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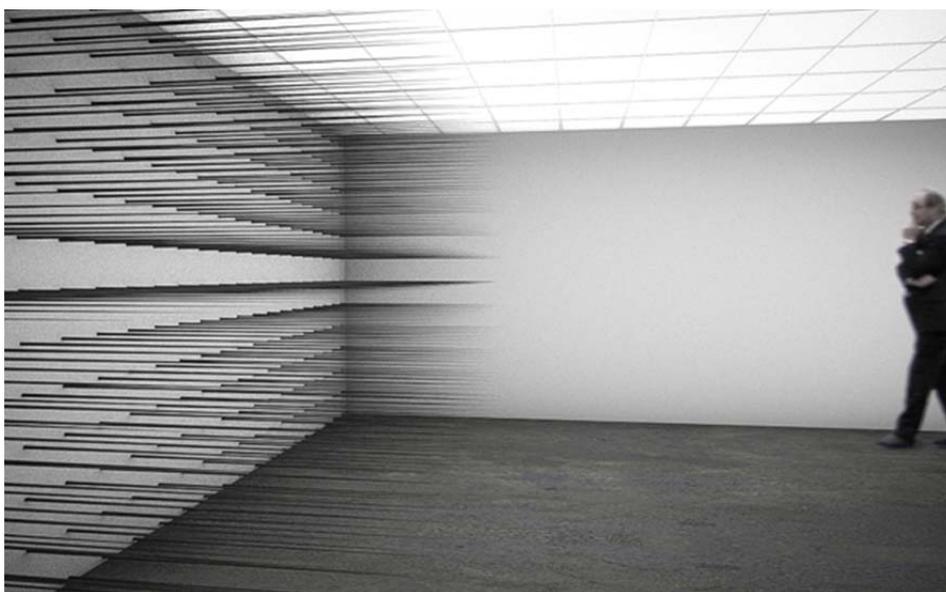
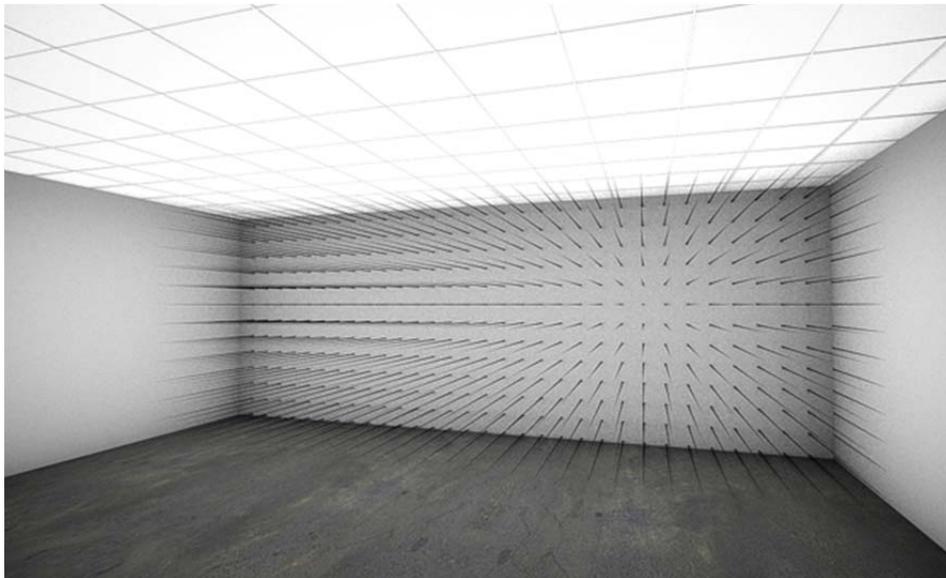
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The Material Poetics of Fabien Bürgy: Reflections on *Spikes*

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Fabien Bürgy's work creates interstitions in which the virtual becomes indistinguishable from the real, and the real becomes impregnated with the virtual. Spikes is a sculpture-installation that exists in a threshold in which matter becomes digital and the digital becomes matter. This review addresses the many conceptual layers particular to this artwork, and wishes to preserve the aura of inscrutability that belongs to its poetics.



Spikes - Sculpture-Installation by Fabien Bürgy¹

The art of Fabien Bürgy² is a world of many dimensions and illusions. He manipulates matter and code by creating interferences and propositions in which the virtual becomes indistinguishable from the real, and the real becomes impregnated with the virtual. There is an aura of mystery surrounding his creations: one never knows if a given work has been materialised or not. This mystery that equates matter to data while portraying digital possibilities as material spaces is in fact the defining characteristic of Fabien Bürgy's work:

The idea of my work is to question given situations by provoking seamless shifts between real and unreal using the liberty to use whatever medium is appropriate—this allows me to lift the reality off the rails [...] the distinction between virtual and real is fading massively anyway—and this throughout all aspects of society, technology and communication. Would you say the Internet does not exist because it's not tangible? Or a printed text is not real because you only feel the paper when you touch it? This is really my point [...] it basically doesn't matter anymore if something is created physically. (Bürgy Patterson)

This review wishes to preserve the aura of inscrutability that belongs to Fabien Bürgy's work, therefore presenting the reader with the same aesthetic challenge we are confronted by when exploring his pieces. *Spikes* is a sculpture-installation that exists in the encounter of the real and the virtual, in which matter becomes digital and the digital becomes matter. *Spikes'* minimalist aesthetics might be mistaken for conceptual simplicity; however, nothing could be further away from the truth. This minimalism is nothing but the outer layer of a complex system of conceptual elaborations, actively engaged with the most pressing issues of our times.

The world of computational technologies is permeated by realistic representations of material objects and environments. Virtual reality, scientific visualisation and data manipulations are able to simulate immersive experiences in which matter becomes digital (Milburn). We are surrounded by many kinds of augmented realities, immersed in mobile networks of digital communication which change and reshape our experience of the material world. Complex technologies and media interfaces are a material canvas in which a new aesthetic begins to emerge in the touchpoints connecting gadgets to gadgets, gadgets to humans and humans to humans. Our digital networks are material at their core:

We have this notion of the cloud, like the cloud is some magic faraway land where computing is done, and it's not. It's big sheds on ring roads filled with servers. The cloud is a lie. The cloud looks like sheds. And that's a terrible thing, because the network is awesome. (Bridle 2011)

A complex interplay happens between the material structures of digital virtual spaces and the human minds that inhabit them. There are sequences of touchpoints in which cognitive and material realities co-exist. These touchpoints are mathematical in their very essence, rooted in the logic of computer codes. They pervade our material space expanding in every direction, trespassing concrete walls, air waves, bodies and buildings.

Fabien Bürgy's *Spikes* speaks of the pervasiveness of these complex and transversal contemporary realities through a multidimensional installation that pierces through solid

matter in a matricial burst of directed movement. A change in the view angle brings about the folding and unfolding of various aesthetic possibilities. Multiple perspectives of observation allow for multiple speculations.

A frontal view of *Spikes* is a sensorial attack that threatens to eliminate the subject, smashed by the intensity of a fatal encounter with a metallic apparatus and crushed by a matrix that is all encompassing. A lateral view becomes a mesh topology in which the lines collapse upon one another, and movement around the structure creates the optical illusion of fluidity and organicity, visually evoking follicles of hair growing out of human skin. Look closely enough, and a stack of perfectly aligned corridors might appear. Simultaneous to all points of view is the existence of a tension between various kinds of opposition: solidity vs. ethereality, virtuality vs. materiality, macro vs. micro, motion vs. stillness.

Spikes resonates with the *zeitgeist* characteristic of a post-digital landscape shaped by the convolutions of network culture, materialising the complex features of contemporary network aesthetics. Michael Betancourt affirms that works belonging to the new aesthetics “appear to render the aura of information tangible, physically present, but at the same time withdraw from immediate engagement.” Conceptually, *Spikes* belongs to a new aesthetic of *immaterial physicalities* (Betancourt) –defined here as physical manifestations of digital and mathematical aesthetics which are able to express the inner landscapes and conceptual contradictions characteristic of material ecologies which integrate technology and nature.

Spikes creates a field of immaterial physicality which touches and alters the boundary between artificial and organic, imagination and individuation. It challenges our understanding of the frontiers of digital and traditional art, creating mirrors which diffuse and obfuscate the walls which separate physical realities from immaterial spaces. In a world ruled by mediated interactions, defined by visual images and carefully designed presentations of digital versions of ourselves and our works, Fabien Bürgy’s immaterial sculptures are a reminder of the powerful implications of an accelerated process of convergence between technologies of mind and technologies of matter. We are trespassed and transformed by the gigantic mesh of network technologies which pierce through our bodies and minds, lost within a sea of illusions and reflections. Art is a bridge that might reconnect us to the forgotten minimalism of a silent stillness which transcends distinctions between im/materialities.

¹ Images captured from the artist collection at:
<http://www.fabianbuergy.com/105493/1078374/artworks/spikes>

² FABIAN BÜRGE, born 1980 in Switzerland. Lives and works in Switzerland.

Biography

Fabian Bürgy is a swiss based Sculptor and Digital Creative. His diverse and playful artistic practice, which includes sculpture, installation and digital imaging, explores the conceptual aesthetic of things through random encounters of materials, misplaced situations and spatial relationships. He began his career as a sculptor and later moved into graphic design and new media, with the aim to combine the techniques of both worlds. Thus the projects often mix traditional craft with new technology, in combination with the conceptual rigor and sense of

playfulness from the communication and design industry. Bürgy creates conceptual situations and small interventions which are inspired by a wide range of mundane objects and appearances, from chairs and suicide belts to skid row textures, nails and even dog tails, all subjected to what could be described as Bürgy's characteristically slightly violent and disturbing process of transformation, misplacement and dysfunction of things. He takes specific thoughts and develops conflicts with precise and absolutely minimalistic means - an oeuvre, which explores the point where known things become something else, where metamorphosis is reached.

**text retrieved and available at: <<http://www.fabianbuergy.com/105495/biography>>*

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Author Biography

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