

CLUSTER, by Kurt Hentschläger

Argeo Ascani, Empac 2012

The digital figures in CLUSTER represent a delicate form of the human body – naked, nondescript, exposed and powerless. These figures seem live in a world like ours, governed by rules and boundaries, but they are incapable of controlling their actions. An unseen force directs them with a higher purpose, a loftier goal that can only be viewed from above. Or perhaps it is only for sport, tossing their bodies around in amusement, boredom, or spite. It is difficult to understand if it is enjoyable or painful – are they even capable of feeling such things? Occasionally an individual tries to escape the swirling chaos – but they are always pulled back into the group, unable to be masters of their fate.

But there is possibly a contrasting interpretation. There is no unseen force directing their actions – no greater goal. The figures are ones of choice and free will that are in control of their own destinies. They are drawn towards one another – to that which is familiar and alike. The occasional lone souls are a result of exclusion or wanderlust. But always, inevitably, they return to the fold out of need or fear. The figures, most recognizable as human when they are separate, amass for safety and comfort while losing all definition and individuality.

These two interpretations weigh heavily with subtext – God and purpose, self-reliance and Transcendentalism, politics and society. It is easy to relate to Art that uses human figures – it allows us to find answers to our own questions. But Hentschläger's work isn't necessarily about providing answers. He's more interested in the boundaries – between real and virtual, between clear and blurry, between inquiry and resolution. CLUSTER provides a frame from which we can hang our own perspectives, and view from a distance.

From a technical point of view, Hentschläger creates his work by controlling the parameters that influence how the 19 digital bodies react. Rather than being a recording, the synchronized 3D imagery and sound are generated by computer programs in real time. The macro (shape and gesture) is determined by his choice, but the micro (individual actions) happens in the moment as the figures attempt to comply. The overriding laws appear to be attraction, whether by collision or cooperation, and a repulsion that sends the figures spinning away like leaves from a tree.

An on going “work-in-progress” that began in 2004 (which includes 7 complete, independent works), 2012 marks the premiere of the full-length stereoscopic version of CLUSTER. Kurt Hentschläger has been in residence in EMPAC's Concert Hall for three weeks in October 2012 developing the content of CLUSTER and bringing its bodies into the third dimension.