

Still surprising at every turn

Humility, transcendence meet in Tim Hawkinson's wry work

By Charles Desmarais

Think of an artist whose work you loved 20 years ago. Does his or her new work hit you with the same force as the old? Most artists who are lucky enough to have their moment fall into one of two groups: those who repeat themselves and the one-hit wonders who disappear.

Tim Hawkinson, though, whose exhibition at Hosfelt Gallery runs through May 7, just keeps getting better. I come by that opinion in a particularly informed way: Hawkinson's last solo outing in San Francisco, at Yerba Buena

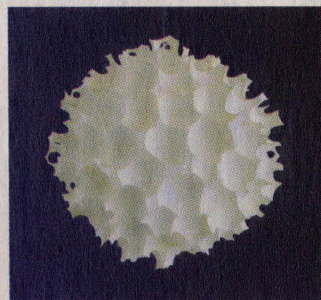
Center for the Arts in 1996, was sent here by Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center. I was the curator. (In that role, my primary loyalty would have been to the artist; now, my job is as advocate for the viewer.)

Hawkinson is one of those rare

artists who surprises us at every turn. He has made the most delicate of models of a tiny bird skeleton — meticulously pieced together from his fingernail clippings. He's constructed an "Uberorgan" the size of a high school football stadium to fill the lobby of the Getty Museum, all air and giant plastic balloons the size of school buses. But it's not his engineering ingenuity that makes him a strong artist.

The current show presents ample evidence of that cleverness, but it's also a great chance to experience Hawkinson's true genius: his ability to share his wonder at the natural world and to highlight our place — simultaneously humble and transcendent — as humans in that vast expanse.

If ever there was a navel-gazer, it is Tim Hawkinson. A 20-foot-long quilt, 6½ feet



"Egg-shell Star Burst"
(2016) urgently conveys the fragility of the world.

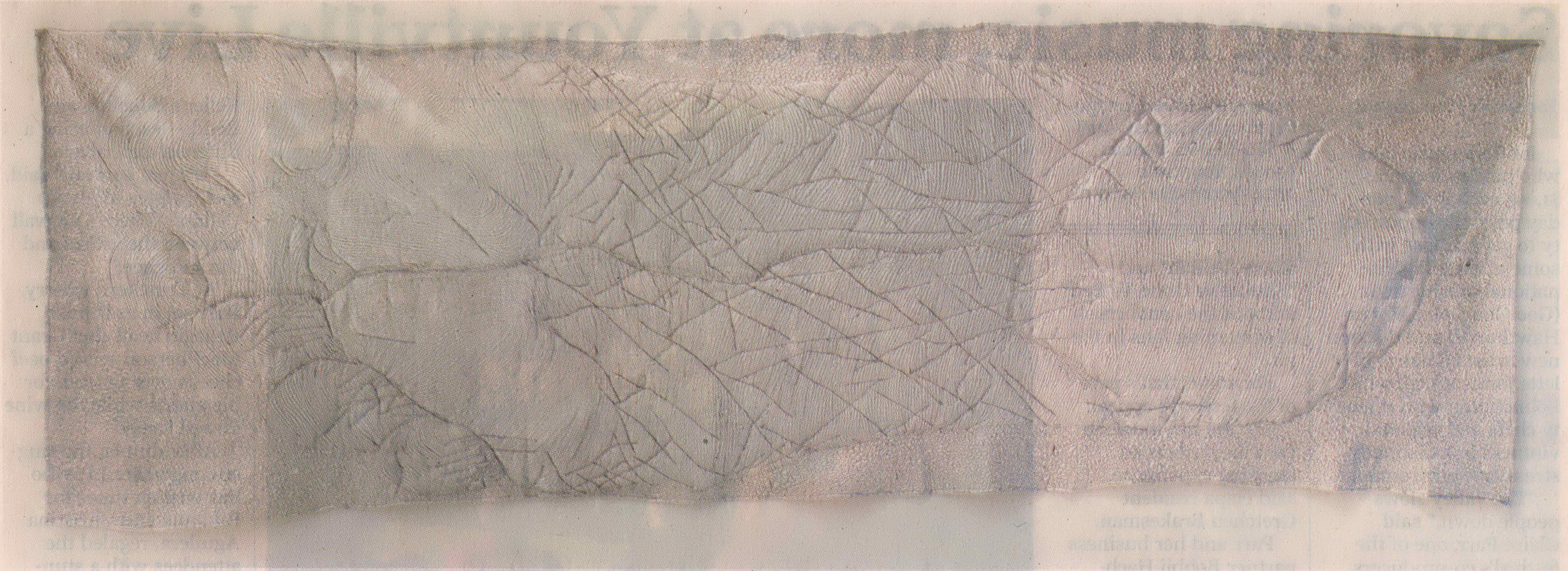


In "Sebastian," the limbs of a pair of discarded Christmas trees are bent and shaped into arrows with unlikely organic arrowheads in tribute to the martyred saint.

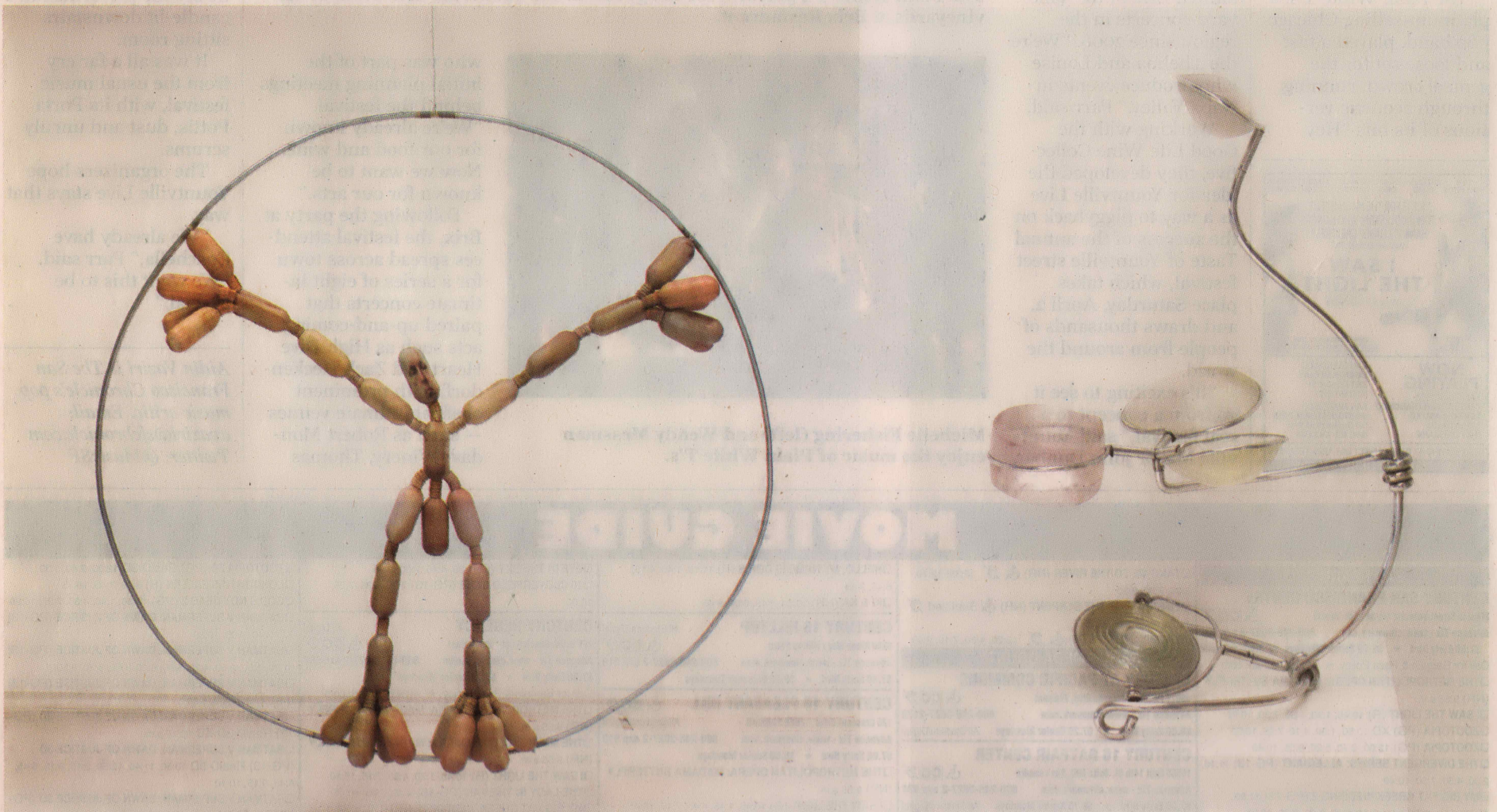
Hosfelt Gallery photos

Hawkinson continues on E3

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



For “Foot Quilt” (2007), Tim Hawkinson meticulously embroidered the lines from his right footprint onto a 20-foot-long piece of silvered fabric.



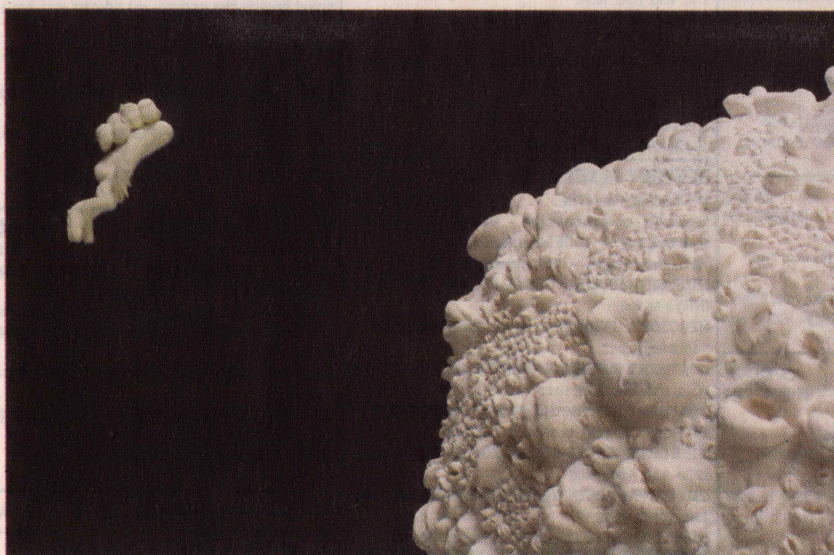
Above, “Butt-head Lens Microscope” (2013), with lenses cast from impressions of the artist’s body parts. Left, “Averaged Vitruvian Man” (2016), a riff on a Leonardo da Vinci drawing.

Artist still surprises at every turn

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high, was sewn by the artist himself. It is a carefully enlarged transcription in stitchery of his right footprint, with every dermatoglyphic swirl and loop, every crease and crevice embroidered into silvered fabric. The effect (un-photographable — you will have to see it for yourself) is mesmerizing, as our eyes follow the details on a seemingly endless journey, and the brightness and the immensity and the humanity of the work make it a fitting object of meditation.

A deeply faceted globe, formed by gluing together eggshell domes, concave-side out, instantly and urgently conveys the fragility of the world in a way words could not. The limbs of a pair of discarded Christmas trees are bent and shaped into arrows — tipped with unlikely arrow-



Hosfelt Gallery photos

heads of seeds, dried potato, coconut shell and other organic materials — that inter-pierce one another. The work is titled “Sebastian” in tribute to the martyred saint — though, of

course, it is a pair of Sebastians, with no discernible distinction between the murderer and the murdered.

Be sure to ask for the exhibition checklist, which describes

the materials and methods used in the works, often in wry terms. Regarding a recent work, the deadpan text reads, “This piece references the famous ‘Vitruvian Man’ draw-

For “Thumbsucker” (2015), Hawkinson made casts of his lips and thumbs, then enlarged and reduced them before assembling them into the moon form and the astronaut.

Tim Hawkinson: Garden Variety: 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays; 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursdays. Through May 7. Hosfelt Gallery, 260 Utah St., S.F. (415) 495-5454. www.hosfeltgallery.com

ing by Leonardo da Vinci, which was based on the correlations of ideal human proportions with geometry and classical architecture. Here, all the main body parts have been photographed in the round and averaged into identically sized 8½ x 11-inch prints wrapped around plastic soda bottles.”

The ideal and the average, in one absurd package. What could be more human?

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