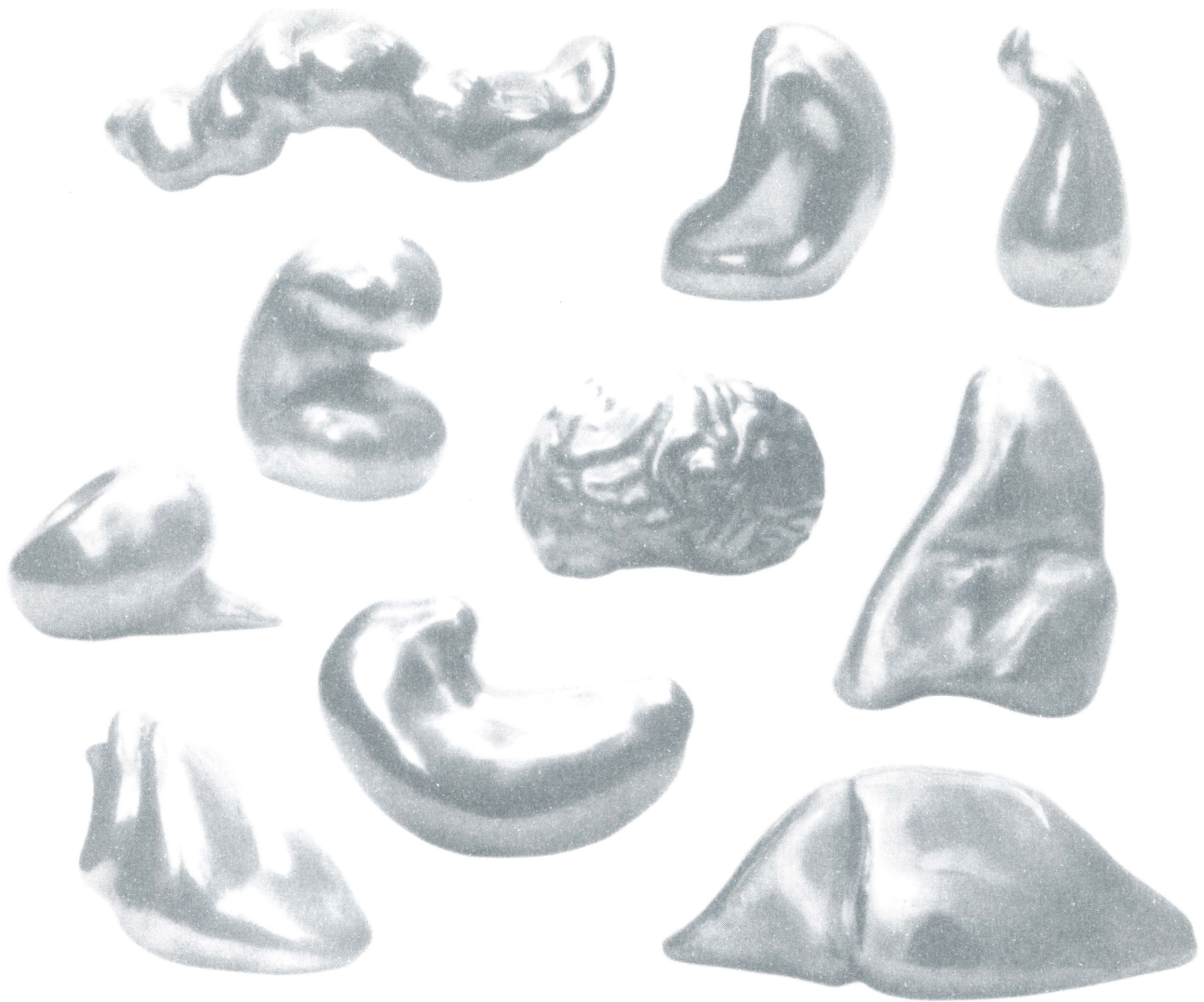


amorphous
organ

Lyndal Jefferies



a p r i l 6 - 2 7 1 9 9 6

2 0 0 G E R T R U D E S T R E E T

M e l b o u r n e A u s t r a l i a

t o u r i n g t o A R T S P A C E

A u c k l a n d , N . Z . D e c e m b e r 1 9 9 6



The time man was a tree without organs or function
but only will
and was a tree walking at will
will return.
It was, and will return.
For the biggest lie ever was to frame man as an organism
of eating, assimilating,
incubating, excreting,
that which existed creating a whole hierarchy of latent functions
to elude the field of *deliberate*
will

excerpt from
Antoin Artaud
Letter to Pierre Loeb 1959

Unfold the Body.

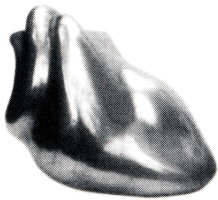
Bodies have been unfolding in Lyndal Jefferies' work for quite a while now. In the 1992 installation 'sterility/fluidity' a stainless steel surgery bed had its surface replaced by a transparency of light refracting under water. Removing the body as it lay passive and presented by medical discourse, it was replaced with images and surfaces of fluid and light. 'finitude' at CBD gallery Sydney in 1993 included three pink foam abdominal supports stretched between bars attached to the wall. Used to keep transplanted organs in their new bodies, their stretched open state suggested a way of thinking the body beyond science's concern to keep it together. These works were backlit, behind the support a body of leaking light all over the place. In both installations the body as fluid and light was opposed to the body of blood and bone. This new body was unfolded from the medical and biological discourses which constitutes the organism as their object, to suggest new approaches to our bodies, and new experiments in what it can and should do. If these two shows explored this new body as fluid and light in opposition to a medical discourse that it escapes, 'doll parts', at CBD gallery in 1995, began a more determined research into this new body. Three large shiny pink p.v.c. forms, stuffed taut and hard were suspended top and bottom in the manner of punching bags. Ambiguously both bodies and organs, they posed this confusion not as an opposition to be resolved, nor to be left fashionably unresolvable, but rather as a suggestion. Organs as bodies, and bodies without organs.

The current exhibition 'amorphous organ' consists of a large, shallow, silver pool and ten cast aluminium sculptures of the body's organs, slumped and flaccid but with a contoured motion. Jefferies' recent line of inquiry is continued in these small and immaculate bodies, these smooth and ambiguous organs. Each body/organ occupies its own space and has its own character. Each embodies differences



aesthetic and formal, unlikely and narrative. Such variety of directions energises any number of transformations: 'droop' (the kidney) is meditative, seemingly turned in and thinking on itself, doing yoga; 'creep' (the pancreas) twitches with a barely contained nervous energy, a creepy contracting; 'poise' (the gall bladder) has something of the confectionery; 'slump' (the liver) has something of a slow, slithery and silent attack; 'purse' (the spleen) seems hollow, its skin sagging around its structure; whereas 'shunt' (the heart) seems hard and muscular, about to jump; 'spasm' (the stomach), is jerky and backflipped; 'suck' (the lung) is sculptural and upright, the glimmerings of a torso; and 'tank' (the brain), is so recognisable that animating it with other than received meanings is almost impossible: it seems in its faceted and polished silver, jewel-like, beautiful.¹

If medicine takes as its object the organic body, regarding its organs as parts making up the whole, then 'amorphous organ' posits organs as jumping out of their skin, no longer within such an organisational logic. These organs have their own bodies, discrete, different and difficult to contain. 'amorphous organ' according to Jefferies, 'does not present the organs rather than which the organism is not'.² Jefferies gives us bodies/organs that make connections beyond the visceral hard-wiring of the body and the transcendental organisation of the organism. No longer organised from the top down, or from the outside in, these 'amorphous organs' are free to find their own way, in their own way. In their palpable differences of posture, tone and suggestion, they immediately produce a glittering sparkle of directions. Jefferies does not present us with the aftermath of an autopsy - dead body parts without the whole - rather each piece is more alive now it makes its own connections. And with this opening comes the opportunity to experiment, to discover what it is that the body/organ can do. 'amorphous organ' contains something of this Spinozistic imperative: it is inspiring and continues Jefferies' own research into the body/organ beyond western science. Art is an experiment with the body without organs, a testing of knowledges and a dissatisfaction with their limits. As Gilles Deleuze has said, 'It's organisms that die, not life.



Any work of art points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks.’³

The other part of ‘amorphous organ’ is the silver pool. It is made by floating a thin layer of oil on top of water onto which is dusted aluminium powder. This forms a seamless and gently undulating surface that reflects light from the large windows. For Jefferies it is ‘the body as an amorphous amalgam, liquid metal and white light.’⁴ Such a surface appeared in Jefferies’ ‘sterility/fluidity’ show, and was picked up again in last years ‘heal’ at First Draft in Sydney. There the “self-healing” surface of the pool encouraged thoughts of a healing immersion and rising anew. In ‘heal’ the addition of bathing towels and swim caps, and pool bars going into the pool clearly indicated our roles and the path of our bodies. In ‘amorphous organ’ however, things seem less mapped, our relation to the pool seemingly less determined. The space is smoother. The pool is here depthless, the pigment at once floating and opaque, presenting an infinite surface and an impossible depth, an unfathomable space. The surface is constantly changing, moving, shimmering, reflecting the conditions one finds it in, registering light and force, a swirly dissolve. Although flirting with abstraction, the pool appropriately rejects modernism’s more erect postures. It reflects its surroundings in the body of its surface, alive with non-organic forces. Its physical being is immanent to the viewing moment. It is a smooth surface of possibility, a plane of consistency.⁵

And so, as we walk from the pool to the organs, we begin to think of them together. They are linked most obviously in their surface, in the similarity of their glossy shines. The organs a touch brighter perhaps, but similar in their shared consistency, their silver glob. The organs/bodies, set free from the organism, seem to remember something of what they are, possibilities to be. The pool and the organs/bodies take



the artist’s research in two directions, on two lines of flight. The pool tells of everything; god/nature. The organs/bodies tell of a thought of being part of it, an immanent mode of being.⁶ Organisms can be rethought and Georges Simondon gives us a place to start. ‘Individuation’, he writes, ‘must be grasped as the

becoming of the being and not as a model of the being which would exhaust its signification.⁷ In this sense, individuation of the body/organ is a process which contains the pool while developing it. The organism as a model would unify the organs and exclude the pool.

We might now be able to trace a path from our own body out to it's organs on the shelves. They seem to melt. We are on the way to the pool. The pool in turn sends us back to the organs which are no longer our own, they glow with life. We glow too, in their light on our skin and in the trip on which they take us. They give us a view of the gallery, the street and all around. No longer the earth as organism, nor organisms, but bodies without organs, in the pool of life. We leave asking what mind? what body? and feeling the glowing possibilities of an 'amorphous organ'.



Stephen Zepke
Sydney, February, 1996.

- 1 Jefferies studied images of cadavers and the organs of animals to arrive at such an expressive understanding of their surfaces and consistencies.
- 2 Lyndal Jefferies, *Artist's Notebook*, 1995
- 3 Gilles Deleuze, *negotiations 1972-1990*, M. Joughin trans., Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p.143.
- 4 Lyndal Jefferies, *Artist's Notebook*, 1995. Jefferies has been interested in Deleuze and Guattari's ideas on the Body without Organs, especially in its resistance to the organism. They write, 'the body without organs is opposed less to organs as such than to the organisation of the organs insofar as it composes an organism. The body without organs is not a dead body, but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organisation.' G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, B. Massumi trans., Athlone, London, 1988, p.30.
- 5 Deleuze and Guattari say of the plane of consistency that it is 'the unformed, unorganised, nonstratified, or destratified body and all its flows: subatomic and submolecular particles, pure intensities, preital and prephysical free singularities.' In *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.43.
- 6 Immanence is a key concept in 'amorphous organ', as it is for Deleuze and Guattari. As they describe it; 'However many dimensions it (an immanent system) may have, it never has a supplementary dimension to that which transpires upon it. That alone makes it natural and immanent.' In *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.266.
- 7 Georges Simondon, 'The Genesis of the Individual', in J. Crary and S. Kwinter eds., *Incorporations*, Zone, New York, 1992, p.311.

curriculum vitae

lyndal jefferies

born: 12/05/71
nationality: New Zealand
resident: Sydney, Australia

education

1992 Post Graduate Diploma of Visual Arts
Sydney College of the Arts
1991 Bachelor of Visual Arts
Sydney College of the Arts

exhibitions

solo

1996 'amorphous organ', ARTSPACE, Auckland, New Zealand
1996 'amorphous organ' (part two), CBD Gallery, Sydney
1996 'amorphous organ' (part one), Pendulum, Sydney
1996 'amorphous organ', 200 GERTRUDE STREET, Melbourne
1995 'doll parts', CBD Gallery, Sydney
1995 'heal', First Draft, Sydney
1994 'cleanse', Selenium, Sydney
1993 'finitude', CBD Gallery, Sydney
1992 'gentle beatings', First Draft West, Sydney

exhibitions group

- 1994 'soft, pink, flesh', The Fresh Art Show. S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
- 1994 'dumb paintings', Selenium Gallery, Sydney
- 1992 'sterility / fluidity', G.D.V.A. exhibition. Sydney College of the Arts
- 1992 'Home and Away', Ilam College of Art. Christchurch, New Zealand
- 1992 'N.S.W Travelling Artist Scholarship Exhibition', City Art Institute, Sydney
- 1991 'Fem-en-in-a-tae', S.C.A. Graduate Exhibition, Sydney
- 1990 'Suspended Sentence', Jan Taylor Gallery, Sydney
- 1990 'Works off the Wall', The Works Gallery, Sydney
- 1988 'Objects Trouves', Auckland, New Zealand

awards, grants and scholarships

- 1995 Visual Arts Craft Board of the Australia Council for the Arts - Professional Development Grant 'amorphous organ', 200 GERTRUDE STREET, Melbourne
- 1995 Pat Corrigan Grant 'heal', First Draft, Sydney
- 1992 Pat Corrigan Grant 'gentle beatings', First Draft, Sydney
- 1991 Sydney College of the Arts Scholarship
- 1990 William Fletcher Trust Scholarship

publications

- 1995 *The Changing Critical Role of Artist Run Initiatives Over the Last Decade*
First Draft publication - photo 'heal'.
- 1994 *Sydney Morning Herald*, Fresh Art Show, S.H. Ervin Gallery - photo 'soft, pink, flesh'.
- 1994 Fresh Art Show - catalogue. S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney.
- 1992 G.D.V.A. - catalogue. Sydney College of the Arts publication.
- 1991 *The Increased Difficulty of Breathing*. Bachelor of Visual Arts - catalogue
Sydney College of the Arts publication.
- 1991 Lyndal Jefferies *Postmodernism / Feminism and the Terrain of the Female Body*,
(Post Graduate Thesis) Sydney College of the Arts publication.

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