

A complex, abstract sculpture composed of numerous sharp, angular, and faceted geometric shapes. The sculpture is rendered in a palette of muted colors, including shades of grey, white, and a deep, dusty rose or terracotta. The forms are layered and overlapping, creating a sense of depth and complexity. The overall shape is somewhat elongated and vertical, with a more intricate, craggy base and a smoother, more defined top section. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the sharp edges and the interplay of the different facets.

NEW SCULPT

AN ESSAY BY
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POLYGONS ARE EMPTY. Their interiors echo nothing, their surfaces can depict anything. To consider them spatial one must set aside all presumptions accorded to 'lived' space. Inert physical lumps and dumb crystals may offer reliable resistance to the fleshy hands and sharpened chisels of the meatspace artist. But as your avatar leans in close to the Gaussian smoothed surface of a polygon it is a matter of computation that determines whether subject and object collide.

In the past three decades the term 'cyberspace' has come to define a social, rather than a geometric common environment. The term still conjures up images of posthuman projections and vast parallax branes, their cross-hatched surfaces woven at right angles by virtual motorcycles. We hear 'cyberspace' and we think of terminals, of cables and an ocean of information, yet the most important means by which cyberspace is produced – namely human social and economic relations – barely registers a flicker. The objects of *New Sculpt* play between these contradictions. Hovering in their natural/virtual environments they call attention to the aesthetic qualities of cyberspace evoked in the works of William Gibson or the computer generated landscapes of *Tron* and *Deus Ex*. In the gallery, torn from context and repurposed as art objects, they extend the Relational Aesthetics of Nicolas Bourriaud and Liam Gillick, who consider art as a permanently conditional, contingent and inherently speculative form of space.¹ To define LaTurbo Avedon's works as post-cyberspatial would be facetious, so instead I proffer we term them 'para' – after the Greek for *beside*: paraspatial, pararelational, paraaesthetic. Scott Bukatman, after science fiction writer Samuel Delaney, termed 'paraspace' as 'an alien space within a familiar space, or between two adjacent areas of space where no such "between" exists.'² LaTurbo Avedon's creations are not submissive objects, rather they activate us and our world, reminding us that space is a dynamic that is always already unfamiliar and in question.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre considered space as a set of possibilities constantly being remodelled in accordance with political and social interests:

*The starting point here is a knowledge which is at once integrated into, and integrative with respect to, the mode of production.*³

The conditions of paraspace, the modes of its production, have become so integrated into our lived experience that we barely register their existence. The works in the *New Sculpt* series are best understood as extensions of this relatively recent, and burgeoning paraspace. A space conditioned by a mode of production that appears to have as much in common with 'traditional' production as polygons do to Roman-Greco sculptures. As Peter Weibel has argued, it is now impossible to consider an experience *beyond* media, *beyond* the digital:

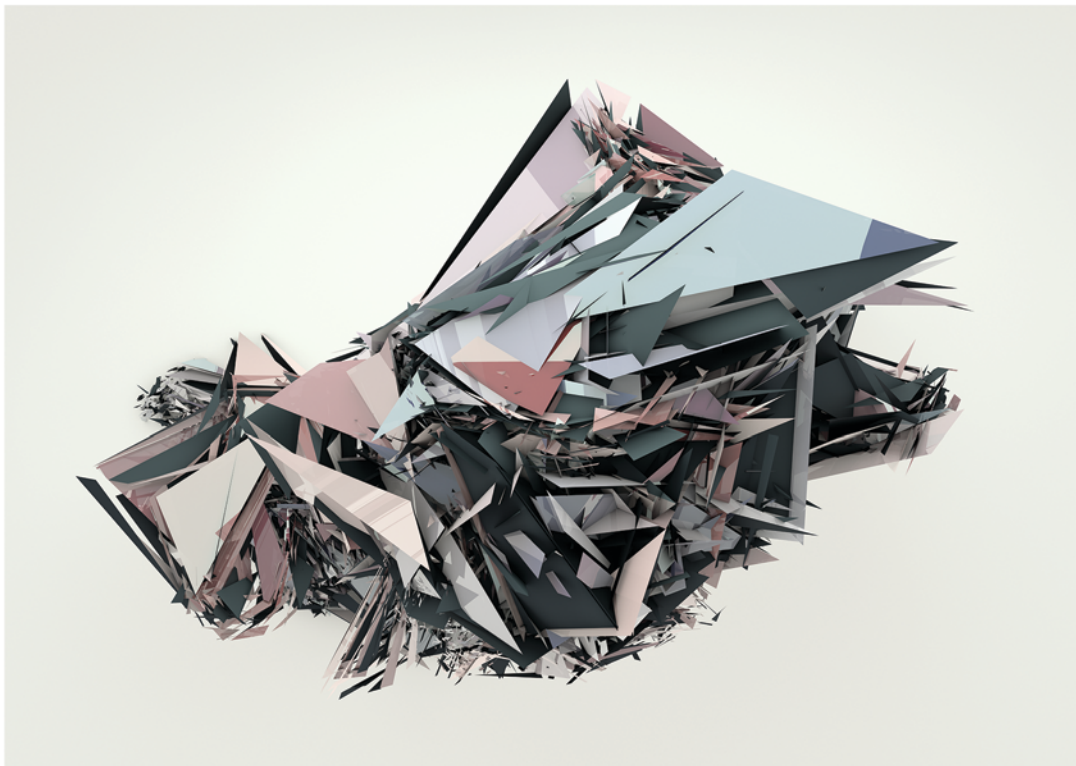
*This media experience has become the norm for all aesthetic experience. Hence in art there is no longer anything beyond the media. There is no longer any painting outside and beyond the media experience. There is no longer any sculpture outside and beyond the media experience.*⁴



The question posed is not whether Avedon's work should be understood through the language of 'lived' space, but whether our knowledge of 'lived' space was not limited to begin with. To accept *New Sculpt* as paraspatial is, therefore, to begin to understand that the whole world may have already shifted into an interstitial state. Drawing attention to new modes of human relationality produced by game consoles, Second Life and Facebook and leaking – drip drip – out of increasingly ubiquitous screens, the terms of subjectivity are reconfigured.

Now we can really begin our enquiry, perceiving *Transfer Gallery* as cyberspatial and *Second Life* as natural, the realm of 'lived' experience ebbs outwards, encompassing anything you purvey. In a frantic attempt to steady yourself you raise your hand into view. How long will it be before a single Graphical User Interface smooths the transition between the physical and virtual paraspaces you inhabit?

Avedon's printed and projected works intersect 'virtual' / 'lived' space, drawing them together even as they highlight their representational incompatibilities.



In the paraspaces of massively multiplayer online games avatars mingle, exchanging real words and virtual bullets across unknown geographic distances. In a Grand Theft Auto back-lot or abandoned World of Warcraft cavern LaTurbo Avedon's sculptures could reside right now, out of sight, but no less visible to the code that manifests these places. Were a bullet to strike them or a Mogu'shan Guardian's spell envelop their rich textured surface the computational ripples would cause server banks on multiple continents to fluctuate in temperature.

For LaTurbo Avedon gamespace is the ideal environment for her sculptures. In these realms, spawned and distributed across a thousand information processors avatars, digital frontiers

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and the projectiles that traverse them are described by the same software modules. Once manifest they exhibit – to paraphrase Rachel Moore's thoughts on cinema – 'the animistic character of the atom, the single element that fashions the universe.'⁵ On the walls of *Transfer Gallery* hang prints; documents; inscriptions; echoes of this animism. The prints fall between the cracks of postmedia for, like antiquated analogue photographs, they image the temporary state of a dynamic, all be it, digital matter. The rendered sculptures are caught inhabiting vast, paraspatial landscapes, or depicted teetering on plinth-like obsidian voids. Accorded the status of art

objects each *New Sculpt* print is perhaps best understood as a portrait; a simulacrum of a domain Mark Hansen considers 'below the "threshold" of representation itself.'⁶ The prints call to mind the works of cubists such as Pablo Picasso and George Braque. Concerned with transposing the invisible angles of their subjects onto oil painted surfaces the cubists were engaged in the production of paraspace long before polygons needed to be pre-rendered. Avedon's printed and projected works intersect 'virtual' / 'lived' space, drawing them together even as they highlight their representational incompatibilities. In this regard they work harder than would animated illustrations sent spiralling on wall-mounted screens. Drawing on a long history of abstraction in photography, painting and sculpture, LaTurbo Avedon is also a producer of parasubjects.

Perhaps the most abstracted parasubject in Avedon's work is her own. Sent to dance before her Facebook timeline the artist is herself incompatible with the white cube gallery brimming over with flesh. Regardless of one's will to understand Avedon's sculptural or artist parasubjects on their terms, it will always be the human one sees at their surface. LaTurbo Avedon recedes as we approach her because, as Donna Haraway has noted, we construct our condition of 'self from the raw material of the other.'⁷ After all my talk of paraspace – a refreshed ontological

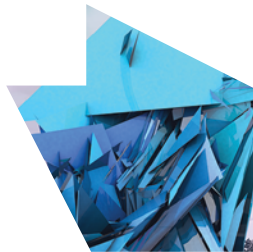
category of besides, rather than between – the ‘raw material’ of subjectivity turns out to open onto the largest region of uncharted space. LaTurbo Avedon’s physical anonymity is more than a gesture to liquid social media identities, or the utopian ‘immaterial’ embodiment yearned for by transhumanists such as Ray Kurzweil and Nick Bostrom. As a parasubject LaTurbo Avedon breaks down the categorical distinctions between her sculptures and her self, asking to be considered as one considers a cubist abstraction. Unseeable, ineffable – beyond computation – polygons are rich. Their vertices contradict themselves; as subjects they contain multitudes.

Notes

1. Liam Gillick, “Maybe It Would Be Better If We Worked in Groups of Three? Part 1 of 2: The Discursive / Journal / E-flux,” *E-flux*, 2009, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/35>.
2. Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 164.
3. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, Mass. [u.a.: Blackwell, 2011), 9.
4. Peter Weibel, quoted in Domenico Quaranta, “The Postmedia Perspective,” *Rhizome.org*, accessed July 9, 2013, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/jan/12/the-postmedia-perspective/>.
5. Rachel O Moore, *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 68–69.
6. Mark B. N Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 4.
7. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women : The Reinvention of Nature*. (London: Free Association Books Ltd, 1991), 11.

Also referred to:

Thrift, Nigel. “Beyond Mediation: Three New Material Registers and Their Consequences.” In *Materiality*, edited by David Miller, 231–255. 2. printing. Durham [u.a.]: Duke Univ. Press, 2006.



LaTurbo Avedon, *New Sculpt*

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