Daniel Gordon, *Toe Transplant*, 2006. C-Print.

ETHAN GREENBAUM: I think that your photos articulate a very contemporary, very ambivalent grasping for bodily experience. Most people in this country aren't in danger of violent attack, nor do they use their bodies in a way that increases their awareness of them. You can watch Saddam being hung on YouTube or see photos of killing in Darfur, yet we have no way to square these images with our own lives. In your work there is a recurrence of deformed, battered or otherwise pieced together figures. These models are disturbingly corporeal, even as they remain clear constructions. All their angst resides literally on the surface. Can you talk about your use of the figure in relation to your photographic process?

DANIEL GORDON: I think the body has always been a present subject in art making. Using the human form is universally a way to relate to people, and its possibilities are endlessly engaging. I try to use the body as a tool to create an environment where one might identify, feel disgust, anger, empathy, etc., and be aware of their own physicality. Instead of setting intentions, I've tried recently to discover the literary form, or its 'meaning', as I go along. Of course, being a member of the world I am influenced by media and images like anybody else, but I'm not trying to make overt political or social references. Basically, my work is intuitive.

EG: I see connections in your work to contemporary painters like Dana Schutz and Barnaby Furnas, who create these very material figures that are all surface. Do you think about the relationship of your work to painting? Do you feel that you are working at all in response to figurative painting of the last decade?

DG: I don't really think about painting. I am a very simple man.

EG: To go back to my first question, there is this relationship between your images (downloaded internet photos) to the things you're making (photos of paper constructions). That seems to be about this desire to pull an intense sort of physical response from something immaterial. How'd you start working this way and what does it mean for you?

DG: The first picture I made using the process you just described was an image of a toe transplant operation. This is a procedure that my dad actually helped pioneer, an operation

that enables a lost thumb to be replaced by an amputated toe. I was captivated by the implausible / unnatural quality of this procedure, and was inspired by its perverted, ambitious, cinematic qualities (Frankenstein). When I made this picture I was thinking a lot about the mass of images floating around in virtual space, and the possibilities of combining and pushing them away from their original context; a similar feeling operation to that of the toe transplant. These images found on the Internet seemed to be the perfect material to 'transplant.' By giving these images a real sculptural space I'm encouraging their transformation to be complete. That way I can treat (through photography's essentials: space and light) this composite as if it were the real thing. Making this picture was the birth of this particular process.

EG: I had a sense when I saw the toe photo that you were onto something different. So much of the images you're dealing with are coming along by way of the latest technology, high speed internet, etc., yet you have this way of making that interrupts the seamlessness of the digital.

DG: At this point, I'm thinking more about what kind of images I want to make and less about how the process affects meaning. I've accepted my tools and supplies as a given, and am interested in allowing the work to grow, as it can in other mediums where the material is already accepted as the standard (i.e., painting). With that said, all of the points you bring up in terms of my particular form of materials are interesting and valid. A question for me is, why not just create everything in the computer? But, without seams and faults and limitations my project would be very different. The seamlessness of the ether is boring to me, but the materialization of that ether, I think, can be very interesting.

EG: Another thing that stood out to me looking at your work was the different type of compositions or formats you were using. In some of your work, there are cropped formats that feel excerpted from a larger scene (that of course doesn't exist). There are also pictures like *Snapshot*, of the bodybuilder being crushed by weights, which feel like more self-contained narratives. A third format is the frozen still lives, flowers, cutting boards etc. They seem to have really different relationships to time. The cropped images feel like part of a continuum, and the others more like a static snapshot, more familiar to photography. What's the impulse behind these different formats?

DG: The various ways that I shoot the pictures is kind of a continuation of my desire to give the viewer a sense of the subject as a reality. So, I think it is helpful and necessary to use certain tropes people are familiar with. I think there's some comedy in a picture that's totally constructed for the camera but is actually more aligned with the feel of street photography. It's more of a gesture at this point, though, as opposed to a serious decision.

EG: Your talking about the use of tropes as a generous gesture (i.e., to give the viewer something familiar to work with) reminds me of a comment you made in a conversation we had earlier about how using found internet imagery felt like a collaborative process for you. Can you talk more about this idea of collaboration in the way you work and/or the relationship with viewers?

DG: Well, I am appropriating images from people all over the world. I can find a picture of a hand from Peru or an umbilical chord from Australia within minutes, and although I don't know the people who post these images, I do feel that the source material is, by nature, more personal; with more of an existing point of view than if I were appropriating images from a visual encyclopedia.

EG: I would call your figures post-digital, in the way that they are coming out of a particular set of circumstances that seem really tied up with digital technology and the way it influences perception. How do you think the figures you are making (i.e., paper thin and constructed from multiple digital sources) relate to a view about people or their representation?

DG: It's a really good question, but, honestly, I don't know how to answer it.