



Orion Szydel, *Exposed*, 2015, SX-70 Polaroid: 8.8 x 10.7 cm., image: 7.9 x 7.9 cm.

L'espace devient question, cesse d'être évidence,
cesse d'être incorporé, cesse d'être approprié.

L'espace est un doute: il me faut sans cesse le marquer,
le désigner; il n'est jamais à moi, il ne m'est jamais donné,
il faut que j'en fasse la conquête.

—Georges Perec, *Espèces d'espaces*

Orion Szydel is a photographer and teaching assistant in the Studio Arts and Photography Department at Concordia University in Montreal. His interests lie in different photographic subjects and genres, including natural motifs and installations. His works are remarkable for their stylistic diversity.

This polaroid photograph is a self-portrait of Szydel mimicking the pose of the model in *Standing Female Nude* (1917) by Egon Schiele (1890–1918). Szydel has long been fascinated by Schiele's work, particularly its reliance on the “empty” canvas and its expressivity despite an economy of line. As Szydel states, “One can feel the person, live the moment and the interaction with the artist. An empty film, filled with intimacy.” Similar to Schiele's representation of his model's transient pose, Szydel's self-portrait captures the magic and beauty of a particular moment. Szydel was not only captivated by Schiele's ingeniously simplified method of rendering the nude and her emotional state, but also by the malleability of gender that underlies Schiele's portrait. The figure in *Standing Female Nude* is not a traditional Venus; she is a robust figure with a masculine haircut. Still, she is vulnerable as she partially covers her body with her hands and warily looks back to see if anyone is spying on her. The blurring of the boundary

between masculinity and femininity is also central to Szydel's self-portrait, which shows a bearded man with accentuated curves, who, like Schiele's model, is also glancing back as if to see if anyone is watching him. Both artists detach the human subject from their surroundings to concentrate on the plasticity of the human body. Whereas a drawing offers the liberty of stylistic manipulation, a polaroid is usually not meant to be retouched. The line is still crucial in the photograph but the three-dimensional physicality of the subject is more heavily emphasized, thus shifting the focus from the spontaneity and minimalism of Schiele's quick sketch to the corporeality of Szydel's body in his photographic self-portrait.

Alena Krasnikova