



Postmodern art would please Aristotle; it shows signs of being a Self-Thinking Thought. Nowhere is this generative self-regard more evident than in the photographs and drawings of [Derek Liddington](#), a young Toronto artist who has been engagingly making work out of work that has already been made. Liddington has jumped into the ring with the likes of Douglas Gordon, Jeff Wall, Rodney Graham, and other assorted heavyweights, to duke it out. He identifies himself as Tommy “Machine” Gunn in *Rocky V*, and he reminds us that the challenger didn’t fare so well. But while he may not have won the fight, Derek continues to get back in the ring and, unlike an earlier actor in the filmy history of pugilism, he is already a contender.

Liddington’s process isn’t a simple question of appropriation. He actually inserts himself into the histories of the artists with whom he chooses to spar. “It’s almost an aggressive move. On one side I’m trying to imitate, but on the other side I want to break open the narratives I encounter.” He has done a series of drawings of the hair styles adopted by David Bowie in his various incarnations, from Ziggy Stardust on stage to Andy Warhol in film. There is no face in the drawings, just the hair, running from mop to mullet. “We recognize the hair and we understand it as Bowie right away. My fascination is that he’s an icon, a chameleon who’s able to shift because he always understands how to read what we want.”

Liddington pays as close attention to the look of his work as he does to the conceptual underpinnings that generate it. When he uses Douglas Gordon as an informing image, he hires a photographer “to mimic the Gordon, and I frame it in

the identical size that he would frame it. There's something in the aesthetic sensibility that I find very interesting." Liddington likes to get as many associative layers in his work as he can, so one of his meticulous vinyl drawings includes the Everly Brothers and The Kinks on side one and David Bowie, his iconic hero, doing Warhol and Bob Dylan on the other. The host record is Rodney Graham's *Garden Fete*. But having all that information isn't necessary to admire the work. "I guess that's why I always come back to drawing. I personally feel that you can appreciate those drawings just as aesthetic objects."

The object he is working on now reprises his own *Duel at Noon*, a project that will bring into a common visual orbit Tim Lee and his perennial favourites—Graham and Wall, as well as Bryan Adams from his *Cuts Like a Knife* album, all re-staged through his ongoing interest in the dynamics of duelling. Its projected form in an exhibition at the Clark & Faria Gallery this November will be a theatrical performance featuring four pianists working two pianos (pace Rodney Graham), dressed in hybrid costumes combining the 19th-century dandy with Bruce Springsteen. The pianists will be playing songs from the *Born to Run* album. Derek Liddington continues to break open new variations in his ongoing aesthetic narrative. His canonoclasm continues apace.