

**“YOUR DOG”, 2002 by Yoshitomo Nara
Study Paper by Marilyn Blitz, 2017**



**“YOUR DOG” by Yoshitomo Nara, 2002
Fiberglass sculpture, edition 4/6, 75 x 51 x 108”
Gift of Donna and Cargill MacMillan, Jr.**

Yoshitomo Nara

Born 1959 in Hirosaki, Aomori Prefecture, Japan

Studied 1988-93 Dusseldorf, Germany

BFA & MFA University of Fine Arts and Music, Japan

Lives and works in Tochigi, Japan and Cologne, Germany

Nara has had nearly 40 solo exhibitions since 1984. Also, his pop art work has been in MOMA and Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in LA.

Yoshitomo Nara, one of the better known and internationally successful artists in Japan , first gained attention in the art world in the 1990s as a part of Japan’s Pop art movement. . Like his friend and mentor, Takashi Murakami, Nara was inspired by the hugely popular traditions of *anime*, Japanese hand drawn or computer generated animation, and *manga*, Japanese comic books and graphic novels. The subject matter of his sculptures and paintings is deceptively child-like; most works depict one, seemingly innocuous, subject with little or no background detail.

Nara’s upbringing in post-World War II Japan profoundly affected his mindset. Nara was raised in the isolated countryside as a latchkey child of working-class parents, so he was often left alone with little to do but explore his young imagination. The singular images that are the subjects of so much of his art may be a reaction to Nara’s own largely independent and lonely childhood. In the 70’s , like all Japanese youth, he was over the top for American cartoons, movies, music and everything modern that came from the West. But within his youthful images, Nara incorporates his ever present feelings of melancholy and vulnerability, a mood that distinguishes his art from that of the other *kawaii* (kitsch) artists of Japanese popular culture.

It is interesting to think about why Nara has dealt only with child like images and emotions for his entire career. He says he cannot help that whatever he creates comes out looking the same. Nara’s “Your Dog” defies cuddling due to its slick surface and the huge size questions the usual relationship of a human to a pet. Does its pure white, stable posture, sleepy eyed appearance make him a perfect, protective companion or does his size suggest a menacing guardian poised to attack? (Nara says dogs represent submissiveness.)

Being a life-long dog lover, this huge, simple fiberglass sculpture made me feel surprised and happy as I entered. I think it may have a positive effect on visitors who worry the museum is going to be a “too serious” way to spend the afternoon in Palm Springs!

“Close Up On Art” Study Paper, Marilyn Blitz, December 2016

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Yoshitomo Nara’s “Your Dog”

Questions:

Why do you think the museum placed him here?

Did he catch your attention?

What does his posture say about him?

Why do you think the artist made him so big?

(Discuss “the lonesome puppy”)

How does his size make you feel?

Why does the artist call him “Your Dog?”

Does he look like a real dog?

Have you ever seen pictures of animals like this? Where?

Could you make a drawing of him?

If we could, would you want to touch or pet him?

Draw comparison of the materials and feeling of Butterfield’s Horse and Nara’s Your Dog

Discuss use of dramatic contrast in color, balance by artist. I.e. Positive and negative of Hepworth’s “Two forms with White” and Nara’s large and clean “Your Dog” and visual balance in Hepworth vs . Nara’s symmetrical design.

Relate to Lichtenstein and Lynn Foulkes, “Last Outpost” Pop imagery

Sources: Wikipedia

Nobody’s Fool at the Asia Society by David St.-Lascaux

Art Review Interview with Aimee Lin