

Basic Detail Report



Pig

Date

2008

Primary Maker

Wright, Daphne

Medium

Marble dust and resin

Description

The body of the young pig is curious, its large head and legs tapering into a slim waist and visible rib cage. This animal is bred for its meat carrying potential. The fall of its head, width of its neck, and thick thighs recall the hanging joints in butcher's shops. Wright transforms the physical flesh of the dead body into a delicate sculptural form: the hooves of the pig almost perfect in their rendering, the thin flesh of its ears translucent. The emotive potential of the infant body is refuted by the

classical language of the white marble. Despite its apparently pristine marble surface, Pig has not been carved by the artist's hand. It is in fact a cast in marble dust and resin of the animal, its death mask. The use of powdered marble evokes the conventions of classical sculpture, used for memorials, monuments and memento mori, only to circumvent and subvert them. This inherent contradiction in the work gives it its poetic power and emotional complexity. It renders physical something unsayable. The decay of the body has been halted at a crucial moment and forever. Like the victims of Pompeii whose forms were preserved by volcanic ash, whilst the animal's body has decomposed, the transitional moment of its death has been frozen in time through the casting process. In this case the body is quickly hung up and carefully covered in rubber to make a mould, into which marble dust and resin are then poured. The white marble transforms the visceral reality of death into a sanitised and transcendent aesthetic form. Life and death are the eternal subjects of art. On an intuitive level, the pig stands in for the human. Historically, a death mask is a likeness in wax or plaster of a person's face after death, made by taking a cast impression from the corpse. Wright first used this technique in *Deathmask, Horace*, 14 June 2003, a bull's head cast in plaster. Other animals she has cast in marble dust and resin include a pair of still born calves, a crow, a swan, a lamb, a fox, a rabbit, a pair of pikes, a stallion and a rhesus monkey. Wright turned to making casts after the birth of her children when, for several years, she could not bear to touch materials with her own hands when making work.

Dimensions

Object: 51 x 48.5 x 20.5 cm