

Press Release

DAPHNE WRIGHT

A Small Thing to Ask

13 March –25 April

Frith Street Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new sculpture and video works by Daphne Wright.

Wright is known for her poignant sculptural installations, which use a variety of techniques and materials including photography, plaster, tinfoil, sound, voice and video. Her art is the result of a relentless curiosity into the way in which a range of languages and materials can create an involvement with often unspoken human preoccupations.

In this exhibition many of the works deal with the subject of children and childhood, both from the adult and the child's point of view. The first work, *Clay Heads*, is a collection of 11 busts in unfired clay. This work developed from looking at children's self-portraits and also references tribal masks and early modernism. It evokes different personalities with the sparest of means.

Kitchen Table is one of the artist's most ambitious installations to date. It takes the form of a mise-en-scène of two boys in a domestic setting. The smaller child sits on a kitchen table, legs crossed and hands gripping his ankle, while the second slouches over the table as if in boredom, his feet twisted around the legs of a chair. Every element of the installation, from the oilcloth table cover, to the children themselves, is cast from life in jesmonite, and painted using traditional technique of plaster mixed with pigment. This piece portrays an unremarkable scene in the artist's home (the children are Wright's sons) but it also conveys a certain sense of melancholy and the odd poignancy of a moment of childhood frozen in time.

Two video works, *If you broke me* and *I am the beginning*, are displayed in the same gallery and both show a solitary boy speaking in riddles to the camera. In each piece the child's face is painted; as tiger in *If you broke me* and with a beard in *I am the Beginning*. Here these popular riddles are made strange, the monotony of each boy's voice and their unblinking stare creates a heightened tension, and the riddles take on a different significance beyond that of simple childhood rhymes and logic puzzles.

A video projection entitled *I know what it's like* is displayed in the lower gallery. This film is a haunting and at times uncomfortable evocation of memory, heartache and isolation. In it an elderly woman gives a startling performance of six disrupted statements to camera, exploring social taboos such as breastfeeding, sexuality, ageing and parental coldness.

Daphne Wright's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions including Quad, Derby; Limerick City Art Gallery; Frith Street Gallery, London; New Art Centre Sculpture Park and Gallery, Roche Court, Wiltshire and Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin. Important group exhibitions include *Presence: The Art of Portrait*, The Holburne Museum, Bath; *Garden of Reason*, Ham House, Richmond-Upon-Thames; the inaugural exhibition at VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow; *Mirror of Secret Desires*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg. Wright has also worked on several large-scale public art projects including *Home Ornaments*, Gorbals, Glasgow in association with CWZG Architects and Artworks Programme 2002-05 and *The Ballymunn Project*, Dublin, in association with BDP and Breaking Ground 2003.

For further information and images please contact press@frithstreetgallery.com