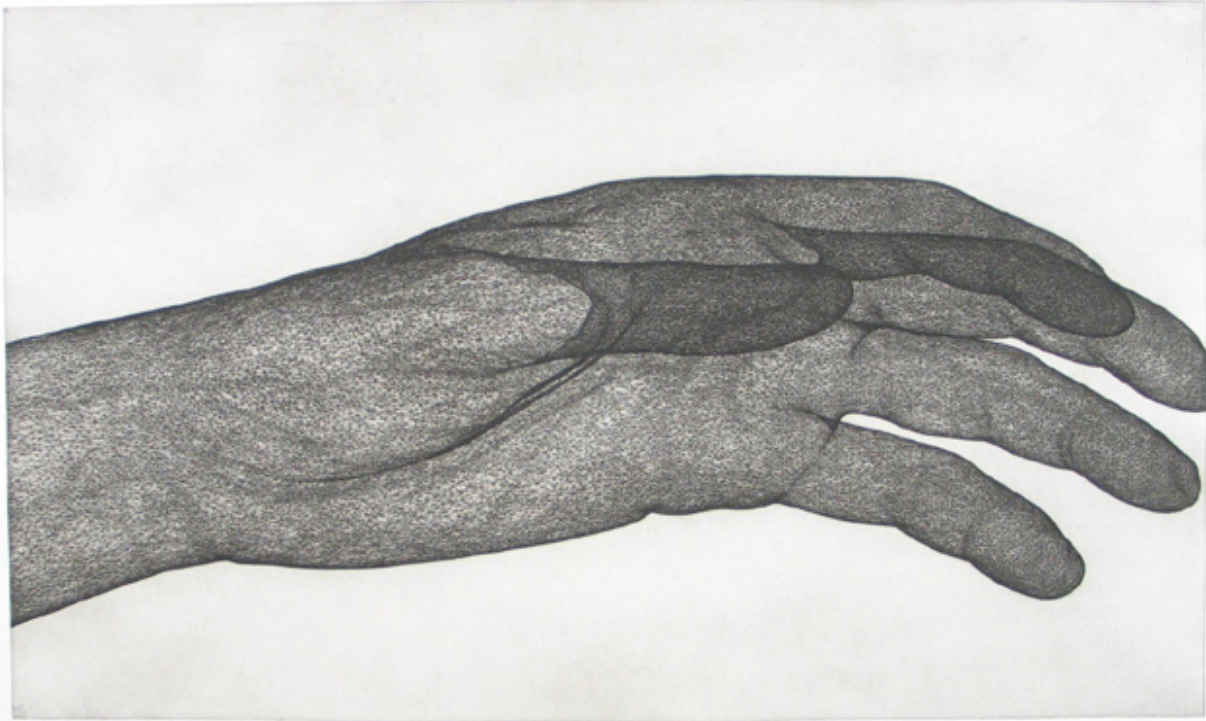


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Fandom for *Phantom*

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Richard Dupont. *Phantom*. 2007. Etching and aquatint. Publisher: Carolina Nitsch Contemporary Art, New York. Printer: Gregory Burnet, New York. Edition: 12. The Museum of Modern Art

Sometimes I just wish I were a printmaker. While I've embraced being able to familiarize myself with our department's collection, mostly through preparation for study center visitors, it's hard to avoid envying the person who gets to work in the studio and master the technical elements of printmaking. A work recently acquired by MoMA, [Richard Dupont's](#) etching *Phantom* (2007)—which was among the artist's earliest print projects—reveals the kind of artistic processes I am especially drawn to.

At first glance, you wouldn't be able to tell that Dupont began the project with a thorough digital mapping of his own body, a crucial step the artist often incorporates into his work, whether it is a sculpture, a drawing, or an installation. But the frenzied, baffling accuracy of the hand—the precise network of lines, so intricate they almost resemble neurons—point to some of the technical challenges the artist experienced in producing *Phantom*.



Photo courtesy the artist



Photo courtesy the artist

After searching for a close-enough full body laser scanner, most of which are in California, the New York City–based artist found one at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, where it was used to produce military gear. There, he was able to receive a full three-dimensional photograph of the surface of his body. The digitally rendered snippet of Dupont’s hand in *Phantom* was then stretched using simple 3D software, in order to remove the image from the original—it seems Dupont is interested in creating something more accurate than realistic. The image was then transferred onto a copper plate via screenprinting. That the project began with a three-dimensional scan of his entire body and ended with an etched plate is just remarkable to me, because Dupont found a way, as he states, “to achieve a transformative result that would resonate in the sense of using an ancient process to address a contemporary image.” The hand represents a metamorphosis: from the intangibility of the digital image to something that possesses a tactile presence.

Phantom is a magnified and extremely accurate likeness of the artist’s slightly warped hand. The short, textured, interwoven lines that compose the hand remind me of the tiniest of wrinkles and folds we can see on our own hands, a somewhat scaly effect that further expresses the hyper-accuracy of the depicted hand. Its opaqueness exudes a certain ghostly quality; the hand simultaneously seems to emerge from nothingness and to disappear into the background. In either case, the hand remains omnipresent,

lingering in a space that declares intransience while threatening nonexistence, a characteristic that definitely communicates the idea, according to Dupont, of a “phantom limb”—an appendage no longer there, but still felt.”