

YOSHITOMO NARA **Japanese artist**

YOSHITOMO NARA is one of the leading artists of the Neo Pop Movement in Japan. He is best known for his depictions of children and animals both charming and devilish. He practices painting, drawing and sculpture. With cumulative revenues of \$ 35 million (339 lots sold), he ranked 11th in the Artprice 2018 ranking of the top 500 contemporary artists in the world (Sales revenue). Yoshitomo Nara sold a painting entitled "Sleepless Night Cat" for \$ 34,925,000 HK at Christie's in May 2019.

The artist

Yoshitomo Nara is born in Hirosaki, Aomori, Japan, in 1959. He studied at the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music, where he obtained his BFA and MFA (1987). In 1988 he left for Germany and took classes at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (1993). In 1998 he taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, as a visiting professor. In 2000, he returned to Japan. Currently he lives and works in Tokyo.

Artwork

Yoshitomo Nara is influenced by elements of popular culture such as Anime, manga, Walt Disney cartoons and punk rock. His work comes from the Japanese neo-pop movement. The artist explores the themes of rebellion, isolation and spirituality. His sculptures, mainly made of fiberglass, and his drawings on postcards, envelopes or scraps of paper, continue this exploration with the same elegance of lines and colors as in his paintings. Yoshitomo Nara is a contemporary of Takashi Murakami in Japan's neo-pop movement, but he considers the associations between his work and those of other recognized Japanese visual culture artists such as the " Superflat " movement of the 1990s, of Manga's comics and graphic novels and its video form, Anime, as reductive. The artist insists on the very personal origins of his characters who make revive a nostalgia for fantasy and the emotion he got from his fiction books as a child. Despite an apparent connection with manga and animation, Yoshitomo Nara cites music, especially rock and punk, as his inspiration. Loneliness and rebellion in his art are often reinforced by references to musicians and songs. For example, the title "Who's Fool", chosen by the artist, refers to a song by American singer Dan Penn. The work "Wish World Peace" could be considered a perfect illustration of the artistic practice of Yoshitomo Nara. Thanks to this emblematic subject of the girl, the artist has captivated imagination and is respected by museums and collectors around the world, making him the Japanese painter almost the best known internationally. If in the early 1990s, Yoshitomo Nara used the emblem of the girl to explore hostility and revolt, at the end of the decade and the early 2000s, the artist softened the temperaments of his characters. At the end of 2017, Yoshitomo Nara had a major retrospective at the Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, titled "For Better Or Worse," exhibiting three decades of artwork. The iconic character of Nara - the piercing-eyed girl - was featured on a large number of paintings alongside more sensitive works that touched on themes of hope, challenge and socio-political issues relating to Japan. He exhibited his drawings 1988-2018, at the Kaikai Kiki Gallery in Tokyo, from February 9 to March 8, 2018. Explaining his artistic work in early 2018, Yoshitomo Nara said: "The drawings have always helped me as an artist when my painting process was not going well, but since I used the clay for the first time about 10 years ago, it became something that strongly links painting and drawing to my mind [...] I think it's because it differs from other sculpture mediums that can be controlled, but my encounter with the creation of ceramics has been one of the most important in my artistic life. " The artist continued: "Recently I realized that clay is freer than pencil."