In his Hollywood studio, Tim Youd is standing next to a giant sculpture of an Underwood typewriter. His passion for classic manual typewriters is immediately noticeable: they can be found on surfaces everywhere, and there are supplies for them packed to the rafters. There are sculptures of them, made by piecing together layer upon layer of cardboard. He blind-draws typewriters over each other—with a tabulate accounting for the number days each piece took. Other hints are more subtle: drawings based on typewriter ribbons, abstract works made by typing and retyping words on paper. And, on a table nearby sits a small stack of postcards: invitations to his exhibition, *Drawings of a Painting* at LA’s there-there. “They are hand-typed,” he tells us. “I usually type either one or two sets. Plus a set for the curator.”
Youd’s love of typewriters and literature permeates his work, and he recalls when the “obsession” began: he was sitting in his studio, reading a book. As he stared at the black rectangle of text inside a larger white rectangle on the page, he thought it could be “interesting to compress it and put all of the words of that book on to one page. It was a palpable urge to crush the book. So that the weight of all of the words and the blackness of all of the words—in that rectangle surrounded by the larger white rectangle—would be there.” This thought led to Youd’s worldwide, multi-year performance art project, for which he is retyping (and, therefore, reading carefully) 100 of his favorite 20th century novels. Each book is retyped on the same make and model of typewriter on which it was originally written. (Youd is up to the 62nd book in this project: Cormac McCarthy’s Blood Meridian.)

“I thought about how authors use typewriters. I decided that I was going to use the typewriter the same make and model that the author used and that will echo the typeset nature of the book. And I will go over and over and over it in this rectangle within a rectangle format. If I put it all on one page and allow the weight to accumulate on the page it is going to become this physical thing, this relic,” says Youd.
This has become a way of life for the artist. Choosing a book, heading to a significant location for the author or setting in the book, and retyping the book with viewers looking on for varying amounts of time. He displays the book as diptychs, often along with the typewriter. He tells us, “The core thing I am trying to do is a devoted reading of a novel.”
It was through all this retyping that Youd was led to his next project. As he was handling countless typewriter ribbons, he thought about all of the words that had been typed into them—entire novels were both on the page and on the ribbon. “They are grimy and you spend a day at the typewriter and you are covered in typewriter ink,” says Youd. “And they have secrets of their own.” He began collecting used ribbons from typewriter repair shops.

“When I retyped Evan S. Connell’s *Mrs Bridge* and *Mr Bridge* in Kansas City, I went home and I took those ribbons off of the spool and cut it up and put it on a panel. I glued it on,” he tells us. “I didn’t like it, so I pulled it off and saw that the ink from the ribbon had been captured by the glue as it hardened. Almost in an encaustic way, the ink was part of the surface. That was an epiphany.”

Youd began to use glue to build up the surface. He laid ribbons down, pulled ribbons up, and continued to layer them over and over—creating hues from purple/black to oranges and reds. He showed these new works at the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Hanes Gallery at Wake Forest.

“Every time I work through something,” he adds, “Something else grows out of it and I move onto the next thing.” As was the case with his ribbon paintings. After traveling
from Venice to North Carolina, then to St. Louis to the Hudson Valley doing performances of typing novels, Youd decided he was ready to draw again.

His love for books and literature informs every aspect of his work. “It has given me a lot of avenues to explore and it keeps doing that.”

“I started fiddling with a sketch and I could created a fairly rigorous formal design. I could bare down on the motif of the red and the black of the typewriter ribbon,” he says. “I construct the drawing in the same way as the paintings, ribbon by ribbon.” Thus, his works that now make up Drawings of a Painting, was born. Again focusing on the colors that he can make with typewriter ribbons—from pink to black and everything in between. He then recreates the hues in color pencil and graphite on paper, allowing the color and graphite to smudge as he fills in the strips. While the shapes are carefully drawn using a metal ruler, the smudges counterbalance their otherwise meticulous nature.

Youd likes the patina that his process creates, “For me, it’s like the grime of the typewriter ribbon, so it really connects on a physical level.”
Tim Youd: Drawings of a Painting is now on view at there-there. The artist will begin retyping Blood Meridian this week in Yuma, Arizona (on an Olivetto Lettera 32 typewriter) leading up to a show at MOCA Tucson in 2020.