

**DAVID
SCHAFFER**

**SEPARATED
UNITED
FORMS**

CHARTA

WHERE
DOES
IT
HURT?



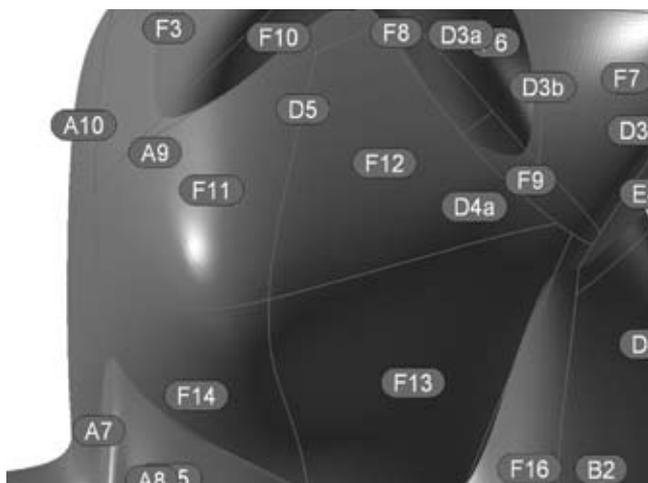


Where Does it Hurt?

David Schafer

The idea of the hospital immediately conjures up thoughts of the human body: its beauty, its flaws, and its diseases. Birth, growth, life, and death—a basic cyclical structure exists—and the spiritual and material needs for medical and social space to coincide have evolved. The New Huntington Pavilion in Pasadena represents an advanced fusion of medical analysis with the spectacle of comfort. By restaging the social body as a site-specific public sculpture, the patients and staff of the Huntington Hospital are enticed to exit the confinement of the clinical space, to become observers themselves of the colonized body.¹ From the observed to the observer, the unveiling of the abstracted forms is redistributed on stage for all to gaze upon: bodies and eyes meet.

Within the walls of the hospital, the clinical gaze and the spatialization of the pathological facilitate a means to sustain the living organism on the cellular and molecular levels. According to the Vitalist doctrine of the early twentieth century, the life in living organisms is caused and sustained by a vital force that is distinct from all physical and chemical forces, and that life is, in part, self-determining and self-evolving. The Vital Life Force and the philosophy of Vitalism were the basis for a new language of abstraction in art at that time.² Even today, the vigor, suppleness, and fluidity of the abject human body, as well as the complex associations of the animate form, are understood to live within an array of organic universalities. The site of the hospital is where



for the sculpture is embedded within the grounds of the new pavilion of the Huntington Hospital, which is both a privately funded symbolic structure and a public space, as well as a site of political, social, and cultural engagement.

In 2005, Art Center College of Design—also located in Pasadena and known for embracing new technologies—had acquired a hand-held three-dimensional body scanner to be used by the Design, Transportation, and Fine Art Departments. The scanner is identical to the body imaging systems used within the medical industry and is the technical armature of the medical gaze.⁴ Access to this state-of-the-art equipment facilitated the opportunity to digitally capture the Moore sculpture with a minimum of subjective interpretation.

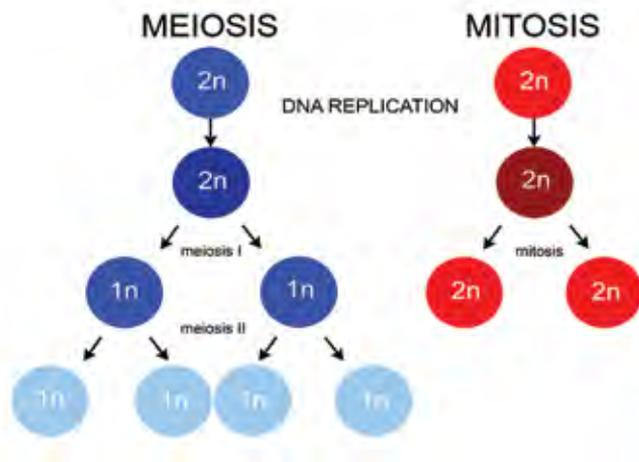
The variety of processes that were utilized for the capture—including sampling and remixing, as well as the casting and fabrication for *Separated United Forms*—play a significant role in the conceptual aspects of this project. Therefore it is important to describe and discuss these processes as ideas in regards to the sculpture itself, as well as its site and placement. The digital imaging and development, the selection of the bronze, the mold manufacturing, and the casting itself all participate in how the piece signifies at the site of the hospital and in relation to its site within the community of Pasadena.

The process of scanning the Moore sculpture involved extensive communication between the institutions involved: Art Center College of Design, The Norton Simon Museum, and the



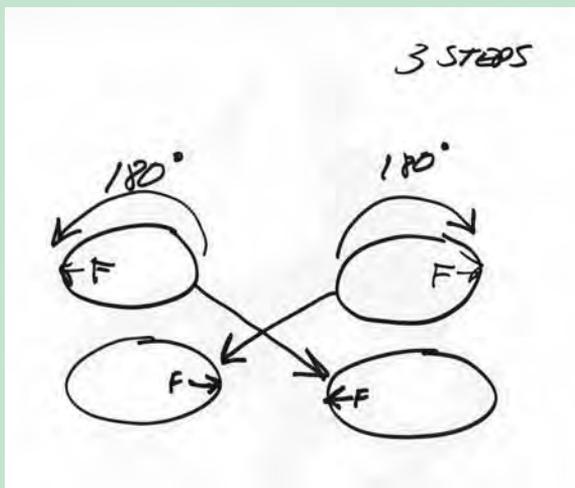
Huntington Hospital. The triangulation of institutional communication and collaboration between a school, a museum, and a hospital functions as a matrix of site specificity, beyond the site of the body or the hospital itself.⁵ Multiple levels of intra-institutional communication took place in order to stage the imaging process of the Moore sculpture. The Norton Simon vault acted as a theater of observation, in which the scanning mimicked a medical procedure, witnessed by curators and security guards. Technicians from Art Center and latex-gloved museum assistants manipulated the inert object as the scanner was aimed at it. The scanner's intense red rays engulfed the marble sculpture, and the scan data was quickly retrieved. As if from a science fiction scene, the Life Force reanimation process began, and the object transformed from object to data, from analogue to digital.⁶

Mimicking meiotic cell division, the two ends of *Reclining Form* were disembodied and, through a series of rotations, reflections, and shifts, were superimposed onto each other.⁷ The forms were then doubled, incorporating additional shifts, shears, and adjustments, generating a tension of similarities and differences between them. This surgical action allowed *Reclining Form* to replicate—through a fission-like maneuver—into two unique forms. The doubling of the biomorphic sampled forms reflects the organization of the living body, such as the symmetry of vital organs, limbs, and facial features. Through



a series of CNC- [computer numerical control] programmed milling paths, the model for *Separated United Forms* emerged as a pre-visualization of the eminent larger object. The physical model could be studied, surfaced, and colored, allowing for a more precise consideration of its potential location and placement within the context of the hospital. The sectioning and casting process for *Separated United Forms* utilized the most advanced systems available for visualization and CNC programs at the Walla Walla foundry in Walla Walla, Washington. These files generated the dozens of molds necessary for the casting process. Bypassing the full-scale pattern stage that is typically necessary in the production of a sculpture this scale, the foundry was capable of going directly from the digital files to the mold sections themselves.⁸ The full-scale sculpture did not physically exist until the final process of bronze casting and fabrication was completed. The alchemy of the lost wax procedure was augmented by the collaboration and synthesis of the digital imaging and work-flow processes.⁹

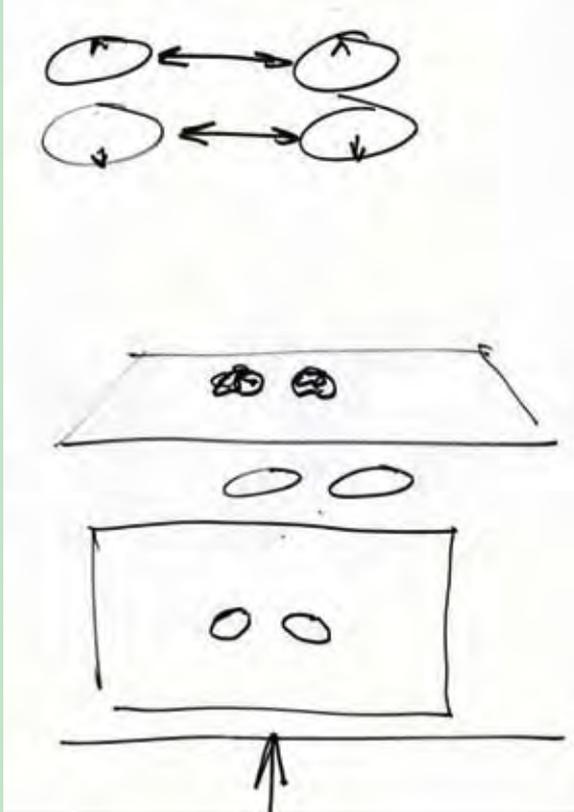
When the CNC milling of the molds was completed, the remaining processes of casting, fabrication, and finishing followed a traditional industrial procedure that has not evolved much since the era of Henry Moore. The cast bronze sections were carefully fitted together and welded. *Separated United Forms* was assembled and its welded seams ground until they disappeared, not unlike the stitches and grafts in medical pro-



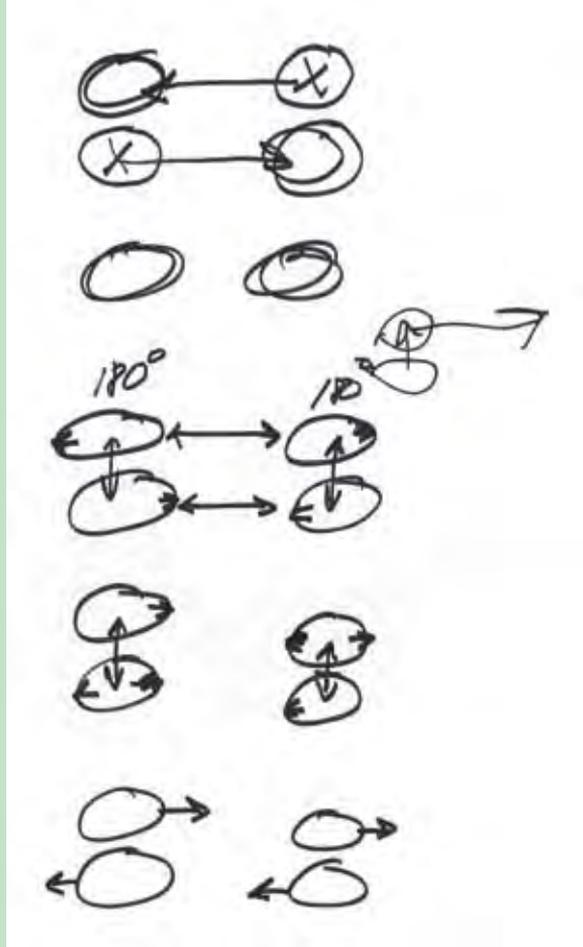
cedures. When installed, the dark patina of *Separated United Forms* would absorb the light and soften the forms, drawing attention to the fluidity and its animate sculptural characteristics.

The location for *Separated United Forms* is an outdoor, publicly accessible site that is embedded within the Huntington Hospital grounds. It is visibly available to the street and sidewalk traffic, along with viewing access from the interior buildings surrounding the site. Accommodating the hospital visitors, doctors, staff, patients, and pedestrians, the site is also visible from the street and neighboring buildings. The spatiality of the project itself represents the modernist ideal, as an idea of democratic public space.¹⁰ The landscaping surrounding the site provides shade and places to sit. The site evokes a park-like atmosphere, heightening the possibility for viewer observation and contemplation. The site, open at the front and side, performs as a picture window and frames the public view. The landscape program considers the visibility of the sculpture as well as of the viewers observing the sculpture from the street. Confounding representation, the sculptures require the observational gaze of the viewers, while inside the hospital, it is the viewers who are gazed upon.

Separated United Forms is positioned on an expansive concrete grid platform, creating an observation deck for its viewers. The ground plane grid sits in contrast to the vector-based biomorphic forms resting upon it. The platform isolates



the separated forms on a geometric surface, resembling an examining situation of hybrid bodies for the observation of the viewing public. Embedded into the concrete slab and designed for optimum enhancement are eight in-ground lights positioned around the two forms. The in-grounds illuminate from below, providing a contrasting visual and spatial experience to ordinary daylight. Viewing the sculptures at night evokes a dark theatricality, framed by the illuminated parking garage behind them. The sculptures function as surrogates for the private and social body and will continue to be reorganized by the multiple gazes emanating from the viewing pedestrians.



Notes:

¹ This is a reference to the *Separated United Forms* (2009) sculptures as a colonized-re-colonized body that the viewers are invited to observe. The viewers themselves are colonized by the intersecting gazes within the clinical space of the hospital, and their tangible bodies are consumed by the domination of the gaze. For discussion of the medicalization of society, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973).

² Vitalism, based on nonphysical substance and states of life, is a metaphysical doctrine concerned with the irreducible effects and manifestations of living things. Henry Moore's Vitalism, or Vital Life Force, is in no way scientifically analytical; it is the Vitalism of the naturalist and



the sensitive craftsman. Besides the sculpture itself, the most obvious example of this lies in Moore's writings. See Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1968).

³The Vitalist aesthetic, a new formal invention that influenced Arp, Hepworth, and Moore, among others, included similar traits of fabrication and execution. This included no outward hints or gouged surfaces or finger marks that would indicate any external forming agent. All is made and rearranged from the inside, the growth center of the piece. As in truth to material, each piece has its own qualities, which are imbued with psychic energy. See Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*.

⁴The scanning device that was used on the *Reclining Form* is a Creafom handheld imaging scanner supplied by Art Center College of Design. The scanner is the first mobile device able to digitize the body in real time. When used in hospitals, doctors can upload the data into a three-dimensional computer-aided design program to custom design orthopedic braces and bone implants or to print out a three-dimensional model. The scanner was used to scan the Henry Moore sculpture, which is an abstraction of a human figure.

⁵The site is a matrix or relay and functions beyond the physical location as fixed, but it references other institutions, histories, and economies, as well as other sites and locations. Institutions such as Art Center College of Design, Norton Simon Museum, and Huntington Hospital also

perform as a condition or situation of site. The Henry Moore sculpture, as well as the body itself, all contribute to the matrix of “site” as situation that produced *Separated United Forms*. See Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002).

⁶ I am humorously suggesting scanning the Henry Moore with the imaging scanner would revive the Vital Life Force within in the sculpture. To generate such a fiction is to also suggest that the life force is inactive, or outdated, or did not exist to begin with; the vault of the Norton Simon Museum would then be seen to function as a resting place for the deceased. Once brought back to life, the sculpture is digitally transformed into a “binary large object” (also referred to as a B.L.O.B.); it has transformed from plop to blob. (Plop sculpture is a derogatory term for public sculpture that does not have any relationship to the site in which it is installed. Henry Moore was adamantly against developing any of his works towards a specific site.)

⁷ Continuing with the fiction of the Vital Life Force being reanimated in *Reclining Form*: the sculpture continued to grow and divide as in a cellular meiosis—dividing from one form into two and then dividing again. The structure that I imposed onto the Henry Moore work is based on this idea of cellular division. The abstracted body of the Moore sculpture divided and rejoined generates a kinship between the two forms.

⁸The molds for the waxes were generated by manipulating the digital files that were originally created by the scanning process. The molds were milled out of plaster and foam. The process allowed for the omission of the full-scale pattern for the sculpture, privileging the digital workflow within the project, as well as reducing work done by hand-crafted labor.

⁹ Threaded through the entirety of this project is the integration and collaboration of physical and digital processes and the various labors associated with them.

¹⁰The public space that is created by the open landscaped area surrounding the site of the sculpture is complete with trees, benches, and sidewalks. I consider this to be an important addition, appropriating the conventions of outdoor modernist sculpture and its placement in and around architecture. There has been a long history of architects using figurative and abstract sculpture in and around modernist architecture and urban design. Alluding to a public and social space where people would gather spontaneously is an idea that can only happen in a situation where there is pedestrian activity. However, while this site is a hospital-oriented public site, very accessible by foot from many points, it functions mostly as a drive-by picture-window or as a set.