

AQC0465

Nanopublication — Cubist Fragmentation as Spirit Dispersal

by Arnaud Quercy · Ariel - The tempest · 2023



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Cubist Fragmentation as Spirit Dispersal

While "Ariel [1] - The Spirit" (2022) maintained a unified minimal face with recognizable features, "Ariel - The Tempest" (2023) abandons facial representation entirely, fragmenting the form into faceted geometric planes that represent the air spirit's ability to disperse, scatter, and reconstitute across space—a cubist transliteration of shape-shifting rendered as spatial decomposition.

CONTEXT

In Shakespeare [3]'s **The Tempest**, Ariel possesses the ability to disperse into multiple forms simultaneously—appearing as sea-nymph, harpy, disembodied music, invisible presence. The spirit fragments across space, existing in multiple manifestations at once, then reconstitutes as needed. This capacity for dispersal and reformation is fundamental to Ariel's power and nature as an elemental being unbound by corporeal limits (except when Prospero's magic constrains this very ability).

My 2022 Wood PLA sculpture "Ariel - The Spirit" embodied this character through a unified, minimal face—two eyes, suggestion of nose and mouth—carved into an elongated angular form. The face was simplified but intact, recognizably anthropomorphic, suggesting a single coherent identity compressed into geometric boundaries. That approach captured the spirit's **containment** but not its fundamental capacity for dispersal.

One year later, "Ariel - The Tempest" abandons the unified face entirely. The ceramic sculpture fractures into a composition of angular, faceted planes that relate to each other through geometric logic rather than anatomical coherence. There is no longer a "front" or "face" in the conventional sense—instead, the form reads as

fragments of a presence scattered across spatial axes, held in temporary relationship by the sculptural armature but visually suggesting the possibility of further dispersal.

The single hollow opening that pierces the upper portion of the form—which might be read as a vestigial "eye"—is the last trace of anthropomorphic identity, a minimal anchor point for the viewer's recognition reflex. But unlike the two distinct eyes in the Wood PLA version, this single void functions less as an organ of sight and more as an absence, a gap through which the spirit might escape or through which the viewer might glimpse the hollow interior—the sculpture admitting its own incompleteness, its status as fragment rather than whole.

The cubist treatment—breaking the form into non-contiguous planes that suggest multiple viewpoints collapsed into simultaneous visibility—translates Ariel's shapeshifting into spatial rather than temporal terms. Where the character in the play shifts sequentially from form to form, the sculpture presents fragmentation as coexistent: all the scattered pieces visible at once, frozen mid-dispersal. The sharp edges where planes break and separate suggest the violence of this decomposition, as if the spirit's coherence is being actively shattered by the binding force that prevents full dispersal.

The vertical thrust of the composition—rising upward from a wider base toward a narrower, tilted crown—encodes aspiration, the spirit's constant orientation toward air and freedom even while bound in earth. The diagonal lean suggests instability, temporary equilibrium, a form that might at any moment collapse back into its constituent fragments or reconstitute into some other configuration.

By moving from the unified minimal face (2022) to complete geometric fragmentation (2023), I evolve the sculptural language from "spirit bound into singular form" to "spirit prevented from full dispersal"—a shift from containment to arrested dissolution. The ceramic Ariel is not a whole being constrained but a scattered being prevented from completing its own fragmentation.

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