

FREEZE FRAMES: *plus qu'une surface, moins qu'un volume*
CHARLES STANKIEVECH

Since the end of the 19th century, we have become addicted to interfacing with reality in ever increasing time-slices. E.J. Marey and E. Muybridge triggered this shift, but we quickly passed cinema's normalized 24 fps, beyond the 10,000 fps used in laboratory tests to record explosions and are now exploring the drift in electrons for creating images at the timescale of attoseconds (10^{-18}). The point for an artist however is not to chase after an accelerating resolution race. The world is already in full resolution, supplanting the need for it to serve as an end in itself.ⁱ Instead, a certain pleasure arises from the inverse experience of not seeing the whole, from feeling the gaps between the frames, the flicker in the darkness, the rhythm of absence. Framed as a Modernist project, David Spriggs's sculptures tap into a parallel phenomenon. Particularly, the essential aspects of his work can be traced back to three important inventions that crystallised around 1890: cinema, x-rays and psychoanalysis. All three inventions created machines for seeing a reality that subverted the skin of the image—a line of thought continued in Spriggs's work today.

In a gesture to freeze time, David Spriggs jams the film projector to create a new type of machine that transfers the principles of cinema into the axioms of sculpture. Freeze the frame. Cut the filmstrip. Stack the negatives. The narrative of cinema morphs into the suspension of sculpture—both backlit with mental projections from the spectator. Everyone knows that moving pictures do not move—that is the magic of cinema. The spectator imagines movement out of a mechanical series of still images. In other words, the fundamental phantasy of cinema for the spectator is motion. On the other hand, for Spriggs's spectator, the fundamental phantasy is volume. To begin with, the glass vitrines that act as the outer membrane of the work demarcate a space and hence suggest an object inside, but the film planes suspended in the vitrine act in the same manner; in a sense they serve only as recursive extensions of the vitrine. Which is to say, the drawings on the clear film again delineate another volume—the volume of an image, a strange mental image that is "*plus qu'une surface. Moins qu'un volume.*"ⁱⁱ However, as soon as the spectator moves to the left or the right of the work, peering in from the side, he or she quickly witnesses *all that is solid melts into air*.

In the traditional movement of Modernism, the object becomes subjective, and the subject becomes objectified. It is a simple but effective subversion: the subject matter flips between object and subject. The human subject becomes sub-ject (literally thrown under) the object. It is not so much a hierarchy of position, but the movement in position that is key. Spriggs's sculptures, though stationary objects, activate this movement much like a minimalist sculpture by Donald Judd or an installation by Robert Irwin. Unlike in cinema where the body remains static and the images move, in Spriggs's cinematic sculptures, the body moves and the images remain static. Thus the single plane of film not