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Jeff Koons Brings a Giant Flower Sculpture to Rockefeller Center

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Jeff Koons, Split-Rocker, displayed in Basel, Switzerland. Photo: courtesy Jeff Koons, Mathias Mangold/ Gagosian Gallery.

Jeff Koons isn't just taking over New York's Whitney Museum of American Art this summer, reports the *New York Times*. The Koons retrospective is spilling over into Rockefeller Center, which will play host to *Split-Rocker*, a monumental flower sculpture in the spirit of the artist's iconic *Puppy*, which was exceptionally popular during its 2000 appearance at the same spot.

Too large to fit at the Upper East Side museum, *Split Rocker* is a 37-foot tall head, half toy pony, half toy dinosaur, fused together into a strange, Cubist-inspired child's rocking toy. Koons has planted the 150 ton statue with 50,000 flowering plants such as petunias, geraniums, begonias, fuchsias, impatiens, and marigolds, which will be watered by an internal irrigation system.

"I love the dialogue with nature in creating a piece that needs so much control—How many plants should be planted? How will these plants survive?—while at the same time giving up the control. It's in nature's hands, even though you try to plan everything to make the plants survive," said Koons in a press release. "This sense of giving up control is

very beautiful. The balance between control and giving up control reminds us of the polarity of existence.”

There is one other edition of the piece, which has resided since last June at industrialist Mitchell P. Rales’s private Potomac, Maryland, museum, Glenstone. Though it has been shown three times in Europe (at Palais des Papes, Avignon, in 2000; at Château de Versailles in 2008; and Fondation Beyeler, Basel, in 2012), the Rockefeller Center installation, in the traditional spot for the annual Christmas tree, will be the sculpture’s first public US appearance.

It’s Koons’s second trip to Rockefeller Center this year. His untitled Fabergé egg (which sold for \$900,000 at Sotheby’s), featuring a silver gazing ball and a cartoon seal and walrus, was prominently exhibited in the outdoor space as part of the Big Egg Hunt in April.

Split Rocker, a Public Art Fund project, will be on view through September 12.