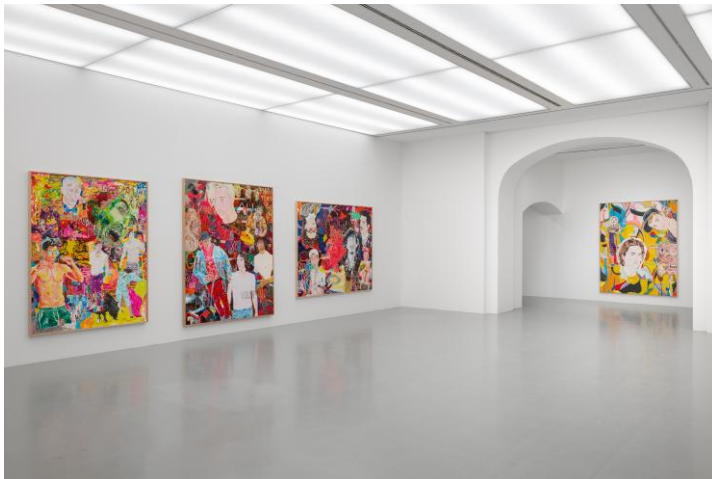
3 Archive presentation

Ephemera from the exhibition *Mike Kelley – Missing Time – Works on Paper 1974–1976/94*, Kestner Gesellschaft Hannover, 1995

Press Images with Credits: Installation Views & Portrait



Richard Hawkins, *House Capriccio*, 2008, installation view, *Potentialities*, 2026, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, *Potentialities*, 2026, installation view, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, *Potentialities*, 2026, installation view, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



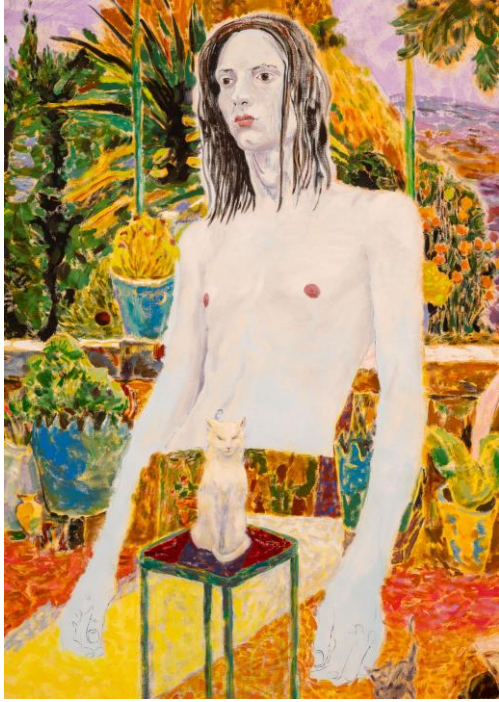
Richard Hawkins, *Potentialities*, 2026, installation view, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, (f. l. t. r.) *Dandy Floriculturists*, 2025; *On the Terrace*, 2023; *3 Jacks for Autumn*, 2025, installation view, *Potentialities*, 2026, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, (f. l. t. r.) *Fruits in Mars Black Shadow (after Bonnard)*, 2025; *Sprinkler*, 2023, installation view, *Potentialities*, 2026, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, *The Supermundane*, 2023, installation view, *Potentialities*, 2026, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, *Potentialities*, 2026, installation view, Kestner Gesellschaft, photo: Volker Crone



Richard Hawkins, photo: Laurence Ellis

Information & Press Contact

Richard Hawkins

Potentialities

24.4.–2.8.2026

Opening

Thu, 23.4.2026, 7 pm

Press preview

Wed, 22.4.2026, 10.30 am

The exhibition in Hannover is curated by Eva Birkenstock and organised in cooperation with Kunsthalle Wien.

The Kestner Gesellschaft thanks Richard Hawkins, Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York, and Greene Naftali, New York, for their support.

Press images

High-resolution press images are available for download. Further visual material can be provided on request.

Kestner Gesellschaft

Goseriede 11

30159 Hannover

kestnergesellschaft.de

Opening hours

Mon closed

Tue–Sun, 11 am–6 pm

Thu 11 am–8 pm

Opening hours on public holidays

Fri, 1.5.2026, Labour Day, 11 am–6 pm

Thu, 14.5.2026, Ascension Day, 11 am–6 pm

Mon, 25.5.2026, Whit Monday, 11 am–6 pm

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gesellschaft**

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Appendix: Press Reviews & Further Reading (Selection)

April 2026

Potentialities: Richard Hawkins

THE BELIEBER IN ALL OF US, OR: OUR HEART WOULD OUT-BEAT US

by Kristian Vistrup Madsen

p. 135–137

27.11.2025

Monopol Magazin

Richard Hawkins in Wien – Hollywood auf der Toteninsel

by Bernhard Schulz

<https://www.monopol-magazin.de/richard-hawkins-kunsthalle-wien>

14.5.2024

Manifesto

Running Towards Creativity: Richard Hawkins

by Madeleine Mak

<https://media.journoportfolio.com/users/284749/uploads/6f648c39-b3ca-4553-85df-2e0384dbd595.pdf>

23.4.2022

The Brooklyn Rail

Richard Hawkins: The Forrest Bess Variations

by Christian Liclair

<https://brooklynrail.org/2022/04/artseen/Richard-Hawkins-The-Forrest-Bess-Variations/>

THE BELIEBER IN ALL OF US,
OR: OUR HEART WOULD OUT-BEAT US
Kristian Vistrup Madsen

Fandom, today, is the domain of the second-rate: loners, losers, followers – people who can't be what they so admire in others. Under the cool reign of freedom, what could be worse than someone who actively identifies as inferior to their idol? Think of the Beliebers, ecstatic tweenagers in such great numbers that they bring traffic to a halt, wreaking havoc upon the public sphere. Think of Eminem's Stan, a basement full of posters and newspaper clippings on the walls, the rain pouring relentlessly, his girlfriend, Dido, queen of the Phoenicians, on the toilet, neglected. The practice of fandom is one of humility, an act of submission to a greater force; it pulls you away from normative romantic structures and into the boundless love of idol worship. Its typical objects, I believe, belong to a gallery of archetypes that repeats, to this day, across cultures, and to which for millennia people have looked for wisdom. Wisdom, I say, and evoke Justin Bieber's Calvin Klein adverts, his doe-eyed, dumbfounded stare. Yes – this is a kind of collective soul-image. Of what? Our enduring enthrallment to the emptiness of flesh, to youth and its perennially disappointed promise, innocence. I could go on.

Fandom has been largely antithetical to the ethos of modernism. I would speculate that, in the fine arts, fandom went out of style along with the tradition of copying classical sculptures in art academies, when myth and sacrality were replaced with agency and ego, the artist no longer imagined as heroically shouldering the burden of eternity, but rather as a creative genius working from a blank canvas, the inventor of the new. The word fan came into the world in the late nineteenth century as an abbreviation of fanatic, at a time when God's death-by-capital meant that overzealous faith, whether in a divine being or some other cultural product, was increasingly understood as a weakness, for Nietzsche even a sickness. Fandom is a response not so much to excellence as to magnetism. Is it what we used to call reverence? Devotion? Self-sacrifice? If so, the ruling deities have instead been invention, formal transgression, provocation, will to power. Meanwhile, the fan has been relegated to culture's shadow as capitalist trash by the hubristic assumption that we

have nothing to learn from such acts of humility; that fandom makes for little more than a lucrative market for merchandise, harmless opium for the beta masses.

But as Carl Jung knew, culture's shadow is a place of great depth. In his psychology, the individuating process begins with the patient becoming conscious of their own shadow, experienced at first as an inferior personality. The Belieber inside all of us. But as our eyes adjust to the darkness, we see. We see, as the rogue art historian Camille Paglia, for instance, saw in Michelangelo's portrait of Giuliano de' Medici the same sexual persona that would emerge hundreds of years later as Elvis Presley, and, I would contend, later still, as Justin Bieber, Nick Jonas and Adam Driver, each incarnation deserving of his own song. For Bieber, one of boundless, insolent narcissism; Jonas, of imperious plainness; and Driver, of his thick lips, high classic nose and a chest which – as Paglia writes of Giuliano's – 'has erotic delicacy and the intelligence and sensibility one normally expects of a face'.

Richard Hawkins is the scribe of these kinds of songs. He is attuned to the magnetism of soul-images, and is steadfastly under their power. These three men appear repeatedly in his series of 'collage paintings' (2017–18) [→ 139–44] alongside several others – as well as archaic and classical sculpture, paintings from Peter Paul Rubens to Paul Gauguin, Giorgio de Chirico to Francis Bacon, vintage pornography, silent films and cartoons. As an artist, Hawkins is a fan in that time-honoured way by which a measure of humility – a bowed head in the face of beauty – allows him a certain privileged access. In Hawkins's hands there emanates from these men what Paglia calls an 'ephebic transsexual quality': myriad contradictions between homosocial military culture and a feminine-associated masochism – flicked wrists, twists of the hips, magnificent blow-dried hairdos. The dandy-esque carnivorousness of Dracula meets the defencelessly smooth man-child, his Colgate smile. I should say that Hawkins employs nothing so obvious as Bieber's Calvin Klein ads, reaching deeper into the catalogue of trashy selfies where the pop star is stripped of glamour, nothing

but an escort, as Francis of Assisi, naked to the world and at its service, and we, still below, stare up at his ‘mounded breasts’ – channelling Paglia again – ‘forbidden Cities of the Plain’.¹

In the days when fandom was understood as civilising reverence, the worship of muses was thought to lead one into the light, to greatness and divinity. But Paglia makes a case for how a chthonic undertow was always part of what lent the image its force. Donatello’s bronze David she dubs ‘the beautiful boy as destroyer’, acknowledging the abysmal desire he evokes in the viewer, a destabilising erotic quality that should make us pause, even cower. Paglia sees dangerous, childlike David transposed into the soft demeanour of Sandro Botticelli’s Venus, and naturally he is there in Hawkins, too, as Leif Garrett and Matt Dillon, nude teenage heartthrobs with full mouths, gravity-defying locks and the blushed cheeks of a woman. Hawkins stays with the destruction that follows such beauty; in fact, his work erects an architecture of painterly gestures that somehow manages to hold it. We stand before the collage paintings in our inferiority – to beauty, its fleeting nature and the baseness and endurance of desire. Jung asks us to stay with the shadow, to get to know its images, and Hawkins, in his way, abides.

In his *Duino Elegies*, Rainer Maria Rilke writes that ‘Every angel is terrible’:

Still, though, alas!

I invoke you, almost deadly birds of the soul,
knowing what you are.

Hawkins, too, invokes these terrible angels – Bieber, Jonas Driver, Garrett, Dillon – knowing just as well not who, but *what* they are. ‘Where are the days of Tobias?’ asks the poet with reference to the child who, in his innocence, did not know he was walking with the Archangel Raphael. It is a trick question, because ‘the days’ do not amount to a historical epoch, but are literally the mere days in the life of an individual during which it is possible to sustain such innocence. At a stretch, they might number the candles on Leif Garrett’s birthday cake, which he holds forth, shirtless: Sweet Sixteen. And probably even that is too many. Now, we gaze upon the angels as if from a distance – ‘high up-beating, our heart would out-beat us. Who are you?’ we ask of them, because we only know what. ‘We, when we feel, evaporate’, writes Rilke – ‘oh, we breathe ourselves out and away’. And our beauty? It exhales from us ‘like heat from a smoking dish’. Angels, on the other hand, are characterised by closed and self-sustaining loops; they are images capable of holding feeling and youth in suspension, ‘mirrors, drawing up their own outstreamed beauty into their faces again.’²

As Rilke’s favourite writer, Jens Peter Jacobsen, once wrote, ‘No great amount of classical education is

necessary in order to come up with a Greek name for a naked person.’³ An unmasking not so much of the art itself as of our attempts to render more righteous the motivations that surround it. We know what they are, the angels, the protagonists of myth – erotic projections, apparitions sprung from the great well of desire – and still we can’t help but invoke them. We know that those whose bodies briefly served the images of angels were left ravaged – in the cases of River Phoenix, Brad Renfro or the saints in Dennis Cooper’s novels, even deceased. And still we meet Bieber’s empty eyes with our own. Perhaps angels are angels because *we* want them to be? Is it from our desire – that is to say, our inferiority – that their divinity stems?

With its title, the collage painting *Golden Calf* (2018) [→ 139] admits we might be worshipping a false god, one whose divine nexus is held in the repeated triangular patterns of lush hair and open male thighs. But then *Mystery Cult of Harpocrates* (2018) [→ 141] namechecks the Greek god of silence and secrecy, falsely inherited from the Egyptians, for whom the finger to the mouth was a sign for childhood. Who knows? Who knows what the gods tell us? Their stories, too, unravel into secrecy. As Bruce Hainley once wrote about Hawkins’s work, it asks how the beautiful became beautiful in the first place. One does not doubt that these faces, these bodies, belong to some heavenly order, and yet the nature of their message is the open question that Hawkins seeks to formulate.

Golden Calf and *Harpocrates* share with my favourite of the series, *Purple Melody* [→ 140], a quasi-scientific character in their ordered grids, some semblance of a rational impulse, a desire to parse. We might see in them, like in Aby Warburg’s *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), one man’s attempt to create some sort of coherent world-view. Here is a map of the intersecting relations between the great marble head of Apollo, the majestic manes of guitarists, the particular masculine daintiness evident in some Japanese fashion photography and Arnold Böcklin’s *Toteninsel* – all in the same field of vision. Warburg likewise orders his pinboards of illustrations from art history and beyond, not in terms of hierarchies of media, subject, place and patron, but on the basis of immediate and fairly loose visual associations. He doesn’t make any real scholarly claim outside of allowing for the interconnectedness of things, the repetitiveness of humans throughout history. Like Hawkins, he tells the story of our being enthralled by the same old angels time and again. But while Warburg’s assemblages are also idiosyncratic and fanciful, his atlas, in the end, is a mind map; in a cartoon, it would be drawn as a big cloud over his head. By comparison, Hawkins’s works are a body with all its inevitable ambivalence; the limitations that come with being subject to the laws of physics, but also the erotics. There is a different melancholy to Hawkins’s assemblages, a sense of yearning, a great desire first and foremost to

amass, to satisfy some itch by that very amassing. Even at the point where the grid of images falters midway, as in *Purple Melody*, we recall the god of silence and secrecy and see in the rough application of the colour purple only more flesh. Hawkins punishes the terrible angels by capturing them like flies in his spiderweb of colour, pinning their ephemerality onto a form, yet he also loves them by holding them in this way within the architecture of his art.

Another artist whose work is driven by fandom is Andy Warhol. But the object of his worship, I think, was celebrity rather than celebrities – that is, his aim was to let the body, perhaps reality as a whole, dissolve into a projection of images. Through the great media machine, to become a disembodied mirage, to become no one. The concept of the image at stake in Warhol is the ordinary one of semblance. In Hawkins’s work, we speak rather of the Jungian sense that sees the imaginary as kindred to the soul, image as a form of bodiliness unto itself.

The territory of Hawkins’s fandom is one in which ecstasy and eroticism are constantly keeping one another in check; not only to be outside of one’s own body, but to conjure the body of another so as to possess it. We see this in Hawkins’s fanzine *Secret Passage* (2017–19) – its subjects: teen beats, Tom Cruise – and the similarly styled artist book *My Own Personal Bess* (2020), in which the radical erotic, spiritual and artistic impulses of the mid-century painter Forrest Bess are not only explored but given body. In works included in *The Forrest Bess Variations* (Greene Naftali, 2022) [→ 46–67], and subsequent paintings and collages, Hawkins continues Bess’s enquiries into the transcendental power of hermaphroditism. One gets the sense that Bess and the images he unearthed from our collective psyche represent even more instances in an ancient lineage of thought and experience, available for Hawkins to humbly resume in his own time. The privileged access of the one who bows his head.

Likewise, in the series of collages devoted to the Japanese writer Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, a strand of which is titled *Ankoku* (2012), lie darkness, obscurity, evil. Shibusawa was the translator of the Marquis de Sade, Georges Bataille and Jean Genet, and a close friend of Yukio Mishima, among literature’s most devoted worshippers of terrible angels, as well as Tatsumi Hijikata, the founder of butoh, the twentieth-century art form that might move most wholly in the Jungian shadow. From Shibusawa extends an ancient lineage, chroniclers of the dark side of eros, impulses it is possible to call upon, transmit, even embody. Though the very notion of embodiment here is expansive. Yes, Bess did make good on his desire for a third orifice, cutting into his own flesh, as Mishima did, too, a sword through his stomach. But crucial to any reading of de Sade is the understanding that the power of his literature lies precisely in the imaginary. Whether he carried out the transgressions detailed in *120 Days of Sodom*, whether there is a real Justine who lived and died, is beside the point. Sade’s books are heavy – literally, they are long – they are repetitive, unflinching, full of time as it accumulates within the body. These are not stories about sadism, but the thing itself.

To face the implications of this is to expand the boundaries of art far beyond the sphere of representation. And it is in this beyond that I think we can understand Hawkins’s approximations of his idols, too. Like all true fans, Hawkins is a fetishist. We are back in Stan’s basement full of magazine cutouts and posters, perhaps there is a used towel, a drumstick, an autograph on a napkin. The *Ankoku* collages with their glued-on pictures, the pencil markings that seem not so much to describe but to manifest ‘a monster made from dust’, ‘a flower of convulsing pus’. Though flat, the physicality of Hawkins’s collages is equal to that of the sculptures, his haunted doll houses, his busts of Halloween masks, his Chinese lanterns. To consider materiality in Hawkins’s work brings us into the realm of the gothic, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, alchemy, somewhere between theatre and science, both as forms of black magic. But we can also think of Buddhist animism, of Jungian soul-images. In Hawkins, it is all real.

Upon visiting Giorgio Morandi’s studio in Bologna, I learned that he would paint the jugs and bottles and vases that he used as models for his paintings. I mean, the actual jug, bottle and vase would be covered in a layer of faint pastel before being rendered on canvas in that same shade. Like the proscenium of a stage, Morandi made a kind of buffer zone for the painting’s fiction, letting it bleed into the real. Funny, I thought, the limits of our imagination. But then, what if it happened the other way around? If the picture exuded such force that reality simply had to follow? For such is the power of Morandi’s works: they have body, they are both image and thing. And there is, perhaps for that reason, somewhere on Hawkins’s altars to the flesh, his ‘collage paintings’, at least one of Morandi’s still lifes. It sits in customary fashion alongside dead teenagers, the naked effigies of the ancient world. If they – jugs, vases, thighs, chests, forbidden cities – belong to the before or after of reality, I am not sure. If my own desire is a response to them or their source – that I don’t know either.

1 Camille Paglia, ‘Renaissance Form: Italian Art’, in *Sexual Personae*, London/New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.

2 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, trans., New York: Norton, 1966.

3 Jens Peter Jacobsen, *Niels Lybne*, in *Samlede Skrifter*, Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1910, p. 67. My translation.

MONOPOL

Magazin für Kunst und Leben

Richard Hawkins in Wien **Hollywood auf der Toteninsel**

Text
Bernhard Schulz

Datum
27.11.2025

Kunst

Die schreiend bunten Bilder des US-Künstlers Richard Hawkins lassen sein Publikum Promi-Raten spielen. Doch eine Ausstellung in der Kunsthalle Wien zeigt, dass hinter der Pop-Fassade auch etwas Dunkleres steckt

Den kenn' ich doch? Das wird sich manche Besucherin und mancher Besucher beim Umschauen in der Kunsthalle Wien fragen. An den Wänden und auf drei Stellflächen sind großformatige Gemälde und Collagen zu sehen; meist auf weißer Wand, teils aber auch auf farbig gemustertem Hintergrund. Insgesamt rund 100 Arbeiten sind es, dazu kommen Videos sowie eine Gruppe von Skulpturen.

Man könnte von einer Werkschau sprechen – denn eine Retrospektive ist es nicht, wohl aber ein Überblick über das derzeitige Schaffen eines Künstlers in allen medialen Formen. Richard Hawkins wird hier zum ersten Mal in Österreich vorgestellt, aber auch in Deutschland ist der 1961 geborene Texaner seit einer einzigen Einzelausstellung im Jahr 2003 noch nicht prominent hervorgetreten. Hawkins lebt in Los Angeles, im nördlich gelegenen Pasadena hält er eine Professur für Zeichnen und Malen am ArtCenter College of Design.

L.A. ist eine Art Stichwort: Denn es ist die Stadt von Film und Fernsehen, der Medien und des schönen Scheins. Und davon hat Hawkins geradezu Unmengen in sich aufgesogen. Sich selbst bezeichnet er als Fan von Filmschauspielern, und sie sind es, die ein kundiges Publikum in seinen Bildern wiedererkennen kann.

Die Lust am Betrachten

Doch das Ratespiel ist kein vergnügliches, der schreienden Buntheit der Bilder zum Trotz. Alsbald erkennt der Betrachter, dass da zwar Gesichter und Köpfe zu sehen sind - aber sehr oft eben nur diese. Die Körper fehlen, oder sie gehen in den Farbwirbeln unter. In seinen Videos, teils mithilfe von K.I. geschaffen, wird Hawkins deutlicher: Da baumeln dann bluttriefende Häupter vor der (vermeintlichen) Kamera und verdrehen die Augen. Die "Toteninsel" aus dem gleichnamigen Gemälde von Arnold Böcklin, die in einem der Filme langanhaltend zu sehen ist, gibt denn auch den nötigen Hinweis auf den morbiden Hintergrund, vor dem sich Hawkins scheinbar so lebendigen Szenerien abspielen.

Hawkins, so formuliert es die Kunsthalle in einem Ausstellungstext, habe "eine einzigartige Praxis entwickelt, die auf der Lust am Betrachten und der Dynamik von Begehren basiert". Die Freude am Schauen teilt sich dem Besucher unmittelbar mit, die Dynamik des Begehrens erschließt sich erst in zweiter Linie.

Aus homosexueller Neugier macht der Künstler kein Geheimnis, und wer es nicht wüsste, braucht sich nur die Abbildungen von Größen wie Robert Redford, Clint Eastwood oder Burt Reynolds anzuschauen, die in verschiedenen Collagen auftauchen. Stars aus einer anderen Zeit, in der muskelstrotzende Männlichkeit noch ganz ungefiltert zur Schau gestellt wurde. Auch neuere Stars tauchen auf, Matt Dillon etwa, und Film-Fanatiker werden sicher noch weitere Gesichter erkennen.

Der Tod ist Hawkins so nah wie damals Schiele

Aber es wäre falsch, wollte man Hawkins auf eine queere Thematik verengen. Er selbst spricht in Wien vom künstlerischen Prozess, und das ist richtig so. Denn das Gesehene, das Hawkins im Kopf hat, wird durch ihn zur Kunst, das heißt zu einer eigenen, gestalteten Wirklichkeit. Die umfangreichen Bild-Sammlungen, die Hawkins aus Zeitschriften-Schnipseln collagiert, lassen nicht von ungefähr an den großen Aby Warburg denken, der sich ein Leben lang mit dem Wandel und dem Fortleben bestimmter Motive durch die Zeiten und Kulturen hindurch beschäftigt hat. So kommen auch bei Hawkins Antike und Renaissance zu ihrem Recht. Denn da sind sie, die schönen Körper, die in unseren Tagen ihre Transformation ins Bewegtbild des Films erfahren haben.

Die großformatigen Gemälde sind denn auch als Collagen mit dem Pinsel zu verstehen, zusätzlich verfremdet durch die Einfügung von Worten und Sätzen, neben oder gar über die gemalten Köpfe hinweg, und die Einbettung in Farbmuster. Hawkins gibt die Künstlichkeit, das Menschengemachte der Kunst ohne weiteres preis. Der Betrachter kann, ja soll, den Pinselstrichen folgen, die sowohl abstrakte Systeme bilden als auch physische Realität in Form der Menschenköpfe und Körper nachformen.

Für ein Wiener Publikum ist von zusätzlichem Reiz, dass Hawkins sich mit der – nun wahrlich morbiden – Kunst von Gustav Klimt und Egon Schiele beschäftigt, ihre Werke collagiert und zitiert. Der Tod ist Hawkins ebenso nah wie damals Schiele. Ein Lieblingsmotiv ist die biblische Salomé, die den Kopf Johannes des Täufers fordert.

Der abgetrennte Kopf als Codezeichen für verbotene Liebe

Oscar Wilde hat zum Salomé-Mythos ein Drama geschrieben, das im viktorianischen England für Skandale sorgte. Fast meint man, dass auch Hawkins einen solchen Aufschrei wünschte, so blutrünstig wie es bei ihm zugeht. Aber der Grusel ist im 20. Jahrhundert ins Horrorkino gerutscht, und das wiederum zitiert Hawkins gern.

Der abgetrennte Kopf sei ein Codezeichen für verbotene Liebe, erläutert der Künstler, um dann sogleich über seine Malkunst und das große Vorbild Pierre Bonnard zu sprechen. Dieser hat gleichfalls gegenständlich gemalt, doch zugleich abstrakt, wenn man seine delikateten Farbfelder und -wirbel betrachtet, in denen das gegenständliche Motiv bisweilen zu verschwinden scheint.

Begehren, Zerstörung, Leben und Tod – darum dreht sich die Motivik von Richard Hawkins. Aber ebenso um Farbe und Linie, um die Überlagerung und Verschmelzung von Formen. Eben um Kunst. Aber das tut sie so laut und schrill, wie es wohl in der Medien-Metropole Los Angeles zugeht.



Kunst in Wien

Richard Hawkins "Potentialities", Kunsthalle Wien, bis 6. April 2026



Bernhard Schulz

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Via Loewe, American artist Richard Hawkins and heartthrobs.

Running Towards Creativity

What do Justin Bieber, OnlyFans and classical Greek sculptures all have in common? They amalgamate in the kitschy and kinky world of contemporary American artist Richard Hawkins. Found at the likes of the Art Institute of Chicago and New York's Museum of Modern Art, his art casts an erotic tinge on pop culture, celebrity and art history references. In one of Hawkins' works titled *Sprinkler*, a paparazzi image of Nick Jonas holding a water hose is reimagined as a nude. Surrounding the former teen heartthrob, flowers and butterflies in vibrant pinks, yellow and cobalt are depicted in the style of French symbolist artist Odilon Redon. According to Hawkins, who also doubles as a professor of Painting and Drawing at the University of California, Los Angeles, this "subjectively perverse" lens runs through his growing body of work. But sheer provocation isn't his aim. Rather, Hawkins' mishmash of thirst traps and abstract forms resonate more like an unapologetic ode to parts of the self he once had to minimise. Born in a small town in Texas in 1961, the artist recounted feelings of alienation as he grappled with his identity and sexuality. "I basically failed every attempt to be masculine and so I had no other option but to get into some impractical creative field," Hawkins shared. "It was better to be odd and misunderstood than to be bad, sinful and wrong," Hawkins said. "And that still affects me today... 50 or 60 years later." At the age of 11, the artist discovered collaging. Using his favourite monster magazines, he would cut up and organise images of villainised characters like Frankenstein and Dracula. "I think I was identifying with

the monster," Hawkins shared. "What's Frankenstein but the guy who is created but doesn't fit in?" Along with paintings and sculptures, this art style evolved to be central to his work. "Collage is like the perfect medium to express what the self thinks of the self," Hawkins explained. In January, the artist boarded a flight to Paris to witness his art displayed not at a museum or a gallery but on a Loewe runway. Turns out, Hawkins was tapped as the latest artist collaborator for the house's fall-winter 2024 menswear collection. His avant-garde paintings were translated onto garments using beaded embroidery on trousers and hoodies as well as jacquard knit for maxi dresses and cardigans. Jewellery, and the hallmark *Squeeze* bag and *Puzzle* tote, also got a Hawkins' upgrade. For the show space, the artist electrified with 12 bespoke digital collages that mimicked arched stained glass windows. Made using AI, the intentionally glitchy videos quirkily interspersed ambassadors and friends of the house such as Taeyong, Manu Rios and Omar Apollo, with crustaceans, porn stars and echoes to José Pérez de Rozaé 1960s window designs for the brand. "This experience with Loewe was very validating," Hawkins shared. "To see my work inspire creativity in others was a really humbling and confirming event."

Text/
MADELEINE MAK
Photos/
Loewe and
RICHARD HAWKINS

has a new platform to tempt us with porn stars



RICHARD HAWKINS



MANIFESTO: Why are media and celebrity culture consistent influences in your art?

RICHARD HAWKINS: I always gravitated towards movies that had nudity. Back in undergrad, VCRs didn't have a pause mechanism. I remember trying to grab stills of the shower scene of Tom Cruise in *Taps* using my Polaroid camera. It took at least two boxes of Polaroids just to get a blurry image. I was very conscious of the fact that I looked for erotic content in movies or magazines or that I was looking at media wrongly... or perversely.

To tie it to the videos [for Loewe], Omar Apollo was the first [photoshoot] I got. The Loewe team and Jonathan [Anderson] were kind enough to do their own photoshoots with their brand ambassadors; some of which were video footage. I asked for something if not erotic then salacious. For Omar's, he was fully clothed and had a vest on. But luckily enough, he lifted his arms a lot. So I perversely edited the videos so that the zoom would just focus on his armpits. (*Laughs*)

M Did you ever imagine seeing your work intersect with fashion?

RH No! (*Laughs*) Fashion is only there for me to cut out shirtless pictures from magazines. Put on a pair of New Balance and a button-down shirt and I'm ready to go. I'm too self-conscious to wear anything fashion forward. But I have to say that even from the initial conversation [with Loewe], there was so much attention to my own personal wants and needs – a great amount of respect that I didn't necessarily expect. You know, [Loewe] is such a goliath of a thing!

And there was some reticence on my part: Are they going to cherry pick my most iconic images and make money off that? Is this what my career is going to be known for? The guy that once did the Loewe thing? There was a paranoia, but they were so generous and still are... they really surprised me.

M So when the conversation started, was it quite clear how they wanted to incorporate your work or was it a continuous conversation?

RH It was a continuous conversation! I had been fiddling with video-like stuff just through Instagram and some side projects, but I'm not trained and was using the most basic programmes.

I sent them some moving GIFs. They said, go for it and that they'd help photograph the brand ambassadors with my specifications. It was also my idea to move the audience to the middle of the runway. In the past, they put the sculptures in the middle and so I was like, "Let's mess this up." Immediately, Jonathan [Anderson] said we can do that without any hesitation!

M The digital collages are inspired by José Pérez de Rozas' window designs for Loewe in the 1960s. What about his work spoke to you?

RH I thought I recognised an affected fabulousness there. A dog whistle to gays. (*Laughs*) Maybe it's also because I can't describe its interest to me, but it seemed like a straight man would not make windows like this. Like a purse with an acrobat? So I immediately responded to that dog whistle and wanted to use them. Through conversations with Jonathan, it would develop into this idea of a sanctuary.

Another influence I keep forgetting to mention is *The Masque of the Red Death*, an Edgar Allen Poe story. It has colour-coded rooms and this hedonistic activity goes on with death looming.

So, I tried to colour code the videos. Initially, I wanted to colour each video individually, but at the end, it felt better to mix them up and have them all going at one time. That was an influence plus some reverent sanctuary feel...



M A sanctuary for?

RH I think a sanctuary of male bodies on display... a sanctuary for the perversity of looking. The videos move so fast that you can't really tell the concentration on Omar [Apollo]'s armpits or that I cut Manu Rios' head off. It's just a barrage of things. At the end, it's the people that feel the most affinity for it who feel the outré risqué elements.

M What was the development process like for the digital collages?

RH Fascinating but difficult as hell! What I definitely didn't want to do was something seamless, polished and that looked commissioned. I wanted it to still look handmade even though it was digital. I really pushed the glitch. We talk about facture in painting. We leave the evidence of the brush or the tooth of the canvas; the non-illusionistic qualities. I didn't want just surrealism but an attempt at it that was full of flaws. Rather than being fascinated by the illusion of something, you get a sense of the obsessiveness of how it was made.

M What was the process like transforming your paintings into ready-to-wear? Were there restraints?

RH One of the motifs in the paintings is of a porn model with his tongue out. That seemed to be kind of risqué to put on a purse. (*Laughs*) Also, the thing about the bead work is that it's handmade and includes different sizes of beads... it's that intricate. Perhaps, the more erotic parts of the body represented in those painting have a different feel when you run your hand across them. I wouldn't call it perverse, but they are very sensual objects.

In that sense, they are better than the paintings. They are an actualisation of what's only indicated in the paintings. I didn't have that much to say over which images [Loewe] picked or how they treated those images when they did. When I saw the first couple photographs and samples, I was like, go ahead, go crazy. It came from such a generous expansion of the work into their own medium. It was so gratifying!

M What about your experience seeing the garments and accessories in motion at the show?

RH I had the chance the day before to see all the pieces in the flesh. The [Loewe] design team were so giddy about what they had done with my work. They got it, absolutely! The jacquard sweaters up-close show the nipples protruding. Armpits also had these loose pieces. I converted these people into fans and they wanted to communicate with me through their materials. At the runway show, I was surprised by how much of my work

was featured. I can't reveal what will be in the ready-to-wear but there is a lot to come. It's incredibly gratifying to see how much they wanted to integrate my work so respectfully into their collection.

M We saw that you sat next to Manu Rios! Was it odd breaking the fourth wall with one of your digital collage muses?

RH There was a little fear, you know? I work in my little cave manipulating things... maybe Manu didn't realise that I cut his head off but he did realise that I had put him in a monkey cage! After meeting Kit Connor, I really wished he was one of the brand ambassadors that they had photographed. He was so sweet, had looked up the work and actually wanted to have a conversation while we were sitting there.

M Is fashion art?

RH To me, the conventional division of art and craft into disciplines has a purpose and there are integrities specific to each discipline. If there is a debate, it sounds like its primary purpose is to employ fashion writers and sell fashion magazines. So, no, fashion is not art. What's wrong with it being a craft capable of incredible brilliance and transformative power? On the other hand, why isn't art fashion?

M What message do you want your art to convey?

RH I've come to realise how powerful creativity can be once you kind of tap into it and identify with it. That sounds so generic but it's about growing up to think of myself as a creative individual no matter what I make, talk about or read. Being able to move forward in the world knowing that I can find a creative way to approach even hurdles and obstacles has helped me in this life.

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ARTSEEN | APRIL 2022

Richard Hawkins: *The Forrest Bess Variations*

By Christian Liclair

As an artist, Richard Hawkins is pretty vers. One can never be certain what to expect stylistically or in terms of his medium, but his artistic practice seems to always be motivated by his own fandom, excessive research, and a thorough engagement with the visual and corporeal pleasures of gay culture. For his *Forrest Bess Variations*, Hawkins created a series of abstract paintings in vibrant colors that are, as the title indicates, mediations on the late Forrest Bess (1911–77), a gay painter from coastal Texas, who is known for translating his mythical visions onto canvas and who Hawkins acknowledged, in a contribution to a recent



Richard Hawkins, *The Celestial Body*, 2022. Oil on canvas on board and artist's frame, 36 1/8 x 41 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali.

ON VIEW

Greene Naftali

Bess retrospective at the Fridericianum in Kassel (2020), as the greatest inspiration for a “fledgling little bookish fag” who was growing up in rural Texas half a century after Bess.

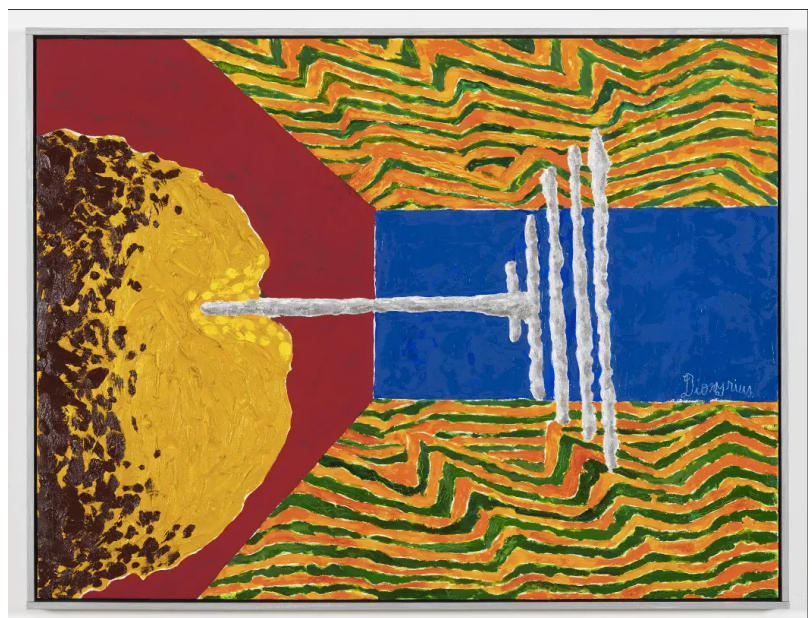
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One of the first works one encounters inside Greene Naftali’s ground floor gallery is *Legend* (2022), a collage that combines reproductions of works by Bess, which served as the basis for Hawkins’s variations, with an annotated color palette, attributing certain characteristics or body parts and fluids to distinct colors: yellow represents “piss” but can also stand for piss’s passageway into the world, the “urethra,” whereas pink designates the figure of the “hermaphrodite.” These color codes are not Hawkins’s own invention, but part of an elaborate lexicon of symbols that Bess recorded in his journals and communicated in letters to the art historian Meyer Schapiro or his gallerist Betty Parsons. Besides the interpretation of colors (red represented, for example, the male, whereas white stood for the female), Bess interpreted a number of basic geometric forms: a circle with emanating lines symbolizes the “golden star,” a.k.a. the “anus,” an obelus, stands for “death—undilated bulbocavernosus urethra,” and parallel lines imply a “back and forth” movement, thus signifying both “masturbation” and “coitus.”

Bess believed that these ancient symbols, which appeared to him in his visions, had derived from what the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung called the “collective unconscious,” an allegedly transhistorical repertoire of knowledge and imagery shared among all of humanity. By studying the combinations of symbols in his paintings, Bess hoped to perceive in the



Richard Hawkins, *The Penetration*, 2022. Oil on canvas on board and artist's frame. 31 1/4 x 41 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Greene

Bess hoped to perceive, in the tradition of Goethe's Faust, "whatever holds / The world together in its inmost folds."

artist's name, 31/7 x 41 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali.

In his *Variations*, Hawkins experiments with modified color schemes, rearranges these allegedly arcane symbols and moves them between paintings. What further connects many works in the exhibition is the word "Dionysius" that the artist has scratched into the surface of most paintings. It is, as Hawkins elucidates in his short essay for the exhibition, a reference to a letter in which Bess asserted that the "creator behind me may be the Devil or it may be Dionysius." The latter was, Hawkins speculates, perhaps the sixth century Greek theologian, whose writings profoundly impacted Jung's theory of analytical psychology. However, Bess could have also misspelled the name of another, more ancient Greek figure, the demigod Dionysus, who is traditionally depicted as either an old, bearded man or an effeminate youth. Thus, Dionysus's divine ambivalence regarding his gender representation can be seen as a further element in the theme of hermaphroditism, which seems to permeate Hawkins's exhibition as it manifests in the frequent use of pink, in the repeated juxtaposition of red and white, as well as in the recurring oval symbols from Bess's 1957 painting *The Hermaphrodite*.

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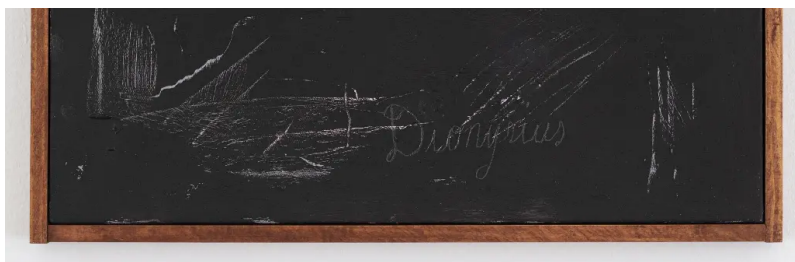
In fact, the figure of the hermaphrodite ran like a golden (or dare I say: yellow) thread through Bess's paintings and theories. After his extensive study of alchemy, mythology, and art



alchemy, mythology, and art history, Bess concluded that through hermaphroditism eternal life might be possible. And, as almost every account on Bess explicates in an often pathologizing manner, the artist himself actualized these assumptions on his own body.

In the early sixties, he

surgically created an orifice at the base of his penis to create a direct pathway into the bulbocavernosus urethra, which could then, if sufficiently dilated, receive another man's penis. In this context, the reference to Dionysus makes a lot more sense, since he was the only demigod who was granted what Bess, by becoming what he termed a "pseudo-hermaphrodite," hoped to achieve: immortality.



Richard Hawkins, *Dionysius, Black Moon Gets Bigger*, 2021. Oil on canvas and artist's frame, 12 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali.

But Hawkins's show seems to offer a different perspective on Bess's experiments in self-creation. Take a look at *The Penetration* (2022), which, according to Hawkins's *Legend*, descended from a unification of Bess's *The Penetrator* (1967) and *Untitled No. 2 (The Penetrated)* (1966). While this painting might, at first, appear as just another reference to hermaphroditism (recalling the century-old isomorphism between activity as male and passivity as female), the corresponding symbolism is missing entirely. Instead, the antenna-like structure from Bess's *The Penetrator* pierces the dented hemicycle of *The Penetrated*, which resembles the glans of a penis. And then there appears the Greek name again and I am reminded that Dionysus was not only associated with winemaking, insanity, or religious ecstasy, but he was also one of the gods of pleasure. Against this background and recalling Bess's obsession with all things urethra, Hawkins's *Penetration* emerges as an abstract representation of a particular form of masturbatory self-penetration: an erotic practice known as sounding, in which a thin object is inserted into the penis for the sake of momentary pleasures, which can derive from the insertion itself but also, if one sounds just deep enough, from the stimulation of one's prostate.

HAWKINS'S *Variations* OF BESS'S VISIONS make me wonder whether his surgery was, perhaps, also a very practical way to enhance his sexual pleasures; a way to, so to speak, cut out the middleman—his penis—and achieve urethral orgasms through penetration by another man. In this sense, Hawkins's *Forrest Bess Variations* might be concerned less with uncovering some hidden truths about immortality and rather with the real corporeal possibilities of intensifying worldly pleasures; a colorful meditation on prostatic instead of prophetic revelations.

Christian Liclair is an art historian and completed his PhD in the research group “Aesthetics of Desire” at the Freie Universität Berlin. His monograph on *Sexually Explicit Art, Feminist Theory, and Gender in the 1970s* is forthcoming.

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