

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Jeff Koons at The Gagosian

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Images: www.gagosian.com

A buxom lingerie-wearing model rides a blow-up dolphin, metallic neo-pop figures glitter on platforms and almost everything appears coated in sweet wrappers- it can only be the work of Jeff Koons. Shamelessly decadent and debauched, Koons takes the seemingly banal into the realm of the sublimely surreal. An art world maverick, his works continually illicit either strongly positive or negative reactions from spectators. But he will always illicit a strong reaction, nevertheless. He embraces the garish, rejects the norm and marries the low brow with the high end.

There is something so plush, so new-money and brazen about it all. He essentially stocks the toy chest of the Billionaire Boys Club. With his Tulips sculpture selling for an astonishing \$33,682,500, he truly is the poster child for the cool kids and creator of playthings for the rich and famous. Even his work ethic, famously hiring hundreds of craftsmen to actualise his warped realities, reflects a elite, white collar, 'can't-get-my-hands-dirty' affluence.

The art world has been left wanting for over a decade and Koons now bursts into the Gagosian with "New Paintings and Sculpture," boasting lavish ceramic casts and childhood dreams manifesting as delicious adulthood fantasies. His work has always focused on 're-imaginings'-

taking the ordinary and adding to it the 'extra'. Art, Money, Sex- Sheer luxury and hedonism are at the helm and unflinchingly so.

With his Gagosian return, sexual innuendo can be found in every crevice. With a nod to youth, he has compiled the type of work that reduces a grown man to a set of covert giggles. The 'Magenta Balloon Venus' evokes the pinnacle of femininity- all breast and thigh and curves, her roundness a caricature of the essence of womanhood. She is based on Venus of Willendorf, a small sculpture of a fertility goddess dating from around 24,000BC. Blowing her up to 8 ½ feet whilst adding a metallic sheen to her rubenesque form is almost akin to the lathering up of an oiled up model. There is a heightened sense of sordid sexuality and excess.

A lustrous blue goddess teasingly lifts her gown, bestowing a glimpse of her chest and buttocks to voyeuristic mortals. Koons cites Callipygian Venus as the inspiration for this 'Metallic Venus', her bawdy, new-age sister. In these sculptures, the modern era copulates with the past, birthing this brilliantly bizarre money-fuelled world. Accompanied by a pot of live flowers, the stark contrast between his unabashedly faux, glossy creation and the organic become even more prevalent.

His 8 ft granite Gorilla draws inspiration from Emmanuel Frémeit's Gorilla Carrying off a Woman, 1887). The sculpture has been based on a toy model that Koons purchased from a souvenir-vending machine at the Los Angeles Zoo. As with the 'Magenta Balloon Venus', Koons has taken the minute and made it colossal, extracting the bombastic and flamboyant from within the mundane.

The ancient collides with the new as marble sculptures frame a kitsch Betty Page-alike mock kissing a monkey. An almost prehistoric scrawl covers the image, 'Antiquity 3', merging the nude renaissance trio of sculptures, the contemporary model and monkey companion with a base and simplistic depiction of sex- the most distinct of the markings clearly depicting private parts. It is sex throughout the ages. His gargantuan works lent from his 'Celebration' evoke the same sense of unabridged sexuality- with his markedly phallic 'Balloon Swan (Blue)', rectum shaped 'Balloon Monkey (Red)' and vaginal 'Balloon rabbit (Yellow)'.

Though this set of works still feature Koons tongue-in-cheek, shock factor, he appears to have seamlessly moved from pop to outright ostentatiousness. His obsession with both sex and perfection are made apparent through unceasing innuendo and perfect craftsmanship, attention being paid to every fine detail. But it is the grandiose that reigns in the work of Koons and always will.