

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

artlyst

Jeff Koons: Shiny and Industrialised Commercial Gold at Gagosian

Isa Freeling



Jeff Koons is a showman, a businessman and a master manipulator first and foremost- and then comes the art. Art has become the vehicle by which he can be all these things and make a GREAT deal of money too. If you heard him on ART 21, and I paraphrase here, he says; “It’s not about the money, it’s about people and making sure his art has durability and integrity as a ready made object.” But then he goes on to say that, “of course it’s about making money too.” As I see it, Mr. Koons is a Baby Boomer artist and like many of his generation poured white paint on the grit of New York and made it new, shiny, and industrialised commercial gold. With his uber-studio of young artist minions he churns out an abundance of pieces. Think of him as FORD. He has BRAND identity in a BIG way and to the minuscule percentage of collectors who can afford him, they have no reference for dollars to time spent trying to earn it so who cares.

It's not a matter of fan or foe. It is, as they say in Buddhist circles, without judgment. If the consumer wants to buy and can, well it's a free country. Though I guess personally the psychology of extravagantly large super shiny blue, gold, and fuchsia balloon animals speak to the child inside all of us and say, “Look at that!” As one's finger traces the object up to the skylight and the adult see's the twisted, pulled, squeezed, wrapped, ripples of where the balloon is tied, making a tail which looks like a penis where their formerly was none and an anal like cavern asserts itself furtively like a neon sign. Ah the eccentricities' and pliancy of air blown into rubber and then emulated in metal. Wow! Will we ever get tired of big supple tricks like that? I

wouldn't even presume to wonder how that would be made all by my lonesome. You need a team of young elastic minions to make a rabbit, monkey, and swan that majestic.

Maybe that's why Koons show at Gagasion was so much fun and made even more razzle dazzle with him there. Like a county fair he shook the hands of everyone who surrounded him without hesitation and was, well, magnanimously gracious as any mayor of a town would be. He held his beautiful blue eyed blonde haired baby in his arms for everyone, even the most unsentimental elitist to see and say, "Awww... What a guy. I want to know him." He took pictures with everyone who asked, including me and my eager artist friend Farsad Labbauf. Mr. Koons walked the room like Miss America after a perfect glass of crisp chardonnay wondering how many of the richest men in the room are perusing the goods. I have to say Larry Gogasian looked more eager and hungry than Jeff Koons, not so easy going, with much less, if any aplomb. His entrance was later during the opening, after the first atoms of light exploded in the room of art collectors, wanna be Basquiat's and Warhol's, as well as fabulously suited dandies with big pockets. No, Gagasion looked anxious with much less whimsy and magic. He looked intense.

Not even the fabulous red balloon Venus sculpture in the middle of the first room got him to heel at her feet looking like a big yummy gummy bear. And then the gorgeous Gretchen Mol as Bette Page erotically astride a gray dolphin amidst statues of antiquity in all their phallic, hermaphroditical, glory, sat in Technicolor against urine colored sepia images. These Antiquity paintings reminded me of Fellini's, "Satyricon." It seemed that they were about then and now, for symbols and modern hieroglyphs were impressed upon the ancient statues of Gods and man. Amongst the debauched stone characters, Picasso's scribbled name appears at the top of one painting which made little sense to me... Maybe I could buy that his identity as a master of abstraction was equal to the iconography of Superman whose emblem was well depicted in one painting. But Picasso was real, which pulls one out of the meaning of made up icons from our childhood catalog of cartoon characters and fantastical stories. It was too much of a non-sequitur to be part of the premise. Even Bette Page played a character, as did Gretchen Mol playing Bette Page.

It could have become like a highlights adventure searching for more signatures, but I was too busy following the wake from the river of people swept up by Mr. Koons trail to search. We made our way to room 2 where we saw the great green hulk with his rustic wheelbarrow of flowers and adored the colorful art eccentric gals who stood near by the green man just being works of art themselves, with their heavy make-up, colorful wiry hairdos with flowers and splendid smiles.

The gorilla also in room 2 did little for me since it seems like there is always a big gorilla everywhere and anywhere. Black granite or bronze, they make little imprint on me even though it is modeled after King Kong and Mr. Koons originally got the little model from a souvenir vending machine at the zoo. It's a great salute to Ernie Kovac's or whatever, gorillas undermine the play they are so overused. It was the great balloon figures of the rabbit, monkey and swan in room 3 that I was enamored with. Reaching up from the depths of childhood out they rose to the bigness of commerce. In the final room Metallic Venus stands in glossy blue splendor taking up

her clothing over her head, revealing her naked body with fresh flowers sitting decoratively beside her on a stand. Life inert represented, beside life alive presented. It's nice, but no bunny to me, so I sailed like a swan towards the door hooking my arm into my friend Farsad's like a monkey does to a tree.