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JEFF KOONS EASYFUN-ETHEREAL

Opening reception:
Saturday, March 10, 6–8PM
March 10–April 21, 2018

555 West 24th Street
New York, NY 10011

My Easyfun-Ethereal paintings are very layered. My interest has always been to create art that can change with any culture or society viewing it. When I look at the paintings and realize all the historical references, it's as if, for a moment, all ego is lost to meaning.

—Jeff Koons

Gagosian is pleased to present “Easyfun-Ethereal,” seven large-scale paintings by Jeff Koons, which were first presented together at the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin in 2000. Three of the

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paintings are on generous loan from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Also on view, will be *Woman Reclining* (2010–14), a granite sculpture from the *Antiquity* series.

Following the enthusiastic public response to *Balloon Flower (Blue)*, the large mirror-polished stainless steel sculpture installed in Potsdamer Platz in Berlin in 1999, the Deutsche Guggenheim commissioned the first seven of the *Easyfun-Ethereal* paintings: mural-sized tableaux that combine cut-out photographs of packaged foods, fragments of faces, limbs, and hair, amusement park scenes, and paradisiacal landscapes into images of convulsive beauty.

The *Easyfun-Ethereal* series, which eventually expanded to twenty-four paintings, allowed Koons to work more spontaneously, in contrast to the detailed production demands of the *Celebration* sculptures. Working from computer-scanned reproductions taken from various printed media, as well as his own photographs, he considers the use of gesture, expression, and eroticism in artistic precedents and American advertising. Multilayered yet possessing a classical order, the resulting paintings marry the immediacy of collage with Romantic grandeur.

Koons's depictions of juice, hair, milk, and cheese suggest the gestural fluidity of Abstract Expressionism, but through highly stylized, illusionistic painting. In *Lips* (2000), two pairs of lips, swathes of silky brown hair, and a disembodied blue eye float among oversized corn niblets and streams of red-orange liquid, with a verdant South African vista in the background. And in *Hair with Cheese* (2000), three short bobs in red, blonde, and purple are layered with forest brush, graphic snowflakes, and gooey, melting cheese.

Koons highlights the hyperreal, exaggerated nature of images pulled from coupons and magazines in precise areas of color. He pairs sprawling, perspectival landscapes with graphic curves and swells, every inch of the canvas bursting with detail. Cheerios and blonde braids spiral in a cavernous grotto; pedicured feet and donuts overwhelm an aerial view of Niagara Falls; and figures in lobster and octopus costumes pose within the metal armature of a rollercoaster, with syrup and butter melting over stacks of pancakes in the sky above. The *Easyfun-Ethereal* series infuses art history with the vernacular charge of American life, drawing the viewer into awe-inspiring panoramas that are as edgy as they are sublime.

As the title suggests, the black granite sculpture *Woman Reclining* depicts a female figure on a small divan, both legs raised over a planter filled with vivid blooming flowers. Like many of the *Easyfun-Ethereal* paintings, it draws upon the potent visual memories of childhood, in this case Koons's fascination with a novelty porcelain ashtray that sat on his grandfather's table. The ashtray was in the form of a woman lying on her back holding a fan, her legs raised in the air. When a cigarette was set to rest beneath her legs, the smoke would activate them to rock back and forth. The very same knickknack inspired the porcelain sculpture *Woman in Tub* (1988), from the *Banality* series. Koons often cites this reference, underscoring the importance of liberating oneself from cultural shame by embracing one's authentic cultural history.

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Jeff Koons was born in 1955 in York, PA, and lives and works in New York. Collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Broad, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; Museo Jumex, Mexico City; Tate, London; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Hamburger Kunsthalle; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels; FRAC Aquitaine, Bordeaux; MADRE - Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina, Naples; Francois Pinault Foundation, Venice; Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; and QAGOMA, Australia. Institutional exhibitions include Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (2004, traveled to Helsinki City Art Museum, through 2005); Lever House, New York (2005); "Jeff Koons on the Roof," Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2008); "Jeff Koons: Celebration," Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2008); "Jeff Koons: Popeye Series," Serpentine Galleries, London (2008); "Jeff Koons: Versailles," Château de Versailles (2008–09); "ARTIST ROOMS: Jeff Koons," National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (2011); "Jeff Koons: The Painter and The Sculptor," Schirn Kunsthalle and Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung, Frankfurt (2012); Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2012); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014, traveled to Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and Guggenheim Bilbao, through 2015); "Jeff Koons in Florence," Palazzo Vecchio and Piazza della Signoria, Florence (2015); and "Jeff Koons: Now," Newport Street Gallery, London (2016).

Image: Jeff Koons, *Lips*, 2000, oil on canvas, 120 × 168 inches (304.8 × 426.7 cm) © Jeff Koons.

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