

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Art review: Jeff Koons at Gagosian Gallery

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Andy Warhol was fascinated by boredom for two perfectly good reasons: It allowed him to see things he otherwise would have missed, and it meant that, overall, things were going pretty well if life's daily dramas were not overwhelming, debilitating or too upsetting.

At [Gagosian Gallery](#), 10 new paintings by Jeff Koons flesh out both aspects of Warhol's love affair with boredom. If Warhol is the father of Pop Art, Koons is a chip off the old block, an unparalleled imitator whose imitations are so cockeyed and corny that they come off as originals, weird as that is.

Despite their size (approximately 9 by 12 or 9 by 7 feet), flashy colors (metallic silver, verdant green, fleshy pink), sexy subjects (naked models posing languorously in luscious landscapes) and painterly flourishes (juicy smears of semi-translucent pigment), Koons' pictures are boring.

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To look at them is to see too many easy nods to works by too many other artists, including heavyweights Roy Lichtenstein, Sigmar Polke and Cy Twombly, super-heavyweights Georges Seurat and Gustave Courbet, and lightweights Christopher Wool and James Nares, not to mention Koons' own over-designed porn pictures of himself and his ex-wife, Cicholina. His new paintings seem to suffocate under the preposterously long list of sources.

And then they get interesting.

When you finally stop looking at what they depict and start looking at how they do it, you see something strange. Koons has not piled up various types of painting atop one another, putting thin, sinuous lines over thick, gooey brush strokes, or laying swiftly scribbled gestures atop digitally rendered fields of screenprint-style dots.

Not one single bit of oil paint overlaps another speck. Absolutely everything occupies the same plane. And it's all perfectly done.

To stick your nose in these paintings is to be blown away by the fastidiousness of their planning and the meticulousness of their execution.

The labor-intensity is inconceivable.

And that's when it hits you that Koons runs a studio with a huge staff of exceptionally skilled technicians. As an artist, he is dedicated to the production of handmade reproduction — super-realistic depictions of works that look as if they are mass-produced. His paintings are the best copies money can buy.

It's loony. It's perverse. Best of all, it ruffles art-world feathers because it ignores class-based differences between the work of artisans and artists, salespeople and poets.

The crass aspirations of the nouveau riche are Koons' great subject. His oeuvre is the visual equivalent of a 19th century novel of manners. If that's boring, it's exactly the type of boredom that fascinated Andy.

– David Pagel

Gagosian Gallery, 456 N. Camden Drive, Beverly Hills, (310) 271-9400, through Jan. 9. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.gagosian.com

Image: Jeff Koons' "Waterfall Couple (Dots) Brown Swirl." Credit: From Gagosian Gallery.

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