

Steptoe

Diversity & Art: A Virtual Tour

Cinnamon Willis

United States (b. 1982)

Women's Troubles



Work

Cinnamon Willis is a figurative sculptor who creates highly expressive works. While her interests include painting, photography, sculpting, and installation art, over the last ten years she has focused on what she calls her “twisted toys” or “demented dolls.” Sculpted of air-dried clay, her dolls break the traditional mold of beauty usually associated with dolls and challenge the notion that our cheerful self should be shown to the world. Her aptly named “Melandolys,” appear sad and frowning.

The well-dressed and often bejeweled women of her dolls openly lay claim to their inner feelings before a world that teaches them that the only acceptable public face is a cheerful one; one that denies the way they truly feel. She protests our society’s unwritten rule that cheerful is the norm, conditioning us to believe that feeling otherwise is wrong and expressed only in the privacy of our own home.

Her *Women’s Trouble’s* doll takes on the expectation that women can do it all, depicting a sad and overwhelmed contemporary woman who struggles to maintain balance between fully loaded professional and family lives. Willis declares that the Melandolys are her way of encouraging us to be more comfortable with our inner feelings and accept that we are neither perfect nor superhuman.

About the Artist

Cinnamon Willis is a young African American artist who was born and lives in Brooklyn, New York. She first expressed an interest in art at the age of six; at eight years old, she was enrolled in a comic book drawing class at Brooklyn College. She studied at the New York College of Technology, from where she received an associate degree in art and advertising and a Bachelor of Arts in communication design. Willis has worked in several publications as a graphic designer, art director, and production designer, and creates her own art at night in her Brooklyn apartment, after coming home from her full-time job as graphic designer. She has participated in numerous exhibitions in New York, New Orleans, and Canada.