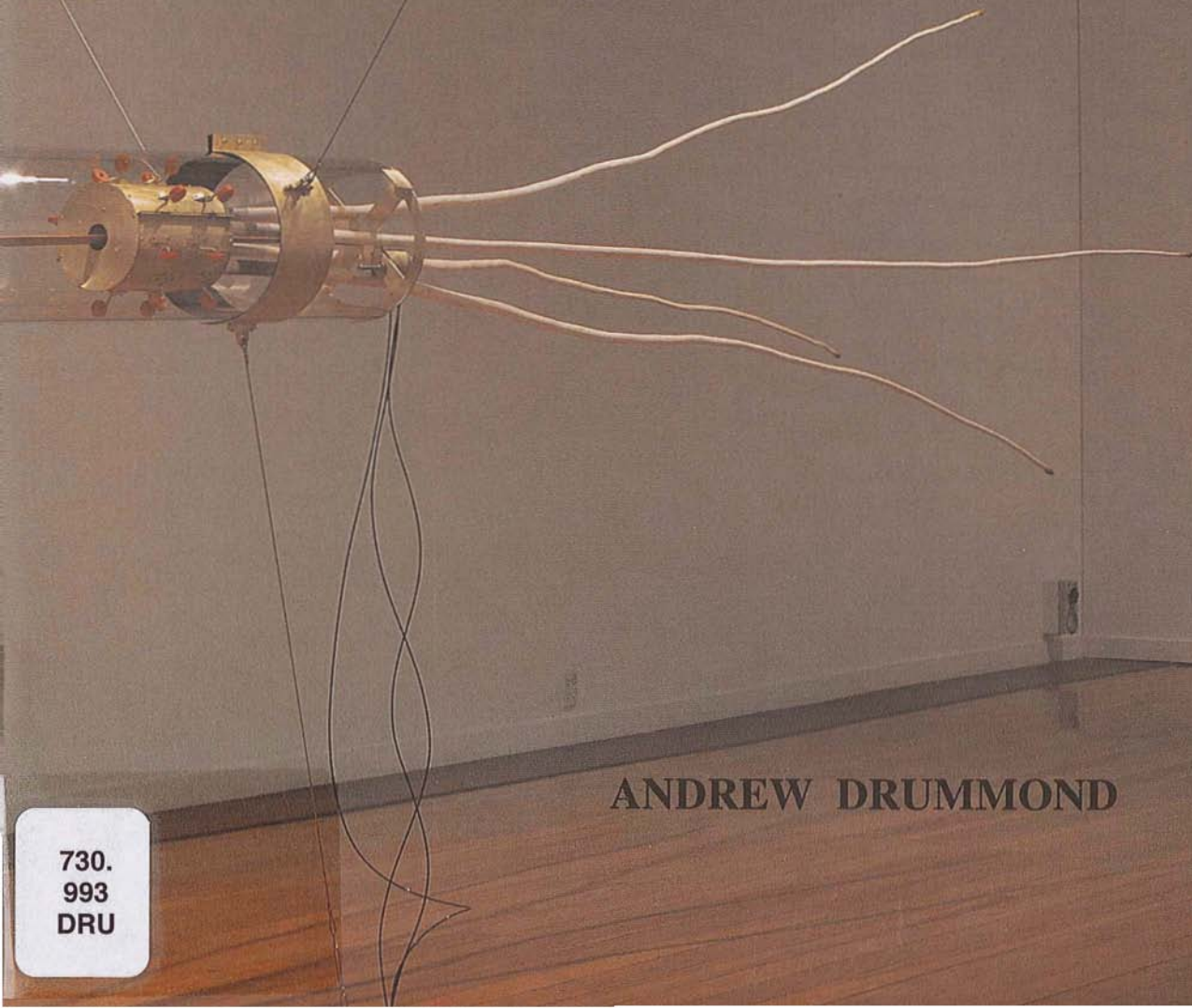


for beating and breathing



ANDREW DRUMMOND

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Relationships between body and land form a significant theme in Andrew Drummond's sculpture. In 1993, when Drummond moved to Christchurch to take up the position of Head of the Sculpture Department at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, he took the opportunity to apply his thinking to a new environment, while also exploring some different directions in his work.

The work that constitutes ***for beating and breathing*** has been commissioned by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery for its permanent collection. The gallery acknowledges and greatly appreciates the generous assistance this project has received from Creative New Zealand, Arts Council of New Zealand/*Toi Aotearoa*.

Elizabeth Caldwell, Contemporary Curator at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, is in conversation with the artist:

Body and Machine

Elizabeth: The title for these new works in, *for beating and breathing*, and some of their rhythmic actions and forms, evoke a sense of the body and that's certainly in keeping with the content of your work to date. Most people, I think, are familiar with your early performance works like 'Filter Action' and 'Vein'. This work, however, refers to the body, to medical intervention and the way science and medicine make use of technology. For example, the vehicle's movements with the willow branches are inspired by the inflation of the arteries in the surgical procedure angioplasty. What's your interest in introducing these references into the work?

Andrew: It's a number of things, one of them is the way that technology has reached a point where it can keep the body working, even if it is in a temporary situation, to extend life. I have used technology this time to illustrate this idea of somehow supporting a body, and in the work called 'Device for breathing and reaching' what I've done is taken the idea of angioplasty, where they extend the artery and I've used a glass tube, which is more like a vein actually, and the vehicle runs up and down this tube and the branches extend, at the end of the tube which is like what it would do in

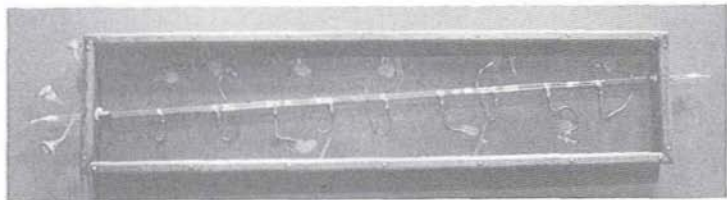
angioplasty. But it's a tenuous reference rather than a specific reference and its doing a job, but in this particular instance, the machine is doing a job which doesn't really have a point.

Elizabeth: Is that important, that you've got works that are doing something, but don't have a function that you would necessarily relate to on a practical everyday level?

Andrew: Absolutely. I'm interested in making work which alludes to a function, and sometimes that function is practical but it's also metaphorical and develops the idea of metaphor so that machines instead of being just useful in a practical sense are useful in a metaphorical sense. As I go on, though, I'm becoming more and more interested in the idea of sculptures that have a use. At the moment I'm going through a period where I'm making sculptures that have a metaphorical use but don't have a practical use. The next body of work I'm working towards, are machines for cleaning the environment. I'm taking an interest in the organic relationship between the body and the land, the symbiotic relationship between them. The next century is about the healing. The 'Vein' piece was a gesture to healing. Burying a vein in the ground was putting back something into the ground that had been taken out, so it was symbolic. But

now, all these years later, I've moved from there. I'm developing a greater interest in making machines that have a job to do.

Elizabeth: This idea of these machines is really quite fascinating to you? Body as machine, body and landscape. You're making machines that establish these metaphors?



Andrew: I think the view at the moment of the body as a machine is so there. It's there in fashion, in terms of the manufactured look of the body. This idea of the manufactured body, and the possibility that you can change your body to suit your career. In fact I'm certainly interested in that reading, because it's something that is going on now. I'm not taking that as the major force, but just as an observation. This is going to have an impact on how we see ourselves in relationship to our environment. We know that we've got this belief that we can change our environment, control our environment, and we also have the same belief that we can change and control our body which is really a late 20th century perception.

Case History

Elizabeth: The arteries, veins, and capillary networks referred to in these works make me think about some of your earlier work, such as 'Vein'. Do you see a connection there? You've also mentioned the machines that don't have a direct function other than that which is metaphorical and that makes me think about works like the 'Listening and Viewing Device'.

Andrew: Absolutely. You know you get to a point where your work revisits ideas that have come up earlier which is really what I have been doing in the last year or two. I've been revisiting some of the earlier work I did in the 80s. Certainly the 'Vein' piece, where I put a vein into the earth; I've actually revisited those ideas in the work 'Device for breathing and reaching'. I've made quite a strong reference to the 'city' vein; it's a straight line and its got stations along this line. In this case, the stations are the saddles that hold the work in space so that the vehicle goes between the stations. It has quite a strong visual reference to the city vein. The idea that you mention, that the work has a function, although it's a metaphorical function, and it also has a practical function. It's operating between one area and another area. So, the viewer can

wonder what its doing and then conclude that there's no reason for it to do this, so its like an object of delight. At that point it has a delightful fascination and yet it has this other side to it which is alluding to a use. It operates between them. For instance, in the work in Wellington, on Druid's Hill, the 'Listening and Viewing Device', I actually made that work, originally putting it in a glass dome, so that it couldn't be used. I was interested in the idea of isolating something in its own atmosphere and that work, even though it has functions, you can't get to it to function. Now, in its real state, in the Wellington Botanic Gardens, it sits on a hill and swings in the wind. That's all it does, it swings in the wind. So again, it has an allusion towards some use but it's actually useless. In terms of its real function, its usefulness is in a metaphorical sense.

Elizabeth: When I think about the works you've done over the years, there seems to be a progression in the way that you reference the body in your work - from earlier performance work where you utilise your own body (such as 'Vein' and 'Filter Action' that connect body and land) through to these current body-like pieces. You've gone from involving your own body directly to an almost mechanical distance. There is a play on the role of technology and the organic, they both seem to be involved.



Filter Action, Aramoana 1980

Andrew: That's a good point, and it's been interesting to look, over a period of time, at how your work shifts, even though the concerns might stay the same in a general way. I think in the '90' Device, beating' I certainly was interested in this idea. The two kidney forms and the recycling of the water and the idea of laying the kidneys out on a slab, certainly has some references to 'Filter Action' at Aramoana, which I did in 1980, where I was using the idea of the kidney as a metaphor for filtering. In this work I've got the kidneys on the slab and the heart is hidden inside the reservoir and its beating out. So there's that kind of context, but there's this other point that you make of the distancing between the performance work where I was part of that thing, to here, where its much more detached. I'm now more interested in the impact of technology on our lives.

Filtering

Elizabeth: This new work seems to continue, or extend, some of the themes addressed in the work 'From the Duplicitous Nature of the Swan; COB and PEN'. The water references and the planes in those works appear here too, suggesting machines linked in ways to the environment.

Andrew: '90° Device, beating' references the Canterbury landscape, although it's more tenuous than specific. It has a glass top and we're pumping fluid up into it and it's a really flat plane and the fluid drains off and then goes down into the reservoir.

Elizabeth: So, the features of the Canterbury landscape referred to, are the flat plains and the filtering of the water as it percolates into the aquifer?

Andrew: Yes, and the glass has a broken edge like a coastline, but in this particular instance, I've used the table not only as a landscape reference, it's also got two kidney forms which are laid out, so the glass table is like a slab where you've laid out a body. There are kidneys, and the kidneys have these arterial routes which meander down to the edge of the glass and then down into the reservoir.

Elizabeth: The meandering you mention sounds a bit like the braided rivers Canterbury is famous for.

Andrew: Yes it does relate to the braided river notion, and a few years ago, of course, I did quite a lot of work with the idea of the braided rivers and the relationship between a braided river and the veins and arteries in the body, so it does have that kind of reference.

vein (van) *n.* any of the tubular vessels that convey oxygen depleted blood to the heart.



Slate detail from Repository for Dreams and Journeys 1989 - 90

Devices

Elizabeth: That interest in seeing bodies as machines connects to the notion of invisible power. We take our bodies for granted. There's all that incredibly complex machinery inside that we don't see, that's hidden, like your pieces here. I'm interested in the way that perception, or analogy to them as machines, comes through in titles when you talk about '90° Device, beating', or 'Device for breathing and reaching', that idea of the device and machine.

Andrew: I use the word device because people feel a device is something that they have some relationship to.

dēvi'ce *n* a machine or tool used for a specific task.

Materials and Codes

Elizabeth: I'm sure that people are going to be really interested in the materials that you're using. There are chemicals and schlagmetal on the works on paper, glass, brass, and a variety of technological components in the other works. There is an immensely luscious quality about the materials that

you're using for the work, quite apart from the complexities of their composition.

Andrew: I'm really fascinated with how materials read, and in this work I've used a lot of glass. There's glass in the atmospheres; their little glass tubes which could feed the atmosphere. Then there's the glass cylinder for the vehicle which is scientific glass. There's also the glass plane for the '90° Device, beating'. Everything else, if it's not glass, is brass. Glass and brass always seem to go together; it's just the way I read materials. Because of them being devices, they're special things, they're things which might be used for measuring and the reading of those calculations. I've used them in that way, almost like you would do in a laboratory situation, in a kind of experimental situation. The materials are very singular in that sense, their utilization is very carefully thought through. Wherever I've got another material, for instance on the vehicle which moves up and down the glass tube, the air line through its stomach and the wheels which hold it in space are red. I've used the colour red as a key.

Elizabeth: When you say red is a key, do you mean as a symbol for blood?

Andrew: It could be like blood, or a type of colour coding.

Elizabeth: Do you mean colour coding like that found on electrical wires? It sounds like something potentially dangerous.

Andrew: Yes, exactly, it arrives out of that very ordinary expectation that, if its red, its dangerous. Then in the other piece, '90° Device, beating', the fluid is blue, so you've got red and blue. You mentioned blood, and that's right, the red being what blood looks like on the outside of the body, on the inside at various points its blue prior to contact with oxygen. I've used that colour coding system here, where you know that's blue because its inside, you know that's red because its outside, but also when its blue its depleted of oxygen and when its red its oxygenated. Yet, the vehicle's dependent on oxygen and its wheels are red, so I'm playing around with that idea. Then in the atmospheres, these moments I've trapped on paper, I've used brass, on paper instead. It's called schlagmetal. I've used the chemical patenation of that to record the moment. It's actually like you would do an experiment. Even the frames around them, I've used red oxide which is like dried blood.

So again, I've extended the metaphor on that level. Certainly, the use of materials is really important in terms of keying the work for people but also for making it look special, the brass is yellow and golden.

ve'hicle (ve'i-) *n* carriage or conveyance used on land or in space; thing or person used as medium for thought or feeling or action.

Imperfect Atmospheres

Elizabeth: I'm interested in the way you have put glass domes over some of your other works such as the 'Vented' series and the preliminary work for the Druid's Hill 'Listening and Viewing Device'. By doing this they then occupy their own atmosphere and this connects them with these new works, particularly the 'Device for breathing and reaching' and the accompanying works on paper 'Imperfect Atmospheres' which have allusions to self contained atmospheric environments.

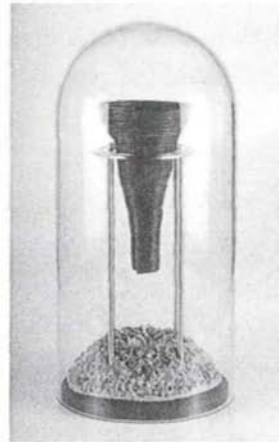
Andrew: When I was putting this body of work together the notion of atmosphere became quite

strong in my mind and I developed these drawings, I guess you can call them, where I trapped chemicals onto the paper, onto the schlagmetal, and it was like a moment, a breath, or an instant. It seemed that any instant, or moment, contains ideas of beauty and perfection. The drawings are recordings of moments in time and they were happening 'just then' so it was like a breath on the paper and of course, the machines are both doing that.

Elizabeth: That 'just then' moment, ties into the rhythm of breathing in 'Device for breathing and reaching' and the heartbeat reference of '90° Device, beating'; and the isolated, captured moment of the atmospheres.

Andrew: Yes, the idea of the body and the heartbeat is considered with the '90° Device, beating'. It's beating in a polyphonic rhythm which the heart doesn't do, the heart beats regularly, so I've actually shifted that around but again, it's that moment, the 58 beats a minute. Then of course, there is also the vehicle running up and down the glass tube in 'Device for breathing and reaching'. At the end of each cycle it takes and expels a breath. This is like the idea examined in the 'Imperfect Atmospheres' drawings. It focuses on a moment

in isolation. With the drawings I've inserted a glass tube in the frame so that it looks like the recording of the moment has actually happened inside its own environment, inside the frame of the drawing.



Listening and Viewing Device 1994

a'tmosphere n. the gaseous envelope surrounding the earth or any other celestial body; the air or climate in a particular place.

Viewing

Elizabeth: There is a rich and lush quality to the material used that imbues them with a tremendous elegance and beauty even though they are describing things like oxides, dried blood, or kidneys. There is a sense of dismemberment about the way the work isolates body parts, yet it retains this extraordinary grace. There's a kind of morbid fascination to them in the way they both attract and repel, combining apparent opposites.

Andrew: I'm really interested in the idea that you can take something which people find distasteful or difficult and then by relocating the idea into a new materiality it takes on another degree of reading. That's a very conscious move.

Elizabeth: In that case, how do you think the viewer will relate to this work, what kind of response do you expect the works to engender?

Andrew: There will be the muted pumping sound and the breathing of the vehicle but they won't be that dominant. They will be reasonably quiet but they will be there, so people will realize why the machines are working that way, it gives them clues. I'm not interested in hiding the motivation for the work you just don't see the engines. They are not

there and you don't need to see them. When we look at any machinery these days all of that is hidden away and we're only interested in what the machine does. I've actually bought into that idea quite a bit. In terms of how people read the work, this is always difficult for me, or anyone who makes work, to consider what you want them to get out of it, but I think what I've done this time is provide the viewer with so many ways into it, the readings can be multi-layered. So, there will be the techno-freak who will come in and be fascinated by the fact that you can get these sixteen wheels running along a tube when in fact the wheels have nothing to do with what powers it, they are just there to hold it in the space. What moves it is a tube which goes through the guts of the vehicle and is powered by a flat air line and a programmable air circuit but that is not immediately apparent.

Elizabeth: You want the viewer to be mystified?

Andrew: I want them disturbed in the nicest possible way. Disturbed in the sense that the work provokes thought. I want viewers to be fascinated.

Acknowledgements

Technical assistance: David Healy and
John Michelle

Editorial assistance: Jonathan Smart

Catalogue design: Simon Mulligan

University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts

Colour Images

Outside cover: For breathing and reaching

Inside cover, front: Imperfect Atmospheres

Inside cover, back: 90° Device, beating

for beating and breathing

First exhibited at the McDougall Art Annex

3 November - 10 December 1995



ISBN: 0-908874-40-5

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