

KIKI SMITH

IN KIKI SMITH'S LARGE-SCALE *Untitled* the artist conceives an image that is filled with pervasive symbolism. Starting with Smith's choice of materials, we experience the fragility of the handmade paper as a metaphor for the delicacy of the girl/woman. The torso and head seem as if they are disparate entities: the body belonging to a developing adolescent; the face projecting a woman with a dreamy, disconnected gaze. There is an allusion to multiple and dissimilar elements within her personality. Smith's use of the bird, traditionally found in folklore to represent souls, brings into question the intent of its iconography. The placement of the beak blending into the pubic area suggests a conflict between the physical and immaterial world, as well as a reference to the social constraints on female sexuality. Through a rendering that reflects both strength and vulnerability, it is intuited that this spirit will find a balance between its corporeal and incorporeal selves.