

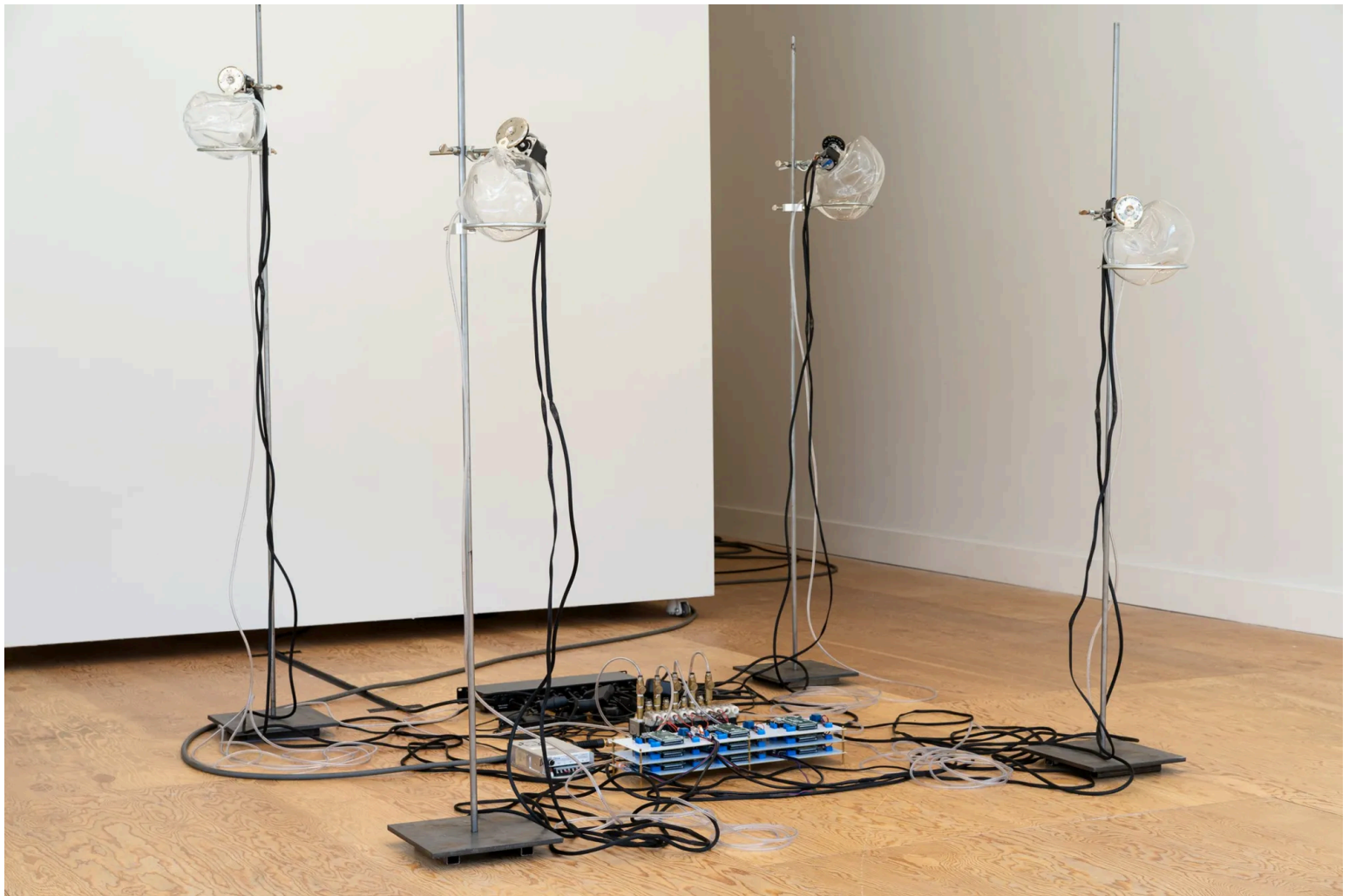
ART REVIEW

Queering sound

Tess Oldfield turns her voice into a mechanized choir at ACRE Projects.

by **Chris Reeves**

June 26, 2025



Installation view, Tess Oldfield, "hiccup," ACRE Projects

Credit: Levi Shand

Every 30 minutes from 9 AM to 5 PM on opening days, visitors to ACRE Projects are greeted with the song of a mechanized choir in Tess Oldfield's "hiccup." The central work of "hiccup" is *Pitch Pipe Choir*, a bafflingly complex combination of air compression tubes, electromagnetic valves, pitch pipes, Arduino software, motors, and lots of cables. All of this stuff coalesces into the titular sonic composition heard through four glass-blown semispherical sound domes. While *Pitch Pipe Choir* is a striking visual assemblage in its own right, and no doubt a treat for the "how does it work?" sect, the sounding composition deserves its own special attention. Turning on at around 15 minutes into my visit (startling myself and ACRE's gallery attendant), *Pitch Pipe Choir* came to life with a hissing mechanical polyphonic drone, emitting a sound palette that recalled something between the whir of an electric saw, a run-down chord organ, and the hiss of cicadas. There is something enchanting about the slighthness of the sound from this particular pipe organ and its seeming suggestion of knocking the pipe organ's austere position down a few rungs. This is not to say the composition and its sounding device were lacking; rather, it elucidated to me the exquisiteness of queering sound, of evoking the sonic in ways unexpected. While I am unsure of Oldfield's attendant written metaphor of this work surrogating a human vocal choir, there is plenty to contend with around what it immediately evokes in its rich and subtle request to listen differently.

Я "hiccup"

Through 7/28: Mon and Wed 11 AM–3 PM, Sat 11 AM–4 PM or by appointment

exhibitions@acreresidency.org, ACRE Projects, 2921 N. Clark, acreresidency.org/exhibition/hiccup