

# GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on June 9, 2015

## **Jeff Koons: A Retrospective**

Sponsored by

Fundación **BBVA**

## Fundación BBVA

One of the hallmarks of the BBVA Foundation has always been its support for the advancement of knowledge and innovation, be it in basic and environmental sciences, cutting-edge technology, biomedicine, healthcare, the humanities, or general culture. Acting as a driving force of high-impact cultural activities is part of the strategic plan that the Foundation practices through long-term programs and with first-rate partners. Our collaboration as Strategic Trustee of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao fits within this context. This partnership, which dates back to the opening of the Museum eighteen years ago, has made it possible to organize exhibitions featuring major works of art that had never previously been shown in Spain. It has also made it possible to implement truly original approaches in exhibition concept and design. Today, we are proud to present the most important retrospective to date devoted to the celebrated contemporary artist Jeff Koons. After a world tour that included the Whitney Museum in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the retrospective is reaching port at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Around a hundred pieces from Koons's various artistic stages afford the public the opportunity to survey Koons's career and the full scope of his work, which constitutes a personal reaffirmation of the artist. His oeuvre, whose diverse series from the 1970s up through the present day are displayed chronologically in the Museum's galleries, is populated with art historical references, especially to Surrealism, Pop Art, and Dadaism.

One noteworthy aspect of Koons's artistic output is the evolution in his use of the readymade concept. Koons gradually disrupts the notion of the readymade as it was formulated by Duchamp, transitioning from direct exhibition of industrial objects to reproducing them, making changes in material, scale, and possible meaning.

Koons's work lacks the aura of inaccessibility that often surrounds other contemporary creations. Very much to the contrary, his art is open, meant to seduce, and has proven attractive to the general public. Koons considers art to be a driving force of social change that helps us go beyond our limits, and his work draws from acceptance of ourselves and of our respective cultural histories.

With extraordinary tenacity, Koons always strives to achieve what he sets out to do. One of his primary concerns is giving his works an exquisite formal finish, an aspect he plans carefully and painstakingly, and which often requires cutting-edge technology. His creative process requires a wide array of mediums, as evidenced in the final object: his creations function as icons of modern society, symbols of popular culture, a celebration and, at times, a critique of contemporary taste. Koons is also the creator of emblematic pieces such as *Puppy*, the sculpture standing outside the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao that has become Bilbao's true icon.

The BBVA Foundation is proud to contribute to making exhibitions of this ambition possible. The retrospective enjoyed a warm reception at its New York and Paris venues, and I am sure that the Bilbao audience will have a similarly enthusiastic welcome in store for the work of Jeff Koons, an artist who leaves no one indifferent.

We congratulate the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's team of world-class professionals, headed by Juan Ignacio Vidarte, and curators Scott Rothkopf and Lucía Agirre, who made this exhibition possible by once again turning Bilbao into a national and international hub of contemporary culture. We would like to thank them for inviting us to take part in this excellent museum project that has become an international benchmark.

Francisco González  
Chairman, Fundación BBVA

### *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective*

- **Curators:** Scott Rothkopf, Nancy and Steve Crown Family Curator and Associate Director of Programs at the Whitney Museum of American Art and Lucía Agirre, Curator at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
  - **Dates:** June 9 – September 27, 2015
  - Sponsored by Fundación BBVA
- **A comprehensive survey of the work and career of Jeff Koons, a key figure in international contemporary art**
  - **The exhibition chronologically examines the work of an artist with a unique style whose innovation and unorthodoxy has continued to surprise critics and audiences alike**
  - **Koons's work includes seemingly contradictory concepts like life and death, past and present, sexuality and innocence, luxury and austerity, eternal and new, feminine and masculine**

The Guggenheim Bilbao presents *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective*, an exhibition that looks back at the work of one of the most eminent figures in the art of our time, the unmistakable Jeff Koons. This chronological, coherent retrospective of Koons's artistic output was organized by New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, in collaboration with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Centre National d'Art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Paris. The exhibition in Bilbao was made possible by the remarkable sponsorship of Fundación BBVA.

Over the past four decades, Jeff Koons has developed a singular, distinctive, innovative oeuvre, becoming one of contemporary art's most prominent figures. Critics and audiences alike have been surprised by the unexpected concepts that Koons has presented at different exhibitions throughout his career.

At this exhibition's Spanish debut, the public will be able to enjoy a comprehensive survey of the artist's work, which speaks to us of self-acceptance, appreciation of the world around us, and the affirmation of being through art. It is an exhortation to live in this world as though it were our first day on the earth.

#### **Art as Wake-Up Call**

Rejecting the aura of inaccessibility that surrounds other contemporary works of art, his instantly recognizable creations appeal to the general public and draw on countless art historical sources, such as Surrealism, Pop Art and Dadaism.

Koons has a unique style that allows seemingly contradictory concepts to coexist harmoniously in his work. Life and death, past and present, sexuality and innocence, luxury and austerity, eternal and new, public

and private, industrial and handcrafted, feminine and masculine are fused through the iconography and materials used in his creations, whose painstaking finishes are achieved with the help of his studio. Koons uses art as a wake-up call, a driving force of social change. The false luxury of some of his pieces—achieved by using industrial materials that are made to look deceptively lavish—and his references to well-known archetypes make viewers feel comfortable with their own history. In the artist's own words: "I feel incredibly strong when I make my artwork. And so art for me is about increasing my own perimeters in life. And hopefully my work gives viewers a sense of possibilities for their own futures as much as it does for mine."

## Exhibition Overview

### Inflatables, Pre-New, The New

Jeff Koons moved to New York in 1976 and began working on sculptural objects that reflected city life. Many of his early works from this period are on display in Gallery 205, where the exhibition begins.

His *Inflatables*, simple vinyl objects bought at discount shops on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, are reminiscent of Dalí's Surrealism and, most of all, of Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Thanks to the artist Ed Paschke, Koons became more aware of using source material from the everyday world. These pieces with dual significance—the male and female flower, for example, in *Inflatable Flowers (Short Pink, Tall Yellow)* (1979)—contain references to the art of Donald Judd and especially to the mirrors of Robert Rauschenberg, which Koons uses as surfaces that multiply space and, by extension, social reality, while also drawing spectators into it by showing them their own reflections in the piece.

For *Pre-New*, a title which Koons retrospectively gave this series to differentiate it from the works of the following period, Koons deliberately chose to work with small household appliances found in nearly every home in the golden age of American capitalism, some of which had already begun to enter the design collections of institutions like the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, where the artist was working at the time.

In order to construct these three-dimensional still lifes, Koons altered the integrity of the devices by attaching them to fluorescent tubes. These pieces allude to the work of Dan Flavin and to storefront windows. One example of this body of work is *Teapot* (1979) made of a utensil.

In *The New*, Koons presented brand-new vacuum cleaners and floor polishers, which he placed inside acrylic cases under fluorescent lights, a method reminiscent of Dan Flavin's Minimalist creations. The New Museum of Contemporary Art invited Koons to create this series for its 5th Avenue front window.

Koons selects his appliances carefully based on their anthropomorphic qualities, viewing them as quasi-lifelike machines that inflate and deflate like human beings when they breathe. The shapes and titles of these works reflect dichotomies such as male and female, dry and wet, or life and death, as is the case in *New Shelton Wet/Drys Tripledecker* (1981).

The lithographs in this series come from billboards like *New! New Too!* (1983) that Koons found and recontextualized, reflecting his interest in advertising and consumerism.

### Equilibrium

The works that make up the series *Equilibrium* are on display in Gallery 206. These pieces are from Jeff Koons's first gallery solo exhibition in 1985, which addressed the theme of personal and social equilibrium. For this series, the artist created several bronze sculptures representing elements related to survival, like *Lifeboat* (1985) and *Aqualung* (1985). By casting them in bronze, Koons made these objects seem immortal, full of air and life, and yet the weight of the metal makes it impossible for them to float as they are supposed to, turning them into deadly devices that underscore the impossibility of achieving a state of equilibrium between life and death.

Jeff Koons also sought to achieve balance in works like *Three Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Dr. J Silver Series)* (1985), which features basketballs floating inside water tanks in a delicate equilibrium that will eventually be upset by temperature fluctuations or vibrations. To design these pieces, Koons worked in consultation with several physicists, including Nobel laureate Richard P. Feynman.

The parallel between these works and life's precarious equilibrium is similar to the parallel Koons strove to convey with a selection of Nike posters that depicted basketball stars as models of success and social equilibrium. The artist acquired the rights to images like *Dr. Dunkenstein* (1985) and exhibited them unaltered, revealing how the perpetuation of certain roles serves to stabilize the established social equilibrium.

### Luxury and Degradation

The tour continues in Gallery 207 with the series *Luxury and Degradation*. Koons unveiled this series in 1986, aiming to show how advertising techniques and marketing campaigns for alcoholic drinks served to perpetuate roles in society. The artist picked up on one significant difference: the ads intended for audiences of more modest means had a more explicit message, whereas those destined for the other, higher end of the spectrum tended to be more abstract, thereby perpetuating social immobility and stereotypes.

In *Luxury and Degradation*, Koons included, along with works like *Hennessy, The Civilized Way to Lay Down the Law* (1986), a series of objects and utensils associated with alcohol consumption. He endowed these objects with fake luxury by giving an ordinary material like stainless steel a shiny, sumptuous finish. The bourbon in the *Jim Beam - J.B. Turner Train* (1986) exemplifies typical American culture, while the train itself takes us back to the days when the West was won; and the *Baccarat Crystal Set* (1986) is associated with European luxury and upper middle-class tastes.

### Statuary, Banality

The exhibition continues in Gallery 206 with the *Banality* series, in preparation for which Koons visited several European workshops specialized in religious woodcarvings and decorative porcelain figurines. Koons commissioned them to produce a series of sculptures of iconic images in contemporary society, such as *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1988)—whose pyramidal composition echoes that of Michelangelo's Pieta—and others referenced from commercial postcards, objects in airport giftshops or reminiscent of religious imagery.

These works, which the critics described as overly saccharine, once again managed to harmoniously mesh contrasting readymade elements: eroticism and innocence, contemporary pop culture and elitist baroque culture. Koons also used these pieces to introduce a new media strategy, unveiling Banality in three cities at the same time: New York, Chicago, and Cologne.

The exhibition then moves to a series of stainless-steel, shiny sculptures that Koons presented in 1986 at Ileana Sonnabend's prestigious SoHo gallery under the title *Statuary*. These pieces reflect archetypes and images of various historical figures, like the life-size bust *Louis XIV* (1986), the symbol of absolute monarchy and of art made to order for a privileged few, and *Bob Hope* (1986), a 20th-century mass-culture icon. All of them are "representations of representations" that have been stripped of any explicit reference to the original sources.

*Statuary* includes the inflatable rabbit—one of the earliest and best known of Koons's creations, related with his work from the 1970s. The stainless-steel inflatable, always full of air and in perfect condition, is an archetype with multiple interpretations: erotic, if associated with the Playboy bunny, and innocent, if read as a depiction of the guileless Easter bunny.

### **Kiepenkerl**

In Gallery 201 we can see Koons's first installation in a public space, *Kiepenkerl*, which he created for the art event Skulptur Projekte Münster (Germany). The piece is made of polished stainless steel, lending it the false appearance of luxury. It is based on a bronze sculpture, erected in 1898, that stood in a square in the heart of the city and had strong historical and political connotations: it was used by the Nazi propaganda machine as a symbol of the city's resistance during World War II.

*Kiepenkerl* depicts a peddler who traveled from town to town, carrying his wares and sharing news as he went. Koons's *Kiepenkerl* is the same size as the original, bringing the past up to date and using the same resources as in his previous two series. However, the difficulties involved in manufacturing this sculpture, which was damaged during the casting process and required major repairs, marked a turning point in Koons's relationship with the readymade, as the *Kiepenkerl* experience freed him from the need to maintain his found objects intact.

### **Made in Heaven**

In 1989, the Whitney Museum of American Art invited Jeff Koons to create a billboard for *Image World*, a group exhibition that explored the relationship between art and the media. The result was the work *Made in Heaven*, on display in Gallery 203, which remains one of Koons's most controversial series due to its explicit nature.

Koons decided to create a huge advertisement featuring him and Ilona Staller (better known as Cicciolina, whom he would later marry) as the costars of the film *Made in Heaven*, which was never actually made but the themes of which he continued with his series of the same name. In various oil inks on canvas works, the couple appeared as a contemporary Adam and Eve, depicted in sexual poses and surrounded by symbols of fidelity and love, of human nature and domestication. Lambasted by both Italian and American critics at the time, *Made in Heaven* is a radical exercise in self-affirmation that Koons invites us to share.

A few months later the artist returned to the series, working with new materials like glass and marble at workshops in Murano and Pietrasanta, Italy, and referencing important works from art history by masters such as Bernini, Courbet, Houdon, and Manet.

### **Puppy**

*Puppy* (1992) is one of Koons's most iconic and beloved creations. Standing in the square just outside the Museum, the work welcomes visitors to the Guggenheim Bilbao.

The first version of this enormous flower-strewn West Highland white terrier was temporarily installed in 1992 in the great courtyard of Waldeck Castle in the German town of Bad Arolsen, near Kassel, where Documenta IX was being held. That first version, which stood 11 meters tall, was made of wood and was dismantled at the end of the project.

Koons later created a larger rendition with a steel frame, which he exhibited at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art. In 1997, the work was acquired for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection and given a permanent home in front of the museum building. In this piece, whose theme ties in with his earlier series *Banality* and *Made in Heaven*, the flowering of the plants is key because it entails an uneven, riotous pattern of growth that gives the work a life of its own, alluding to the power of life in both its physical and spiritual dimensions.

### **Easyfun; Easyfun-Ethereal**

Gallery 202 is home to a series that Koons debuted while simultaneously working on the *Celebration* series. *Easyfun* is a series of cartoon animal silhouettes made from colorful mirrored surfaces, irresistibly attractive objects, like his 1999 work *Walrus (Blue Green)*, that distort the observer's reflection. Koons accompanied these reflective pieces with his first three oil paintings, including *Loopy* (1999), which resemble photo-realist collages, as they incorporate images cut out of brochures, advertisements, magazines, and personal photos, and clearly allude to the work of other artists like John Baldessari, Jackson Pollock, and James Rosenquist. These paintings were soon followed by the *Easyfun-Ethereal* series, which included pieces like *Junkyard* (2002). In this series the process became more complex and the layers of images were processed using computer software and transferred to canvas.

### **Celebration**

In 1994, an invitation to design a calendar inspired Jeff Koons to embark on one of the longest, most technically challenging series of his entire career, *Celebration*, on display in Gallery 208. For this new project, he took photographs and collected images related to holidays and memorable events, looking for easily recognizable archetypes to illustrate every month of the year. His research soon grew more ambitious, leading to a total of 16 paintings and 20 sculptures whose complexity required the artist to spend years working on and researching the processes and materials involved and their possible alloys.

These sculptures include polyethylene pieces, like *Cat on a Clothesline (Yellow)* (1994-2001), and large mirror-polished stainless steel sculptures, like *Balloon Dog (Magenta)* (1994-2000). The puckers, folds, and curves of these small inflatable toys are reproduced on a much larger scale in durable, bright colors, created by applying layer upon layer of transparent color coating with innovative techniques developed by the artist after years of research and consultations with experts.



The hyperreal paintings in this series are inspired by festive events such as birthday parties or children's playthings. In the first canvases, these motifs occupy the center of the composition, which melts away into the reflective glints of a metallic background, as is the case in *Boy with Pony* (1995-2008). In his later paintings, the toys form a hyperreal landscape more in keeping with the world of advertising.

The Museum's outdoor terrace is home to another important part of this series: *Tulips* (1995-2004), a piece from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection on permanent exhibition to Bilbao's passersby.

### **Popeye, Hulk Elvis, Antiquity**

Gallery 105 includes some of Jeff Koons's most recent work. The *Popeye* series, named after the famous fictional sailor, is still in progress today. This pop icon, a proletarian symbol of triumph over adversity, and his cartoon companions, including his beloved Olive Oyl, are the stars of these paintings and sculptures.

Koons created sculptures like *Chainlink* (2003) by combining metal casts of inflatable pool toys with mass-produced ladders, chairs, and fences. The paintings in the series, like *Olive Oyl* (2003), include images of these sculptures among their myriad layers, which were conceptualized first in Photoshop and later transferred to canvas and hand-painted in oil. The composition is complex and, at the same time, extremely flat: the images are simple, and yet so profuse that it is difficult to identify them individually.

Gallery 105 also houses *Hulk Elvis*, a new series Koons began in 2004 in which the Incredible Hulk poses as Elvis Presley from the publicity still for the Western film *Flaming Star*, one of the singer's best-known images, immortalized in Andy Warhol's screenprints. Both Elvis and the Hulk are characterized by an exaggerated masculinity, although each has a conflictive dual nature. The Hulk leads a double life just as Elvis Presley does in the legendary movie. Koons conjoins a bronze inflatable toy version of the superhero with real objects to create a modified readymade. In addition to sculptures, Koons also created complex paintings for this series, like *Dutch Couple* (2007). These paintings feature multiple layers and an increasingly prominent use of Ben-Day dots, an obvious nod to the comic book universe and to the artist Roy Lichtenstein.

Koons also plunged into an arduous research process to discover how 3D-scanning techniques could be used to make replicas of iconic objects from history that he considers altered readymades. A case in point is Koons's *Liberty Bell* (2006-14). The original Liberty Bell, a quintessential symbol of freedom and independence in the United States, has been cast several times and has a long history of replicas, the object of Koons's emulation.

In *Antiquity*, Jeff Koons reviews themes of fertility, standards of feminine beauty, and life energy through the ages. Begun in 2008, this series includes sculptures which depict prehistoric and Greco-Roman deities as well as paintings of a more contemporary, photo-realist type of feminine beauty, like that of actress Gretchen Mol posing as the famous pinup Bettie Page in *Antiquity 3* (2009-11).

In this series, Koons links his artwork to touchstones from the history of art and further explores the ever-evolving role of reproduction and simulacra of cultural objects in art history. For instance, his sculptures exactly reproduce statuettes, such as a porcelain souvenir referencing a 19th-century copy of a Roman Venus *Callipyge* from the Archaeological Museum in Naples, itself a copy of an older Greek work, that



Koons transforms into his colossal stainless-steel turquoise *Metallic Venus*, to which he adds real flowers. In this vein, Koons's paintings reference seminal works from art history, mixing contemporary deities with satyrs and classical beauties. In his Antiquity series paintings, Koons places a reference to Courbet's *Origin of the World* on the forefront. He also pays a tribute to Muhammad Ali, who contributed his own drawings to a project on which the two collaborated.

### **Gazing Ball**

Gallery 105 also includes the *Gazing Ball* series, begun in 2013. These spheres, which some cultures associate with divination, protection, and the afterlife, were first used in Victorian gardens, and in many American lawns or gardens they have become familiar ornaments set out to welcome neighbors, while the surface also "compresses" the scenery around them.

In Koons's works, the bright blue gazing balls made of hand-blown glass capture the reflection of everything happening around the viewer. The pristine white plaster objects or figures become mere vessels or stages for exhibiting the spheres, even though some of them take the form of powerful figures such as *Gazing Ball (Farnese Hercules)* (2013). These plaster casts, flawless replicas of their prototypes down to the very last detail, are opaque and still, and yet they glow with a supernatural perfection.

### **Catalogue**

This exhibition's illustrated companion catalogue includes essays on the artist's career by Scott Rothkopf, Antonio Damasio, Jeffrey Deitch, Isabelle Graw, Achim Hochdörfer, Michelle Kuo, Rachel Kushner, Pamela M. Lee, and Alexander Nagel.

### **Didactic Area**

This Didaktika aims to introduce visitors to the different characters found in the Jeff Koons exhibition: the artist himself, and certain animals, people, objects or customs that inspired him to create some of his works. The fact that the show is ordered by series facilitates this educational approach, in which we will identify some of the characters of the series on display and discuss who they are and where they came from.

Many of these archetypes are borrowed from Art History (classical sculpture, Marcel Duchamp's readymades, etc.), but others were inspired by American society, customs, cultural legacies, music and movie celebrities (such as Elvis Presley and Bob Hope). Even visitors become part of this cast. Finally, *Puppy*, undisputed icon and the bond between the Museum and the city of Bilbao, will also be present in this space in an audiovisual produced especially for this show.

### **Educational Activities Creative Sessions**

Creative workshops for youngsters and adults linked to key concepts of the exhibition.

#### **Mixology Workshop (Friday June 5)**

As an exhibition appetizer, David Ríos, awarded the *Diageo Reserve World Class 2013*, will lead a mixology

workshop, where participants will explore this discipline, familiarize themselves with some of Koons's artworks connected to it, and enjoy some exquisite cocktails by Ríos. They will prepare their own mixes based on the artist's favorite drink and experiment art through taste and smell.

**Meet the artist: Jeff Koons (Tuesday June 9)**

Artist Jeff Koons will talk about his work and his retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim Bilbao.

**Shared Reflections (Wednesday, June 17 and June 24)**

Discover some highlights of Jeff Koons's exhibition, the behind-the-scenes work, and curious details about the show on special tours led by museum professionals. Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre

Wednesday June 17: **Curatorial Vision** by Lucía Agirre, exhibition curator, Curator, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Wednesday June 24: **Key Concepts** by Marta Arzak, Associate Director of Education and Interpretation.

**Gallery Hosts (Daily)**

If you want to know more about the works on view, ask our gallery docents. The museum offers this free service daily, 11 am–2 pm.

**Cover image**

Jeff Koons

*Rabbit*, 1986

Stainless steel

104.1 x 48.3 x 30.5 cm

Edition 1/3

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; partial gift of Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson, 2000.21

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Information on the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at [www.guggenheim-bilbao.es](http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.es) (Press Room)

## Jeff Koons, b. 1955, York, Pennsylvania

- 1955 Born in York, Pennsylvania to Henry and Gloria Koons. His sister, Karen, is three years older. His father owned an interior decoration business. Koons learns from him his aesthetic sense.
- 1960 His parents encourage his creative streak and sign him up for drawing lessons.
- 1963 Koons paints copies of Old Masters, which his father exhibits in the windows of his interior decoration store and sells to his customers.
- 1972–4 Koons studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, where he becomes interested in Byzantine painting and American folk art. He paints Surrealist-inspired scenes and landscapes. After calling Salvador Dalí at the St. Regis Hotel, Koons spends a day with him in New York.
- 1975 Studies at the School of Art Institute of Chicago, where Koons is taught by artists Jim Nutt and Ed Paschke; he becomes close friends with Paschke.
- 1976–7 Receives his Bachelor of Arts from MICA. Moves to New York, where he mixes with the downtown Manhattan music scene (Patti Smith, Talking Heads).
- 1977 Artists David Salle and Julian Schnabel introduce Koons to gallery owner Mary Boone, who takes an interest in his work. In his apartment on East 4th Street, he creates sculptures with inflatables and mirrors.  
Works at the Membership Desk at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) recruiting new members and sponsors.
- 1978 Begins his *Inflatables* series and the following year the *Pre-New*.
- 1980 His first exhibition, *The New*, is exhibited in the window of The New Museum of Contemporary Art on Fourteenth Street. On display are three sculptures of vacuum cleaners affixed to fluorescent lights with a light box featuring the title of the series and show.
- 1985 Begins his *Equilibrium* series, showing the realized works at his first solo gallery exhibition in New York, at International with Monument, and at Feature Gallery in Chicago. This series features his work *Two Ball 50/50 Tank* in which two basketballs are suspended in equilibrium, the technical challenges of which he achieved by consulting with Nobel Prize physicist Dr. Richard P. Feynman.
- 1986 Works from Koons's *Luxury and Degradation* series are exhibited in his second solo exhibition at International with Monument in New York, which explore class and social mobility. Immediately afterwards he creates his next series, *Statuary*, which includes his iconic stainless steel sculpture, *Rabbit*.  
Koons exhibits with a group of Neo-Geo artists at Ileana Sonnabend's gallery, showing his famous *Rabbit* for the first time. Sonnabend Gallery represents Koons for over 20 years (with short break in mid 1990s).

- 1987 The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York includes *One Ball Total Equilibrium* in their Biennial.  
The Saatchi Collection in London presents the work of a number of young American artists in an exhibition entitled *New York Art Now*. *Rabbit* is chosen to illustrate the cover of the exhibition catalogue. At the invitation of curator Kasper König, Koons creates the stainless steel sculpture *Kiepenkerl* for the Skulptur Projekte in Munster, Germany.
- 1988 His next series, *Banalities*, including the sculpture *Michael Jackson and Bubbles*, is exhibited at Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in New York, Donald Young Gallery in Chicago, and Galerie Max Hetzler in Cologne simultaneously. Koons announced the shows by starring himself in an advertising campaign that ran in four art magazines. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago presents an exhibition of his work.
- 1989 Exhibits at the Rotterdamse Kunststiftung.  
For the occasion of the *Image of the World* exhibition held at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Koons creates a billboard advertisement for an imagined film, starring himself and adult film star and Italian parliamentarian Ilona Staller (also known as Cicciolina). The image is displayed on Broadway in New York. Although the film was never created, this project launched his next series, *Made in Heaven*.
- 1990 Participates in the *XLIV Biennale di Venezia*, where he shows the first paintings and a sculpture from his *Made in Heaven* series.
- 1991 The complete *Made in Heaven* series, including paintings and sculptures made of porcelain, wood and glass are exhibited at Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in New York and Galerie Max Hetzler in Cologne.  
Marries Ilona Staller in Budapest.
- 1992 The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam hold a *retrospective* exhibition of Koons's work. During the *Documenta* Koons installs *Puppy*, a 40-foot-high topiary sculpture in the form of a West Highland terrier, in front of Arolsen Castle in Hesse, Germany.  
Publishes *The Jeff Koons Handbook*.
- 1993 Begins the *Celebration* series, inspired by the milestones and festivities of a year's cycle and created by large-scale production methods.  
Koons and Staller divorce in 1994. The legal battle to obtain custody of his son has a profound effect on him.
- 1997–8 First solo exhibition in Paris at Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont.  
*Puppy* is acquired by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and is permanently installed outside of the museum on the occasion of its inauguration.
- 1999 Exhibits at Sonnabend Gallery in New York and the Deste Foundation Centre for Contemporary

Art in Athens.

Production delays of the *Celebration* series prompt Koons to begin his series *Easyfun*, which incorporates paintings and reflective wall sculptures. The new works are shown at the Sonnabend Gallery.

- 2000 Begins the series *Easyfun-Ethereal*. Paintings from the series are exhibited at the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin.  
Installs the topiary sculpture *Split-Rocker* at the Palais des Papes in Avignon, France. Another version of *Puppy* is temporarily installed at Rockefeller Center in New York.  
Receives the BZ-Kulturpreis from the *Berliner Zeitung* in Berlin.
- 2001 Exhibits at the Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria, and Gagosian Gallery in Los Angeles. Works from the *Easyfun-Ethereal* series are exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the following year at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. Jean-Jacques Aillagon, President of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, awards Koons the Legion of Honor at the instigation of President Jacques Chirac.
- 2002 Begins his *Popeye* series, marking his return to readymades and inflatable objects.  
The Kunsthau Bielefeld, Germany, organizes a show of Koons's photographic and graphic work.  
Participates in the *XXV Bienal de São Paulo*, where he shows works from the *Easyfun-Ethereal* series.  
Receives the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture from the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Receives an honorary doctorate of fine arts from the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C.  
Koons marries Justine Wheeler.
- 2003 Exhibits in an Italian museum for the first time, at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli in Naples.  
Koons's work is featured in *From Jasper Johns to Jeff Koons: Four Decades of Art from the Broad Collections* at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. Unveiling of the first completed *Popeye* paintings and sculptures in a solo show at Sonnabend Gallery in New York.
- 2004 Exhibits at Galerie Max Hetzler in Berlin. Retrospective exhibition at the Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst in Oslo, which travels to the Helsinki City Art Museum in Finland.  
Begins the *Hulk Elvis* series.
- 2005 Nominated to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His *Celebration* sculpture *Moon*, is shown at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in its exhibition entitled *Translation*.  
For his 50th birthday, wife Justine and friend Jeffrey Deitch throw Koons a surprise party at Deitch's gallery.
- 2006 Koons's work is shown alongside Antonio Canova's in the exhibition *Canova and Koons: Classical Subversion* at Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin. *Balloon Dog* is installed on the Grand Canal in Venice to mark the launch of the Pinault Collection at the Palazzo Grassi.

His work *Balloon Flower (Red)*, is unveiled at 7 World Trade Center

- 2007 President Jacques Chirac promotes Koons to Officier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur in Paris.  
Gagosian Gallery in London presents two exhibitions of the artist's work simultaneously: *Jeff Koons: Popeye* and *Jeff Koons: Hulk Elvis*. Koons's work is featured in the group exhibition *Guggenheim Collection: 1940s to Now* at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne.  
The Koons Family International Law and Policy Institute is developed to combat global issues of child abduction and exploitation.
- 2008 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, presents an exhibition devoted to the artist's work. *Balloon Dog (Yellow)* (1994–2000), *Coloring Book* (1997–2005), and *Sacred Heart (Red/Gold)* (1994–2007) are the subject of an exhibition on the rooftop of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin exhibits works from his *Celebration* series.  
Château de Versailles opened its doors to a living artist for the first time with *Jeff Koons: Versailles*, where a selection of his works was presented within the Grand Apartments.  
Begins the *Antiquity* series.
- 2009 Koons's work is featured in the show *Four-4* at the Black Cube Gallery in Barcelona and in *The Unexpected: Van Picasso tot Penck, van Appel tot Koons* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.  
London's Serpentine Gallery presents Koons's *Popeye* series, and Artist Rooms, a collection of contemporary art jointly owned by Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland, tours until 2011.  
Koons receives the Governor's Awards for the Arts (from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts), where he is given the Distinguished Arts Award.
- 2010 Koons is made an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London.  
His work is exhibited at the Gagosian Gallery in New York and Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont in Paris.  
The nonprofit organization RxArt, with support from Kiehl's, installs Koons's work at the Advocate Hope Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn, Illinois.  
The 17th BMW Art Car created by Koons competes at Le Mans, France.
- 2011 Receives the Voice of Art Award from the F·E·G·S Health and Human Services System organization, and the Artist Icon Award in the Arts from the Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut.  
The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh inaugurates *ARTIST ROOMS Jeff Koons*.
- 2012 Has exhibitions at the Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills and Almine Rech Gallery in Brussels. First solo show in a Swiss Museum at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel.  
*Jeff Koons: The Painter* opens at the Schirn Kunsthalle and at the same time *Jeff Koons: The Sculptor* at the Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung, both in Frankfurt.  
U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton honors Koons with the Medal of Arts for his outstanding commitment to the Art in Embassies Program and international and cultural

exchange.

- 2013 Koons's work is presented at Almine Rech gallery in Brussels, Belgium. Summer exhibitions include simultaneous shows in New York with new sculptures and paintings at Gagosian Gallery and David Zwirner presents for the first time, the *Gazing Ball* series.
- 2014 A major retrospective opens at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. It later travels to the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou in Paris.
- 2015 Norwich Castle Museums & Art Gallery in Norfolk opens *Jeff Koons ARTIST ROOMS*. *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective* opens at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in June.



Press Images for  
**Jeff Koons. A Retrospective**  
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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At the press area ([prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en](http://prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en)) you can register and download high resolution images and videos featuring the exhibitions and the building. Sign in to get access. If you are already a user, log in here (you need your username and password). The color profile of the files should not be adjusted. Please, use always the original profile.

For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: [media@guggenheim-bilbao.es](mailto:media@guggenheim-bilbao.es).

Jeff Koons

*Inflatable Flower and Bunny (Tall White, Pink Bunny)*, 1979

Vinyl, mirrors

81.3 x 63.5 x 48.3 cm

The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*One Ball Equilibrium Tank (Spalding Dr. J 241 Series)*, 1985

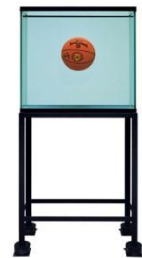
Glass, steel, sodium chloride reagent, distilled water, one basketball

164.5 x 78.1 x 33.7 cm

Edition no. 1/2

Private Collection

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Rabbit*, 1986

Stainless steel

104.1 x 48.3 x 30.5 cm

Edition no. 1/3

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; partial gift of Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson, 2000.21

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Michael Jackson and Bubbles*, 1988

Porcelain

106.7 x 179.1 x 82.6 cm

Edition no. 1/3

Private Collection

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Large Vase of Flowers*, 1991

Polychromed wood

132.1 x 109.2 x 109.2 cm

Edition no. 1/3

Private collection

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Puppy*, 1992

Stainless steel, soil, geotextile fabric, internal irrigation system, and live flowering plants

1,240 x 830 x 910 cm

Edition no. 1/1

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

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Jeff Koons

*Junkyard*, 2002

Oil on canvas

259.1 x 350.5 cm

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner P. 2011.215

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Balloon Dog (Magenta)*, 1994–2000

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating

307.3 x 363.2 x 114.3 cm

One of five unique versions

Collection Pinault

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Tulips*, 1995–2004

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating

203.2 x 457.2 x 520.7 cm

One of five unique versions

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons

*Chainlink*, 2003

Polychromed aluminum, galvanized steel

264.2 x 174 x 48.9 cm



Edition no. 3/3  
Private Collection  
© Jeff Koons

Jeff Koons  
*Popeye*, 2009–2011  
Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating  
198.1 x 131.4 x 71.8 cm  
Edition no. 1/3  
Gagosian Gallery  
© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons  
*Hulk (Organ)*, 2004–2014  
Polychromed bronze and mixed media  
252.7 x 127.6 x 80.3 cm  
Edition no. 2/3  
Gagosian Gallery  
© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons  
*Liberty Bell*, 2006–2014  
Bronze, wood, wrought iron, cast iron  
259.1 x 183.5 x 142.9 cm  
Edition no. 1/3  
Private Collection  
© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons  
*Antiquity 3*, 2009–2011  
Oil on canvas  
259.1 x 350.5 cm  
Private Collection; courtesy Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte  
© Jeff Koons



Jeff Koons  
*Gazing Ball (Ariadne)*, 2013  
Plaster and glass  
112.7 x 238.4 x 93 cm  
Edition no. 3/3  
Monsoon Art Collection  
© Jeff Koons

