

King of Otaku

BOIWE

PROFILE: Born in 1961. From the early 1980s he started to work as a member of the sculpture staff at the plastic model manufacturer Kaiyodo. From the early 1990s he began to create and release works representing popular

young female *anime* characters. From 1995, he started collaborating with modern artist Takashi Murakami on Project Ko2. In 1998, an exhibition including his work was held at the New York art gallery Feature Inc. In 2001, he was invited

to contribute work to a group exhibition sponsored by the Fondation Cartier Pour L'Art Contemporain of France. In 2008, he held a retrospective exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary of his debut as an artist.





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"The King of Otaku." This is the sobriquet a curator of the Fondation Cartier Pour L'Art Contemporain — a force at the vanguard of the modern art scene in France — has used for the sculptor known as BOME. Now working for figurine manufacturer Kaiyodo, BOME (pronounced: Bōmé) has attracted a great deal of attention as a pioneer of figurines of young women created in an anime-esque style. In "Project Ko2," carried out in collaboration with Takashi Murakami, one of Japan's preeminent modern artists, BOME tried his hand at sculpting life-size figures. This led to him holding his own exhibition at a gallery in New York, and, from there, to participation in a Fondation Cartier group exhibition. The beauty imbued in a piece of plastic art created by someone of such standing among followers of *otaku* culture manifests itself as a new form of "beauty" recognized the world over.

Three-dimensional figurines of anime characters represent a significant genre in Japanese *otaku* culture. Keen to see his latest pieces of work, BOME fans flock to the "Wonder Festival," an annual event to display and sell sculptures based upon *anime* and game characters.

"When I take characters into a three-dimensional form, I try to research everything about them — things like whether or not a certain hair arrangement will work, the creases in their clothes," says BOME, adding, "I'm in love with the character until I complete the sculpture, then as soon as I finish, that love is gone, and I start thinking about ways that I could have done things better."

BOME has been making these figurines for 25 years. To him, the look of the clothes draped on Michelangelo's sculpture of the *Pieta*, or the creases in the loose socks worn by a high-school girl sitting on a train serve equally as material in his search for new modes of expression.

"I want to continue making figurines as long as I can, and to leave my mark. Wouldn't it be nice if in 50 years they had become something like a national treasure?" BOME asks rhetorically.



FACING: One of BOME's most well-known works, *Oni-Musume*, (She-Devil).

ABOVE: A figurine of Ignis, a character in the popular video game *Jingai-Makyō* made by Nitroplus.

LEFT: BOME applying his skills on a prototype sculpture.