

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

29 May 2007

PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

17-19 DAVIES STREET

LONDON W1K 3DE

GALLERY HOURS:

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Mon – Fri 10:00am– 6:00pm; Sat 12:00pm – 5:00pm



JEFF KOONS: *Popeye*

Friday, 1 June – Wednesday, 27 May 2007

Opening reception for the artist: Tuesday, 19 June, from 5 to 7pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of selected sculptures from Jeff Koons's *Popeye* series.

The *Popeye* sculptures have obvious precedents in Koons's seminal sculptures of the eighties – the cast metal readymade inflatables (*Lifeboat*, *Aqualung*, 1985) and *Rabbit* (1986) from the *Statuary* series, where breath, forever trapped in metal, formed one of the central themes of the artist's oeuvre. However, Koons's early preoccupation with abstract concepts such as eternity and paradox has reached new heights in these cast aluminum sculptures painted to simulate the brightly hued, inflatable children's pool toys from which they were derived. Unlike the earlier metal casts where the material (bronze, stainless steel) was plainly evident, these objects defy reason, their weight and rigidity obscured by the dissembling paintwork that perfectly replicates the quality of supple plastic. Unexpected visual juxtapositions—a playpool in the shape of a spotted dog with a panel displaying a pair of panties stretched tightly around a woman's legs; a hanging chain of monkeys with a chair; a multicolored caterpillar with chains—attest to Koons's uncanny ability to make everyday objects step outside of time into the suspended state of art.

From the outset of his controversial career, Koons turned the traditional notion of the work of art and its context inside out. Focusing on unexpected yet banal objects as models for his work, from vacuum cleaners and inflatable flowers to novelty drink caddies, china figurines, and children's toys, he eschewed typical standards of 'good taste' in art, instead embracing what he perceives as conventional, distinctly American, middle-class values to expose the vulnerabilities of aesthetic hierarchies and value systems. Koons's declared strategies are to make art beautiful, to strive for objectivity, to give back the familiar, and to reflect, and thus empower, the viewer. Working his way through conceptual constructs such as the new, the banal and the heavenly, his work has evolved from its literal, deadpan beginnings into more baroque manifestations that oscillate between abstraction, pure spectacle, and archetype.

Jeff Koons was born in 1955 in York, PA and received his B.F.A. at Maryland Institute College of Art, in Baltimore, Maryland. His work has been widely exhibited internationally in solo and group exhibitions. Recent solo shows include the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2000), Kunsthau Bregenz (2001), the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (2003) and a retrospective survey at the Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (2004), which traveled to the Helsinki City Art Museum (2005). Koons lives and works in New York City.

For further information, please contact Georgina Cohen on 020 7841 9960.

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