



ART & TECHNOLOGY: Richard Dupont

Questions on human existence through 3D printing



Dupont, the artist in the midst of the 3D technology wave

Around the world, various technologies are constantly being developed. Which of these offer new possibilities for the future? Evidently there are many that might come to mind. But 3D scanning and printing technologies in particular have captured the popular imagination of the latest, mostly because these hold the promise of heralding the age of custom manufacturing by individuals. In other words, it might not be long before 3D technology allows us to manufacture household goods at home, using simple machines. Once the technology becomes part of our everyday lives, we will be able to scan objects in 3D or download blueprints from the Internet to print objects with a 3D printer.

In his 2013 State of the Union Address, U.S. President Barack Obama described 3D printing technology as "having the potential to revolutionize the way we make almost everything."

Expressing strong, affirmative support, he suggested that 3D printing technology could

save manufacturing by ushering in a paradigm shift, like the industrial revolution once did. In response to this context, the art industry has also been experimenting with 3D scanning and 3D printing. New York-based artist Richard Dupont (1968 -) has been at the forefront of this trend through his art which incorporates 3D technology.



The philosophical import of Dupont's Busts

Dupont has investigated themes, such as, the human body in its natural state, human consciousness, and identity. Dupont received a B.A. in Visual Art, Art, and Archaeology from Princeton University, where his interest in history and the philosophical topic of existence began. Dupont insists that his works are "not visual, but philosophical." Indeed, in all of his art, Dupont has constantly raised questions concerning the essence of human existence. His sculptural self-portraits are a key part of his oeuvre. By distorting his own face and body, the artist ponders the notion of identity and individuality in contemporary society, notions that are affected by technology. Dupont suggests that an individual's self-perception is, in fact, always distorted, flawed, and thus removed from their objective existence in reality. Dupont's work demands that its viewers reflect on this point and recognize their limited perspectives as well as their passive consumption of civilization's images.

3D technology and the ego

Dupont began working with 3D digital scanning technology in 2002, nearly twelve years ago, when he was searching for the means to visualize his ego. At the time, few people knew or used the technology, making it difficult for Dupont to find a company that could quickly create his models. Despite facing various obstacles and limitations, Dupont successfully completed a laser scanning of his entire body, creating a 3D

digital model of himself. Since then, Dupont has presented works that distort and modify his scanned image. Not limiting himself to sculpture and installations, Dupont has also worked in a wide range of media, ranging from drawing, prints, animation, and painting.

Terminal Stage, 180, Head, and latest works



Terminal Stage, (2008)

Terminal Stage (2008) is perhaps the artist's best known work. This installation consists of larger-than-life figures that are modeled after the artist yet distorted--expanded, flattened, widened, etc.--in a variety of ways. Erect, these figures completely overtake the exhibition space. 180 (2009) was inspired by events of the Iraq War. The artist symbolized the death of soldiers by piling a large number of his figures. In his more recent 'Head' series (2011 -), Dupont 3D scanned his head to create a larger version of it with transparent resin. He then filled the empty figure with items that had sentimental value and evoked memories.



Installation at The Middlebury College Museum of Art 2011

Dupont's work was also displayed at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) in New York as part of the museum's 2013-2014 exhibition, *Out of Hand: Materializing the Postdigital*, which focused on works of art made with 3D printing technology. Dupont's two pieces stood out from the other featured works. Installed outdoors, *Going Around by Passing Through* (2013) was a large, distorted aluminum sculpture of the artist's head. Installed indoors, *Untitled #5* (2005) was a modified representation of the artist's own body.

Technological Leap

Dupont's more recent works reflect the various technological improvements made in 3D printing and scanning. Over a period of only a few years, industrial fabrication advanced by leaps and bounds. Model manufacturers became far easier to find, technological means were diversified, and new, more task-specific technologies became available for the artist to use. Materials and media formerly unrelated to art, such as synthetic resins (plastics), polyurethane and silicone, became available, although Dupont notes that he continues to use bronze, aluminum, plaster casting and plastic so that his latest work may maintain a link to his past works. Dupont mainly uses SLA and SLS(1) systems, making use of these technologies for finer and more abundant expressions in his work.



Annotation:

There are various types of 3D systems: FDM, SLA, SLS, EBM, DLP, LOM, 3DP³, etc. Stereo Lithography Apparatus (SLA) uses photoreactive, ultraviolet curable resin that responds to a particular wavelength of light. SLS (Selective Laser Sintering) technique uses lasers as the power source for sintering powdered materials, binding the materials to create a solid structure.



On the edge; criticizing tech through tech

As mentioned before, Dupont is interested in various philosophical problems relating to human existence. His works also reflect on the body, raising philosophical questions concerning biometric technologies. The distorted appearance of the modern, digital man evokes possibility and potential but, at the same time, betrays a distrust of the commercialization of the human body in virtual reality. Dupont uses 3D scanning and printing, both of which are at the forefront of technology, to add greater depth and intensity to the message and expressivity of his works.

A future with technology

Around the world, more people have started using 3D technologies, and Dupont states that 3D printing has already been changing the world, by being at the forefront of potentially a new industrial revolution. Dupont predicts that the number of users of this new technology will gradually increase. He also states that he will continue utilizing 3D technologies, while maintaining a critical stance towards it. To the present, Dupont has used newly developed technologies to criticize a world obsessed with technology. Dupont's future works, at the frontlines of art and technology, are much anticipated.



Going Around By Passing Through, 2013, Cast Aluminum 180"x81"x75" / Presented by the New York City Department of Transportation's Urban Art Program and the Museum of Arts and Design in association with the exhibition

Biography

Richard Dupont was born in New York City, where he currently lives and works. He received his BA from Princeton University's Department of Visual Art and Art and Archeology. Dupont exhibited at various solo exhibitions and group shows, including The Queens Museum in New York, Tracy Williams, and Gallery MC in Korea. Most recently, he exhibited at New York City's Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), where he attracted a great deal of attention for his sculptures that utilized 3D scanning and printing technologies. *Going Around by Passing Through*, a 15 ft. aluminum sculpture, was one of the sculptures Dupont exhibited at MAD. This successful outdoor installation was also the artist's first joint outdoor project.