

THE POEM

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Richard Hawkins

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Over three decades, Richard Hawkins has developed a body of work that turns on the erotics of visibility, fueled by what he calls “a combination of historical research and boyish obsessions.” Collage—the commingling of unlike terms—is the guiding principle of his practice, which spans painting, video, glazed ceramic, scrapbooks, zines, sculpture, and more. Maximalist in its aesthetic and roving in its tastes, Hawkins’s work follows his own particular lines of fascination. Artistic touchstones tend toward cult figures like Forrest Bess or Antonin Artaud, and recurring subjects include Greek sculpture, butoh dance-theater, OnlyFans, and celebrity crushes. For Richard Meyer, the results are a brisk blend of “avant-garde, kitsch, and kink”—one that “challenges us to rethink our hierarchies of value and visual pleasure.” Raised in rural Texas, Hawkins was educated at CalArts, coming up under mentors such as Mike Kelley and Dennis Cooper in the 1980s and ’90s, when the AIDS crisis laced sensuality with an undercurrent of risk. With a knowing hedonism, he uses collage tactics of accretion and layering to tap the complex workings of desire. As Lisa Dorin wrote he broaches the “tangible, tactile, bodily stuff of life in all its sexy, scary, gorgeous imperfection.” Hawkins opens a portal—for himself and for us—to the psychic space of fandom’s thrall, where Justin Bieber stalks the violet landscapes of Pierre Bonnard. In Hawkins’s hands, mass media can be a conduit for “expressing difference within culture and fantasies beyond culture.”

Richard Hawkins lives and works in Los Angeles, where he serves as Professor of Painting & Drawing at the ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena. Recent solo exhibitions include Kunsthalle Wien, which traveled to Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover (2025–26); Greene Naftali, New York (2025, 2022, 2019, 2018, 2016); Loewe FW24 Men's Show, Paris (2024); Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (2024); Reena Spaulings, Los Angeles (2023); Tate, Liverpool (2014); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2013); and the Art Institute of Chicago, which traveled to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2010). Hawkins was the 2012 recipient of the Guna S. Mundheim Fellowship in The Visual Arts at The American Academy in Berlin. His work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Loewe Foundation, Madrid; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. ♦ The Poem thanks Richard Hawkins and expresses gratitude to Greene for their collaboration, and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, for their support.

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