

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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JEFF KOONS : *Split-Rocker*

Rockefeller Center®, New York

Through Thursday, 12 September 2014

This summer, Jeff Koons's *Split-Rocker* makes its New York City debut at Rockefeller Center, to coincide with the opening of his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Presented by Gagosian Gallery and organized by Public Art Fund and Tishman Speyer, *Split-Rocker* is a spectacular planted form that towers over 37 feet high and features over 50,000 flowering plants. It was first exhibited at Palais des Papes, Avignon in 2000; and subsequently at Château de Versailles (2008) and Fondation Beyeler (2012). It is also in the collection of the Glenstone private museum in Potomac, Maryland, where it has been on view since June of 2013.

Consistent with Koons's persistent fascination with dichotomy and the in-between, the inspiration for *Split-Rocker* came when he decided to split and combine two similar but different toy rockers, a pony belonging to his son and a dinosaur ("Dino"). The slippage or "split" between the different halves of the heads gives an almost Cubist aspect to the composition. As the model was enlarged to the scale of a small house, the split became an opening, a profile, and a light shaft. In contrast to his legendary *Puppy* of 1992, which was presented by Public Art Fund at Rockefeller Center in the summer of 2000, *Split-Rocker* suggests the idea of a fantasy shelter. Whereas the singular form of *Puppy* is closed and sculptural, the combined form of *Split-Rocker* is architectural and hollow.

"We could not be more excited to bring Jeff Koons's *Split-Rocker* to Rockefeller Center," said Tishman Speyer Co-Chief Executive Officers **Jerry Speyer** and **Rob Speyer**. "Jeff Koons always dazzles, and we know that *Split-Rocker*, similar to *Puppy*, will be remembered for years to come. We are delighted to again work with the Public Art Fund to make world-class art accessible to all New Yorkers and visitors."

"Splitting and recombining two variations on the basic idea of a rocking horse, Jeff's *Split-Rocker* connects us to the imaginative playfulness of childhood. At the same time, it allows him to create a formally dynamic and painterly sculpture, using topiary as his medium," said Public Art Fund Director & Chief Curator **Nicholas Baume**. "The two irregular profiles joined together offer a continuously shifting perspective as we move around the sculpture, which continues to change as its plants flower and grow according to their own cycle of life. Jeff's Whitney Museum retrospective is the perfect occasion on which to bring this extraordinary public sculpture to New York City and Rockefeller Center."

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"We are thrilled to share *Split-Rocker* with New York City this summer," said **Larry Gagosian**. "The presentation of this monumental sculpture at Rockefeller Center, combined with the Whitney Museum retrospective, represents a special moment for Jeff. We could not be happier for him."

Split-Rocker evokes a piece of classical topiary work, yet its technical construction is the result of a twentieth century invention, inspired by the small-scale floral sculptures found in certain vernacular festivals. The steel is hidden from sight other than where the disparate sides of the head join, while its vast surfaces are "painted" with many thousands of live flowering plants—begonias, geraniums, petunias, fuchsias, and many more. Its internal structure also supports an extensive irrigation system.

Jeff Koons comments, "I love the dialogue with nature in creating a piece that needs so much control—How many plants should be planted? How will these plants survive?—while at the same time giving up the control. It's in nature's hands, even though you try to plan everything to make the plants survive. This sense of giving up control is very beautiful. The balance between control and giving up control reminds us of the polarity of existence."

Split-Rocker will be on view at Rockefeller Center **through September 18, 2014**.

"Jeff Koons: A Retrospective" opens to the public at the Whitney Museum on June 27 and runs until October 19, 2014.

For further information please contact the gallery at newyork@gagosian.com or at +1.212.744.2313. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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TISHMAN SPEYER

Image: *Split-Rocker*, 2000, stainless steel, soil, geotextile fabric, internal irrigation system, live flowering plants, 446 7/8 x 483 1/8 x 427 5/8 inches (1,135.1 x 1,227.1 x 1,086.2 cm). © Jeff Koons. Photo by Jean-Jacques Nobs. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery.

Gagosian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagosian.

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