

ARTnews

Richard Dupont

Lever House Gallery

Richard Dupont's installation commissioned for Lever House may be one of the best public artworks to integrate itself socially into a New York

space. The sculptor arranged nine naked, hairless human forms based on his own body in the spacious lobby of the Park Avenue landmark. The floor-to-ceiling glass walls let the outside world in and reveal the inside like a terrarium.



Richard Dupont, *Terminal Stage*, 2006-7, cast pigmented polyurethane, nine figures, each 80" tall. Lever House Gallery.

Dupont's statues are 6 feet 8 inches tall and have flesh-toned, polyurethane-resin surfaces that look like satiny pink rubber but retain enough convincing detail, as in the veins on the back of a hand, to seem realistic. The artist used digital technology to measure, manipulate, and then re-create himself posed, eyes closed, expression neutral, in a stance displaying no specific attitude or motive—the embodiment of everyman.

But here's why you had to be there: Dupont engineered a three-dimensional optical illusion that can't be discerned in a photograph. From directly in front or from behind, his likenesses appear to have normal proportions. However, as viewers approached them from different angles, the figures gracefully expanded or contracted, looking dauntingly wide and muscular, or frail and waifish.

The shape changing in real space was disconcerting but fascinating and caused a viewer's heart to race. It was a reminder of how visual perception is connected to self-preservation—how we need to gauge scale in the blink of an eye to assess potential danger.

The lobby is the portal to the competitive business environment that operates above it, where appearances of dominance or vulnerability trigger the impulse to act, making the metaphor of shape-shifting here especially apt.

—Elliott Green