

CREATIVE BOOM

Large-scale porcelain sculptures that explore the 'conflicting expectations' of womanhood

Written by Katy Cowan



Nike I by Francesca DiMattio (2019). Image courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery. Photograph by Karen Pearson.

What does it mean to be a woman today? In Francesca DiMattio's new series of large-scale porcelain sculptures, on show at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery later this month, she turns a critical eye on women's traditional roles while highlighting the strength drawn from femininity.

Totemic in structure, the sculptures entitled Caryatid are made up of opposites. The hybrids are at once female and male, animal and human, animate and inanimate. Reworking the female form, DiMattio explores conflicting expectations of womanhood, presenting feminine identity as a balancing act, precarious and full of contrasting possibilities. For instance, funeral wreaths are paired with pool floats, a bronze presidential memorial is paired with a gas tank and a mannequin torso is adorned with rococo floral glazes.

The artist mines the history of sculpture and of ceramics to examine how imagery moves through different cultures and history. Ranging from

revered Ming vases to disposable knick-knacks, these associations display shifting notions of value and beauty.

"While DiMattio uses the material to represent the domestic and the feminine," says the gallery, "she surprises and subverts by presenting towering and seemingly impossible forms. Translating each reference through her own hand and underlining formal similarities, she unites these seemingly disparate objects, compressing time and space.

"The artist's practise continues to draw on the history of craft and the decorative arts, often re-evaluating their narratives through a feminist lens. By highlighting this instability of meaning, DiMattio collapses hierarchies between high and low culture destabilising fixed perceptions of identity and prompting further questions."

Francesca DiMattio's Caryatid will be on display at [Pippy Houldsworth Gallery](#) in London from 13 September to 19 October 2019.