

Don Brown born 1962

Yoko VIII 2002

Yoko VIII is a figurative sculpture of a young Japanese woman cast in white pigmented resin and meticulously finished. The sculpture was produced in an edition of six plus one artist's proof; Tate's copy is number four in the series. The figure is naked and she stands bolt upright, her shoulders back, her hands at her sides. She has a slim, boyish figure with small high breasts and a taut stomach. Her head is tilted slightly downwards, her long fringe framing her face. Her eyes are closed and her face is expressionless.

The sculpture is one of a series of works Brown began making in 1999 using his wife as a model. All the works are made to scale using Yoko Brown's exact measurements; the sculptures vary between half and three-quarter scale. They are all cast in the same white acrylic composite resin but the figure is variously dressed and posed in each. In some versions she stands more provocatively in high heels with her hands on her hips; in others she is more demurely dressed in underwear; in one she is completely covered in a sheet-like veil. *Yoko VIII* is arguably the most subtle of the series to date; the figure's inward focus gives the sculpture a quiet, meditative quality.



© Don Brown

Writing about the *Yoko* series in the third person, Brown has acknowledged his influences, saying, 'With this project Brown pursues a sculptural ideal, a perfection of the figure that looks to the formalism of classical sculpture from ancient Greece, contemplative religious sculpture from the East and the more animated sexiness of eighteenth and nineteenth century allegorical sculptures. Unlike classical portraiture, which was nearly always in bronze or marble, *Yoko* is not represented as a pompously elevated individual but more as a universal everywoman' (unpublished artist's statement, 2002).

Brown combines high and low cultural references. The slim form and precise stance of *Yoko VIII* recall *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, 1880-1 (Tate N06076) by Edgar Degas (1834-1917), which also replicates a female figure on a reduced scale. The pristine finish of the *Yoko* sculptures situates them in a fine art tradition and their clean white surface refers to the marble of classical and neo-classical sculpture. The small scale and variation of the works recall porcelain figurines or children's dress-up dolls.

Brown's previous work also played with archetypal forms and miniature scale. In the early 1990s he made a number of works based on the figures used by architects to populate architectural models and thereby indicate human scale. Before the *Yoko* series, Brown made a series of half-scale self-portraits all called *Don*. Each work in that series was cast from the same mould, showing the artist in casual clothes and relaxed stance, and was painted in a different high-gloss colour. The replicated figures and artificial colours recall the yellow multiple *Madonna*, 1982 by Katharina Fritsch (born 1956). Brown is also known for digital photographs made in collaboration with Stephen Murphy which depict imaginative landscapes.

Further reading:

David Barrett, 'Don Brown; John Coplans', *Art Monthly*, no.210, October 1997, pp.34-6.

Mark Durden, 'Don Brown and Stephen Murphy', *Creative Camera*, no.339, April/May 1996, p. 36.

Rachel Taylor
March 2004