

THOM PUCKEY

HOHENTHAL UND BERGEN

The anatomical investigation of European culture reached the sobering conclusion, amongst other things, that the soul was not to be found in the body. Certainly, this conclusion was also a subliminal precondition for the continued pursuit of such investigations. The dissection, opening and dismembering of the human body, was only possible if nothing major was destroyed in the process.

In Tibet, the dead are hacked to little pieces in an open field, and left for the vultures — after the corpse has undergone a series of ritual treatments whose chief purpose is to ensure that the soul can leave the body as undamaged as possible.

Although we know that the human body is a collection of material, we react with horror when we uncover its anatomy. There is a frightening difference between death and life.

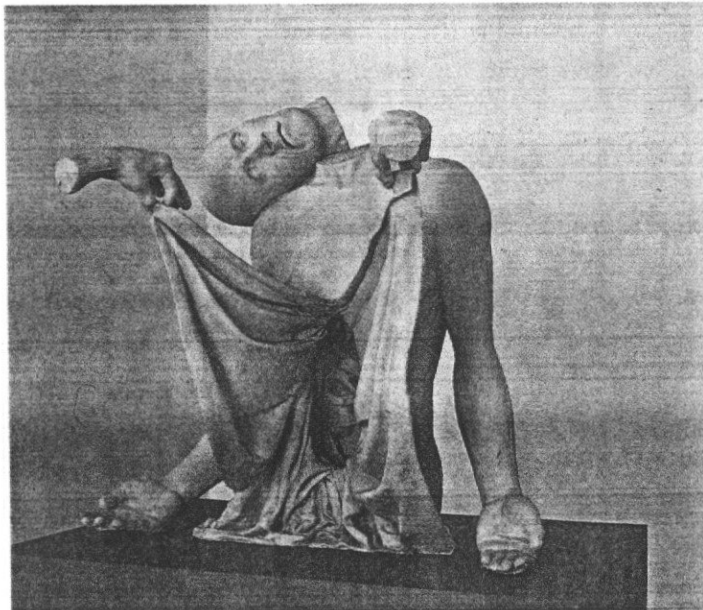
Thom Puckey's recent silicon sculptures work with this horror, and a method that takes contextual references and extends them into absurdity.

Alongside the reference to a Renaissance sculpture of Christ, the apocalyptically lifted cloth, the motif of a beheaded man, and references to countless paintings showing anatomy sessions, there are sexual associations, vaginal forms, and a child's penis. And there's humor as well, the material with its joins and color, but also its comic-book elements, like the floating hands, the dangling strands of muscle and stick-man, try to alleviate the weightiness of the references.

Thom Puckey seems to straitjacket his new sculptures with bold, multilayered connotations. Almost as though he were suspicious of his lucid freedom, and required a guaranteed level of knowledge as a theoretical support. But maybe only emotional and existential themes such as mourning and melancholy, suffering and vulnerability, life and death can resonate in contemporary sculpture?

Rainald Schumacher

(Translated from German by Shaun Whiteside)



TOM PUCKEY, LYRICAL SCULPTURE, 1993. SILICONE, RUBBER, 76 X 70 X 64 CM.