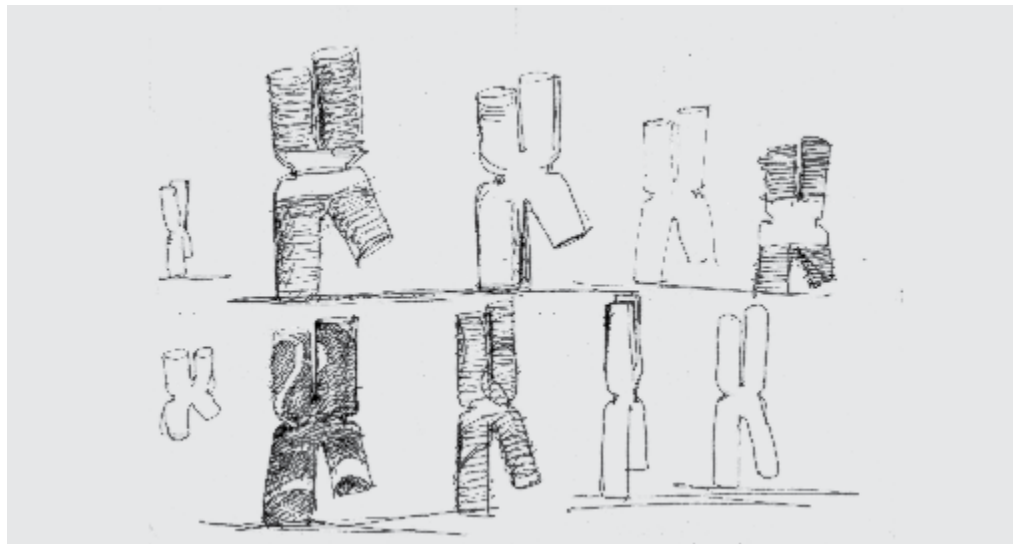


PULSATION

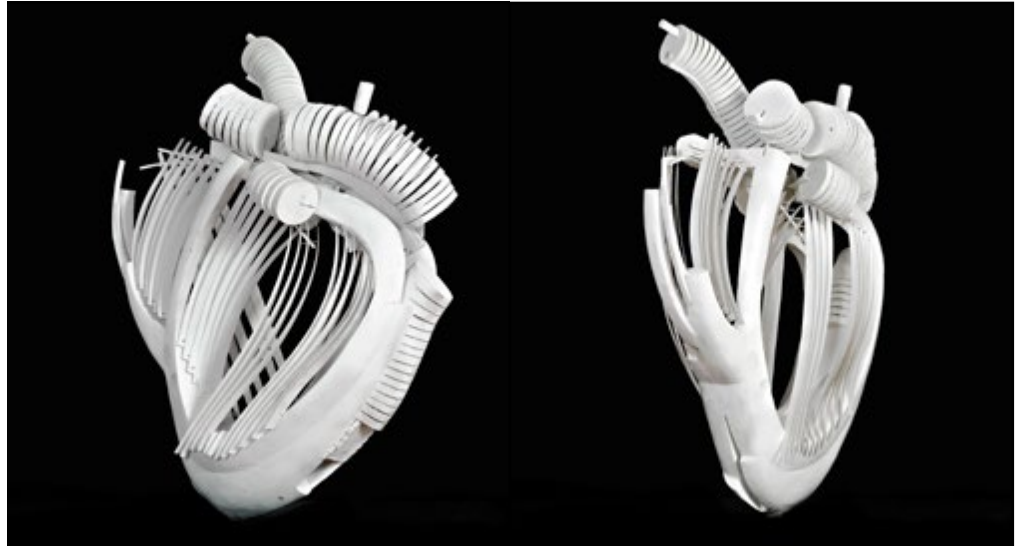
VADIM KOSMATSCHOF

In the project series “Pulsation”, Kosmatschof/Veech approach the forms of life familiar to each of us with greater immediacy than in any other works. The projects of the series, “Gen”, “Urban Heart” and “Breathing Form”, focus on organic life at three levels of magnitude: In “Gen”, the molecular level serves as the generator of form. In “Urban Heart”, an individual element – or, to be more precise, the central individual element – or organ of life is the subject of the work. And “Breathing Form” gives the observer the sense of perceiving an entire living creature in its expressions of life.

With these “quasi-realistic” portrayals of organic life, Kosmatschof/Veech make their clearest allusions to the traditions of object art. Whereas light and movement were the most significant innovations in early modernist sculpture, in the 1960s the repertoire of motifs in object art was expanded again to include action. For example, in 1968 the Viennese group Haus-Rucker-Co, with Laurid Ortner, presented the action “Yellow Heart”, in which pairs of spectators climbed into an organically shaped pneumatic space capsule with just enough room inside for two, in order to experience physical processes similar to those inside a body organ. Whereas the object of such actions in the 1960s was to create very specific physical experiences, which were realized through comparatively simple technology (e.g. pneumatic capsules), the objects created by Kosmatschof/Veech direct attention to considerably more general territories of the senses and are, moreover, constructed with greater technical complexity. The central theme here is no longer hedonism as a protest against mundanity and social constriction, but rather an aesthetic that truly promotes both insight and enlightenment. And the objects do not consume any externally sourced energy, but are powered by solar energy obtained by means of an organic, photovoltaic skin.



“Gen” is a simplified representation of a section of the well-known X chromosome form, which encloses human DNA and is involved in its replication. The construction rests on one “leg” and is illuminated from within. Solar energy causes a pulsating motion of the object, stretching and contracting the “supporting leg” and another “arm”. Although the real movements of chromosomes at the molecular level look different, this abstracted portrayal of life is effective: even as a static sculpture, as a kind of monument to life, this creation can have a powerful impact.



“Urban Heart” is considerably more elaborate in construction and its kinetic mechanism is more complex. For this project, Vadim Kosmatschhof did extensive research on heart surgery (see the contribution by Hellmut Oehlert, p. xxx) in order to develop a realistic image of the anatomy of the human heart and the way it functions. On this basis it was possible to make more precise calculations for transposing the mechanism to an object of appropriate magnitude for a public space. The movements of the heart – the rhythmically staggered expansion and contraction of the two heart chambers – are also emphasized by light effects and surface effects, and the fact that the “heart muscle” itself is comprised of separate movable stainless steel slats can also be understood as a reference to the muscle fiber structure of a real heart.



The central theme of the final project in the series, “Breathing Form”, is another vital life process – presented, however, metaphorically and less realistically than the human heart in the second project. A reclining form, which seems to consist of two spherical bulges with a skin stretched over them, expands horizontally and immediately contracts again, in regular, rhythmic motion. This crouching creature, which gives the impression that one can actually feel it breathing, is in fact a complex mechanical construction: metal rings are mounted in succession on a telescope bar, which is moved pneumatically. The spaces between the rings are covered with a pliable metal mesh, so that the “skin” can stretch and contract without the large form’s being lost.

Organic, luminescent, pulsating objects that look like living creatures or their primary building blocks – this is a formidable innovation as far as the history of object art is concerned, the more so because these artworks are energy self-sufficient. It has thus become possible to create abstract or realistic representations of life processes which up to now were only conceivable as more or less decorative appendages to buildings and their power supplies. Solar technology makes it possible to choose sites far removed from any electrical network – as well as to design and realize objects with monumental dimensions. Future perspectives for a biologically oriented artistic penetration of public spaces are auspicious, particularly also in architecture, which is still too static, too colorless and, where its approach to energy is concerned, far too archaic.