

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

### The New York Times

#### Inside Art: A Jeff Koons Sculpture Is Coming to 30 Rock

Carol Vogel



*"Split-Rocker" by Jeff Koons, displayed in Basel, Switzerland. An edition of the work will be on view at Rockefeller Plaza this summer. Credit Jeff Koons, Mathias Mangold/Gagosian Gallery*

This month, images of two Jeff Koons sculptures were on the covers of Sotheby's and Christie's postwar and contemporary art auction catalogs. One of them, "Popeye" — a six-and-a-half-foot-tall stainless-steel sculpture from 2009 and 2011 — is now heading to Las Vegas. Steve Wynn bought it for \$28.1 million and is putting it on view at his casino, the Wynn. The other work, "Jim Beam J. B. Turner Train," a 1986 stainless-steel train filled with bourbon, is said to be heading to Asia, where an unidentified collector bought it for \$33.7 million.

Those two big sales were just a prelude to what seems to be the summer of Mr. Koons in New York. There is the giant retrospective that opens at the Whitney Museum of American Art on June 27. Timed to that will be the appearance of "Split-Rocker," his monumental, flowering, toylike sculpture. It is beginning to take shape at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, on the spot where the Christmas tree stands every year.

"We couldn't do any topiary at the Whitney, because there wasn't any space," Mr. Koons said.

It's not his first appearance at Rockefeller Center. Fourteen years ago, his 43-foot-tall "Puppy," festooned with 70,000 flowering plants, stood in the same place and was one of the most popular artworks ever shown there, according to Nicholas Baume, director of the nonprofit Public Art Fund. The fund presents art around the city, in this case in collaboration with Tishman Speyer.

Weighing 150 tons and soaring 35 feet high, “Split-Rocker” is composed of two halves: one based on a toy pony of one of Mr. Koons’s sons, the other based on a toy dinosaur. Together, they form the head of a giant child’s rocker. Like “Puppy,” it will be covered with live flowers, in this case petunias, begonias, impatiens, geraniums and marigolds, to name a few.

Mr. Koons produced just two editions of the sculpture. He owns the one being installed in Rockefeller Center; the other is in the collection of Glenstone, the private museum in Potomac, Md., owned by Mitchell P. Rales, the industrialist, and his wife, Emily. “Split-Rocker” has been on view there for nearly a year.

Larry Gagosian, the New York dealer who represents Mr. Koons and is paying for the Rockefeller Center installation, said “Split-Rocker” is “very Duchampian,” adding, “It’s really a ready-made.” Conceived in 2000, the sculpture has been shown three times before, but only in Europe. “Split-Rocker” will be at Rockefeller Center through Sept. 12.