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Richard Dupont

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Richard Dupont makes sculptures of bodies and images of bodies, but for all the precise corporeal detail they reproduce, they're still not tremendously *physical*. Most of the bald, naked, perfectly flesh pink cast-resin sculptures and pared-down ink and collage works in this show represent Dupont's own form and were created from a nearly complete laser scan of his body made at the Wright Patterson Air Force Base. (The military, for whatever reason, wouldn't scan him naked, so Dupont made plaster casts of his genitals and scanned them separately.) The result, a virtual model of his own body, is Dupont's raw material, but the two-foot-tall figures in this exhibition have been put through further paces: They are variously widened, attenuated, or pulled along a diagonal axis so that one edge of the body seems to advance, dragging the rest behind it (and, in so doing, faintly echoes Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, 1912).

The eight bodies in Dupont's *Them* (all works 2005) mill about on a white, waist-high pedestal in a casual tableau, several of them standing like kouroi, a nod to the classical past in the midst of this brave new world. Unlike Tim Hawkinson, with whom Dupont shares an interest in the possibilities of exploring and rendering the body, Dupont's inquiry is not particularly personal. Where Hawkinson's whatever-means-necessary approach (taking pictures of himself submersed in a tub of ink; drawing every part of his body that he can see) suggests an image of the artist as a subjective, inquisitive presence, Dupont's figures—although based on nearly unimaginable amounts of information—are skewed almost entirely toward the generic. In Hawkinson's work, the human element is the artist as observer, but in Dupont's it is harder to locate, and this seems to be precisely the point: His body has become simply a shape to play with, to pull at here and there, much as one might absentmindedly pull at a lump of clay.

It's chilling, to be sure, this sense of the artist as disinterested controlling force. Viewers may find, as a result of seeing the show, that they sense their own physical selves a bit more distinctly, but the over-whelming feeling is not so much one of interaction as of remove. The information gathered by the military in scans like the one it performed on Dupont is, after all, used for such diverse projects as designing crash-test dummies and (after being sold to various commercial entities) determining clothing sizes for retailers such as The Gap. The mini-Duponts are threatening because they convey a sense of information being used against us—not a new concern, certainly, but one given coolly effective shape here.

The most disturbing work in this generally unsettling show is *Forced to Stand*, in which Dupont has created a digitally animated loop of himself (or, better, his likeness's self) trying but failing to stay awake and repeatedly bumping its head into the monitor's frame. The intimation of a not-quite-human construct succumbing to the most organic of needs pulls us into a realm that is more upsetting than reassuring. When the clones have the same needs as real people, what, precisely, is the difference?

-Emily Hall



Richard Dupont, *Them*, 2005, pigmented resin on base, 69 x 45 x 84".