

Dupont, Richard. "The story behind an artwork, in the artist's own words." *Modern Painters*, April 2010

MODERN PAINTERS

Richard Dupont

The story behind an artwork, in the artist's own words

IN 2001 I BEGAN the process of creating a digital model of my own body. At first, it was hard to find body scanners. I located a video game company on Long Island that was producing the game *Doom*. At that time they were still using motion capture to animate the characters, and they had a massive black room filled with trampolines and all kinds of acrobats wired up all over their bodies doing impossible tricks. They also had a small head scanner, which you could rent cheaply and use for a half hour.

Scanning the rest of the body proved more difficult. I ended up flying to Dayton, Ohio, and did a full body scan with General Dynamics on the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. This was very cheap to do because I agreed to participate in an anthropometry study that was being conducted by the military. It took me some time to work up the nerve to go to the base, but the experience ended up being more banal than sinister. At the end, I got my body scan data and spliced that together with the head data and also the data from scans of plaster casts of my feet, hands, and torso.

These days, it's possible to use machines and technology in a more unconscious freestyle process. I have always been much more interested in physical material residue than in information, but technology is a great tool as long as you disrespect it. I often think of Chris Burden's willful misuse of machines and technology as subversive in just the right way. Using things, whether ideologies, machines, or materials, in ways that they were not meant to be used can be a good way to work.

The process and body art that evolved in the late 1960s was

varied in intention and effect. In general, though, it visualized both the behavior of materials and the behavior of artists, rendering transparent the interconnectedness of thought, feeling, action, and the overarching framework of social systems.

Anthropologically speaking, process art engages the ritual origins of art and the metaphysical, transformative, and alchemical potentialities of art. This artistic approach has only gained momentum since then, particularly considering today's collapse of the psychic and social landscapes into a single entropic black hole. The more we are dehumanized by the tyranny of technology, the more artists are returning to the visceral.

The process used to make the present work was discovered accidentally. I often use the sculptural leftovers of previous works in newer works. After using it for something else, I had an enlargement in foam based on a life mask of my head that I was trying to turn into something. Somehow I decided that I should brush a layer of rubber over the foam. This turned out poorly. So the next day in an attempt to salvage the piece, I decided to try to remove the rubber. To my surprise, the entire rubber "skin" peeled off in one piece, like a large mask from an inverted head mold. I immediately nailed it to the wall. Hanging there, it was nearly five feet in length. Somehow, it was transformative, like a sculptural shedding of skin. **MP**

Richard Dupont will have two solo shows running concurrently in New York, at Tracy Williams, Ltd. and Carolina Nitsch Project Room, opening in May. This fall, his work will be included in "Out of Hand (Materializing the Pseudonyms)" at New York's Museum of Arts and Design.

TRACY WILLIAMS

