
**FOUNTAIN OF TEARS**

Tom Sachs, a New York–based artist, creates works of art using a strict set of studio rules he calls the Ten Bullets. Common elements include a specific color palette of approved hues as well as the intentional display of the “scars of labor,” making the hand of the person who made the object visible. Another constant in Sachs’s works of art is the role of appropriating commercial brands such as BMW, Nike, McDonald’s, and Interstate, including cartoon characters like Hello Kitty, Bart Simpson, or the beloved Dutch character Miffy. Created by Dick Bruna, Miffy is a widely popular European character with books, movies, toys, and an interactive website. For this sculpture, Sachs appropriates the character’s likeness while acknowledging its origin via text on the sculpture’s backside.

**LOOK:** Spend time looking at images of Tom Sachs’s *Miffy Fountain*. What is it? What colors, shapes, or textures do you see? What is familiar? What about its surroundings? What is happening? Why is she crying?

**ASK:** To make *Miffy Fountain*, Sachs beat up pieces of foam core to increase the amount of texture and wrinkles, then used hot glue to patchwork all the pieces together to create Miffy. This hot-glued foam core sculpture then went to a foundry, where artisans cast it in bronze, then painted it white. All the details appear in the metal sculpture, even the wrinkles from bending the foam core. How does this sculpture show the “scars of labor”? How would you describe the various textures? What about how the small parts come together to make the whole sculpture?

**DISCUSS:** Fountains are common elements in gardens. Clara Driscoll, the owner and creator of Laguna Gloria’s garden design, brought back traditional putto, or small angel or cherub figures, fountains from Italy to decorate her home’s outdoor spaces. How is Tom Sachs’s *Miffy Fountain* challenging the role of fountains in garden design? What makes *Miffy Fountain* different? Why might she be crying in this setting?

**BONUS ROUND:** Miffy is a famous character in Europe, like Spongebob Squarepants or Mickey Mouse in the United States. Like other popular characters with merchandise, machines create millions of objects to look like the character Miffy. How does this sculpture contrast with a machine-made toy? Why might Tom Sachs choose Miffy as a subject for his art?