

## Headthinker V

Laura Ford

Headthinker V is part of a series of seven sculptures made in 2003 exhibited at Houldsworth Gallery. The pieces were made with the idea that they could work as part of a group installation or as solitary figures. The full installation then travelled to the Model Arts and Niland Gallery, Sligo, Ireland, where they were displayed in a larger space with each piece being given its own poignant, reflective space. Most recently the pieces travelled to the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Connecticut where they were displayed along side works from Mariele Neudecker, Matt Franks, James Ireland, Roger Hiorns, David Thorpe, Jim Lambie, Mike Nelson and Saskia Olde Wolbers in an exhibition called Into My World: New British Sculpture.

Headthinker combines my work with animals, child form, cloth and ceramic. Whilst the head is part of the figure it also remains distinct. Whereas previous works have synthesised human and animal forms in cloth covered sculpture or ceramic no attempt is made here to disguise the separateness of the ceramic head from the figure and thus the viewer is left to reconcile the two into one complete being themselves. This leap of imagination or personal projection is often evident in my works – where faces are often obliterated or eyes removed or shut in order to allow the imposition of our own memories and desires. The shifting of emphasis away from a linguistic/facial reading of the figure puts the emphasis back onto its form, positioning and physicality. The weight of the head is supported by a plinth, which makes reference to more decorative forms of display especially relating to museums and the preservation/veneration of ceramic and porcelain objects. In this instance the plinth is an integral structural part of the sculpture and as such we have another dialogue created between minimalist sculpture and the figurative and top heavy sculpture that it supports. In much of my work there are jokes and puns relating to the teachings of formalist sculptors and as such the formal nature of the work is as important as its surface.

The large donkey's head suggests something of the mythical, but also something of the domestic, mantelpiece artefact that adorns homes all over the country. This type of ceramic object, however, may belong more to a previous generation - one that also relates to the knitted jumpers, flannel trousers and felt slippers of the 1940s and 50s that dress the child's body.

Specifically Headthinker V sits on his heels with his knees on his jumper sleeves in a position that appears vulnerable and apologetic. The work sits close to the floor sleeping on its plinth rather than being displayed on it. Interaction with the work beings therefore at a level in between object and subject where we feel the presence of the poignant recumbent figure as much as examine its substance and objectness. Headthinker is itself absorbed in some act of contemplation, or perhaps overcome by listless fatigue.