

Diminutive in comparison to its fellow animals in this series, *My First Beetle* heroes the tiny ladybird whose perfectly round form and eye-catching spots have captured children's imaginations for generations. In many cultures, they are considered a sign of good luck and are associated with protecting the spirit from danger and negative energy. Legend has it that the "lady" in their name dates back to the Middle Ages, when farmers' crops were being damaged by swarms of aphids. Their prayers of help to the Virgin Mary were answered by the arrival of thousands of ladybugs, which ate all the aphids. From then on, the farmers referred to the insects as "Our Lady's beetles".

The bug's bright colours are not for looks alone, they are meant to warn would-be attackers that it tastes terrible. Another defence mechanism is that they are thought to play dead when approached by a predator. Whilst hibernating during winter, they cluster together in a giant cuddle to keep each other safe and warm. The title of this artwork is a playful reference to the artist's first car – a red Volkswagen Beetle that he was allowed to drive as a child on his family's farm. Like a large toy vehicle, the sculpture is designed to be occupied by a seated figure but its interior is roomy enough for smaller bodies to curl up inside.

*My First Beetle*

2024

Leather, steel, sheepskin, timber

62 x 130 x 110 cm | 24.4 x 51.2 x 43.3 in.

Edition 1 of 5

