

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

GAGOSIAN GALLERY  
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## **JEFF KOONS: *New Paintings and Sculpture***

Thursday, May 9–Wednesday, July 3, 2013

Opening reception: Thursday, May 9th, from 6:00 to 8:00pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present Jeff Koons's first major exhibition at Gagosian New York, following exhibitions at Gagosian London and Gagosian Los Angeles over the last decade. It takes the form of a rich sampling of several major bodies of recent work, demonstrating how Koons's themes and formal approaches continue to overlap and interpenetrate across time.

With sources as diverse as children's art, comic-book characters, and figures from classical antiquity, Koons continues to draw a common thread through cultural history, creating works that attempt to touch the core of the human psyche. Working through conceptual constructs including the new, the banal, and the sublime, he has taken his work from its literal, deadpan beginnings in readymades to baroque creations that extol innocence, beauty, sexuality, and happiness in confounding combinations of abstraction, figuration, sumptuous effect, and pure spectacle.

The *Antiquity* paintings (2009–13) pulse with complex layerings of image, reference, and chromatic nuance as Koons explores the historical oscillation of form in painting and sculpture, the movement back and forth between two and three dimensions, that underpins so much of his own artwork. At the center of each scene is a famous ancient or classical sculpture—so meticulously rendered in oil paint as to suggest both the third dimension and the stone out of which it is carved—symbolizing love, ardor, potency or fertility. Images of popular figurines or figures of popular culture, scaled to the same size as the sculptures, serve to further conflate the aesthetic registers of each painterly composition. The equally detailed backdrops include an Arcadian vision, a tiling of other artworks, and an expressionistic abstraction.

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Two outsized *Venus* sculptures in mirror-polished stainless steel are the first sculptures to be completed in the *Antiquity* series. In one, Koons represents the much emulated classical erotic subject, The Callipygian Venus or Venus of the round buttocks, as a gleaming turquoise monochrome. The other is an astonishing interpretation of one of the world's earliest known sculptures, the fecund Venus of Willendorf. The extreme contours of the original small figurine, transposed into a twisted balloon and enlarged to a colossal scale, become a complex of reflective magenta curves approaching total abstraction.

Works from the series *Hulk Elvis* range from precision-machined bronze sculptures, inspired by inflatable toys and extruded in three dimensions from popular cartoon sources, to granite monoliths. *Hulk (Wheelbarrow)* and *Cannonballs (Hulk)* are polychromed sculptures conceived simultaneously with the *Hulk Elvis* paintings of 2007. A black granite sculpture standing eight feet tall, *Gorilla* recalls Emmanuel Frémeit's *Gorilla Carrying off a Woman* (1887), which influenced *King Kong*. *Gorilla* is based on a toy model that Koons purchased from a souvenir-vending machine at the Los Angeles Zoo.

The *Celebration* series, which Koons began working on twenty years ago, was inspired by an enduring fascination with childhood experiences and childlike consciousness. In dialogue with this body of work are three new sculptures *Balloon Swan (Blue)*, *Balloon Rabbit (Yellow)*, and *Balloon Monkey (Red)*, for which children's party favors are reconceived as mesmerizing monumental forms. With their impressive scale, fluid lines, and immaculate, mirror-like surfaces, they achieve a perfect tension between representation and abstraction.

Since **Jeff Koons's** first solo show in 1980, his work has been widely exhibited internationally in solo and group exhibitions. Solo exhibitions include Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (2003); Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (2004, traveled to Helsinki City Art Museum in 2005); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2008); "Jeff Koons: Versailles," Château de Versailles, France (2008–09); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2008); Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; and Serpentine Gallery, London (all 2009); Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2011); Schirn Kunsthalle and Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung, Frankfurt (2012). The Whitney Museum will present a major retrospective of his work in 2014.

Koons lives and works in New York City.

For further information please contact the gallery at [newyork@gagosian.com](mailto:newyork@gagosian.com) or at +212.741.1111.

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*Gagosian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagosian.*