



The Digital Skin Series

Emilio Vavarella

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Julien | Male | France |



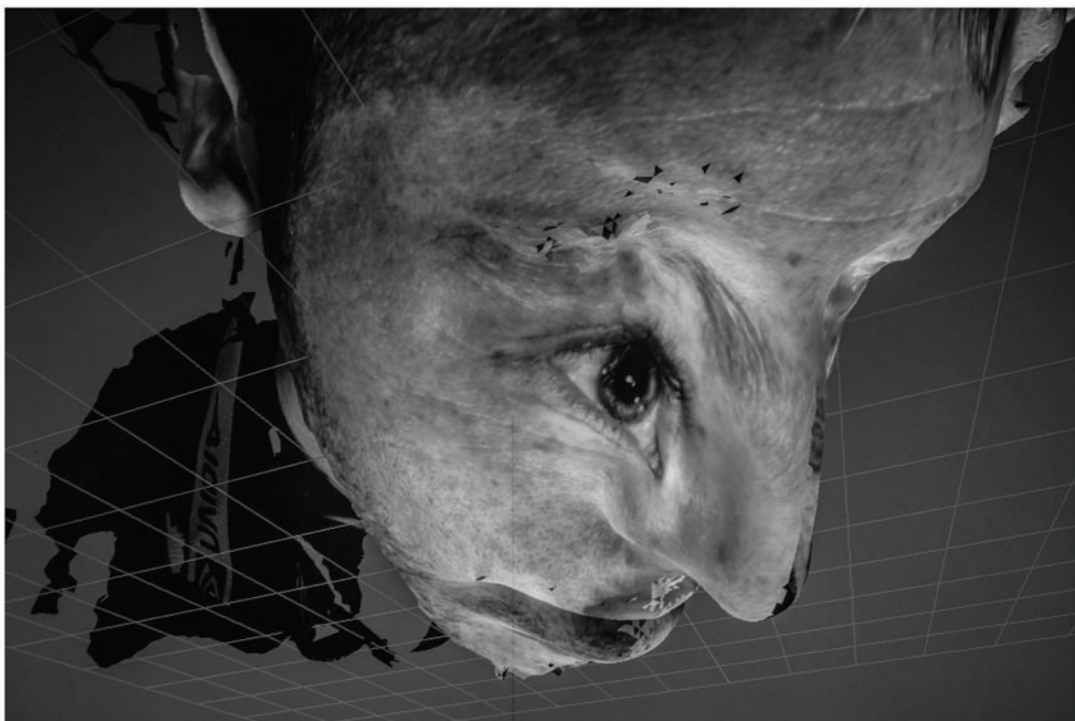
The Digital Skin Series

By Emilio Vavarella

"At first men never died, but when they advanced in life they cast their skins like snakes and crabs, and came out with youth renewed. After a time a woman growing old went to a stream to change her skin. She threw off her old skin in the water, and observed that as it floated down it caught against a stick. Then she went home, where she had left her child. The child, however, refused to recognize her, crying that its mother was an old woman not like this young stranger; and to pacify the child she went after her cast integument and put it on. From that time mankind ceased to cast their skins and died." – R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians* (Oxford, 1891), p. 265

The Digital Skin Series is composed of self-portraits in which I pose "under the digital skin" of strangers I've crossed paths with in the past. To create this series, I first used a 3D scanner to obtain an accurate tridimensional model of my face. Then I used a camera-prototype to acquire HD portraits of strangers. Finally, I applied their portraits to my digital skull as if they were simply an additional layer. The result is a series of photographs where bidimensionality and tridimensionality collide in an intimate and unpredictable way.

In the past, myths about skin were common across cultures and related to radical biological metamorphoses. For example, in the Navajo tradition – which considered the skin a mask – if you were to lock your eyes with those of the *skinwalkers*, they could project themselves into your body and transform into you. In today's network society, bodies have left that organic condition and are characterized by transient statuses: individuals have become di-viduals, data aggregates, samples, signals. The last boundary between us and the world, our skin, has become a transient membrane that changes along with the trans- and meta-human forms under it. The space that was occupied by the *skinwalkers* of the past has been taken over by infinite reconfigurations and mediations. What remains the same is that to be human still means to constantly shift through generative metamorphosis, corruptions, and de-generations that escape any clear categorization.



Christian | Male | Denmark |





Naomi | Female | Canada |





Horst | Male | Germany |





Richard | Male | U.S.A. |





Kobi | Male | Israel |



Emilio Vavarella is a media artist-scholar whose work merges interdisciplinary art practice and theoretical research and is centered around the study of the relationship between humans and technological power. His art practice presents a combination of using new technologies with alternative (non-productive, poetic, dysfunctional) goals in mind, imagining technology's future effects through the use of speculative fiction, and decontextualizing and misusing technology to reveal its hidden mechanisms.

Emilio is currently working toward a PhD in Film and Visual Studies at Harvard University. He holds an M.A. cum laude in Visual Arts from Luav University of Venice, with study abroad fellowships at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Tel Aviv and Bilgi University of Istanbul and received a B.A. cum laude in Visual, Cultural, and Media Studies from the University of Bologna. His website is <http://emiliovavarella.com>.