

JEFF KOONS SHINE

FIRENZE
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Jeff Koons. Shine by Arturo Galansino Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi Director General and exhibition co-curator

Shine: Jeff Koons in conversation with Joachim Plissarro by Joachim Plissarro, Bershad Professor of Art History and Director of the Hunter College Art Galleries Hunter College/CUNY and exhibition co-curator (excerpt from the interview in the catalogue)

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Jeff Koons. Shine

(Florence, Palazzo Strozzi 2 October 2021–30 January 2022)

Jeff Koons opens a major exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence

This autumn, Palazzo Strozzi in Florence will host a major exhibition by Jeff Koons opening on 2 October 2021. Curated by Arturo Galansino and Joachim Pissarro, the exhibition will bring to Florence a wide selection of the most celebrated works by Jeff Koons who, from the mid-70s to the present day, has forged a reputation as one of the most important and controversial figures in the contemporary art world.

Developed in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition entitled *Jeff Koons. Shine* will host loans from some of the world's most important collections and museums, exploring the concept of "shine" in Koons's work – an ambiguous idea that oscillates between the dualities of being and seeming, or truth and sensation.

The chosen artworks illustrate the story of a career that has spanned over forty years, from Koons's glistening metal sculptures replicating luxury objects like *Baccarat Crystal Set* (1986) to his iconic inflatables such as *Rabbit* (1986) and *Balloon Dog (Red)* (1994-2000). In addition, the exhibition will highlight Koons's revisitation of pop culture and his historic reinvention of the readymade through works such as *Hulk (Tubas)* (2004-2018) and *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Spalding Dr. JK 241 Series)* (1985).

The creator of works that have entered our collective imagination due to their ability to merge the academic with popular culture through their references to art history and allusions to the world of consumer society, Koons has found a key principle in the idea of "shine" for his innovative sculptures and installations, which set out to question our relationship with reality but also the very concept of a work of art. To Koons, *shine* is a concept that goes beyond the decorative to become an intrinsic element of his art. Endowed with a reflective quality, his artworks heighten our metaphysical understanding of time and space, surface and depth, materiality and immateriality.

The American artist's works place the observer before a mirror in which they can at once see themselves within their environment and thus experience affirmation. As Koons puts it: "*The job of the artist is to make a gesture and really show people what their potential is. It's not about the object, and it's not about the image; it's about the viewer. That's where the art happens.*"

Taking inspiration from Marcel Duchamp, Koons has developed works throughout his career that have sparked critical debate and courted controversy and acclaim in equal measure. Yet, Koons's combination of pop, conceptual and post-modern influences uniquely demonstrate how the art object acts as a larger metaphor for society and community.

In 2021 *Jeff Koons. Shine* aims to lead the way in Italy's cultural recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, continuing Palazzo Strozzi's lively dialogue between the traditional and the new with the production of contemporary exhibitions with prominent artists of today within the context of its Renaissance historical architecture.

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*"We at Palazzo Strozzi have been working for several years to produce this major exhibition on Jeff Koons, one of the most significant figures in contemporary art at the global level, thus continuing the sequence of exhibitions that Palazzo Strozzi has devoted to the most important players on the contemporary art scene," says Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi Director General and exhibition co-curator **Arturo Galansino**, "For the very first time in this exhibition we are exploring a unique and characteristic aspect of Koons' art, namely the reflective and luminous quality of his work. Shine, the word that gives the exhibition its title, is the key principle in the sculptures and paintings on display in the setting of Palazzo Strozzi's austere 15th century architecture, in what is an essential dialogue between the artworks' Platonic forms and the 'golden rule' of a perfect showcase for them. Producing one of Jeff Koons' most important exhibitions in Florence means interpreting the city as a modern cultural capital capable of playing an active part in the artistic avant-garde of our time".*

*"Jeff Koons often insists on the humanitarian dimension of his role as an artist – says exhibition curator **Joachim Pissarro** - Indeed, it is fair to say that Koons's work touches and affects humankind all of us in our diversity. There is something immediately compelling, in Jeff's work, something that speaks to our innermost heart. Yet, his work is far from facile. Its impact is direct and forceful, yet, the layers of meaning, the complexities and richness of his work are inexhaustible. To be able to see his work in Florence today is particularly rich and significant: it resonates as deeply with the tradition of the Renaissance as it provides us with intense joy and aesthetic fulfillment. That is the mystery of Jeff Koons."*

The exhibition is promoted and organised by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. Sponsors: Comune di Firenze, Regione Toscana, Camera di Commercio di Firenze, Fondazione CR Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi Partners Committee. Main Partner: Intesa Sanpaolo.

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BIOGRAPHY

Jeff Koons was born in York, Pennsylvania in 1955. He studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He received a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1976. Koons lives and works in New York City.

Since his first solo exhibition in 1980, Koons's work has been shown in major galleries and institutions throughout the world. His work was the subject of a major exhibition organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective* (June 27 - October 19, 2014), which traveled to the Centre Pompidou Paris (November 26, 2014 - April 27, 2015) and the Guggenheim Bilbao (June 9 - September 27, 2015). Recent exhibitions include *Jeff Koons: Absolute Value. Selected works from the Collection of Marie and Jose Mugrabi*; *Appearance Stripped Bare: Desire and Object in the Work of Marcel Duchamp and Jeff Koons, Even*; and *Jeff Koons at the Ashmolean. Jeff Koons: Mucem. Works from the Pinault Collection* will be on view in Marseille, France, from May 19, 2021 through October 18, 2021.

Koons is widely known for his iconic sculptures *Rabbit* and *Balloon Dog* as well as the monumental floral sculpture *Puppy* (1992), shown at Rockefeller Center and permanently installed at the Guggenheim Bilbao. Another floral sculpture, *Split-Rocker* (2000), previously installed at the Papal Palace in Avignon, Château de Versailles, Fondation Beyeler in Basel, and Rockefeller Center.

Jeff Koons has received numerous awards and honors in recognition of his cultural achievements. Notably, Koons received the Governor's Awards for the Arts "Distinguished Arts Award" from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; the "Golden Plate Award" from the Academy of Achievement; President Jacques Chirac promoted Koons to Officier de la Legion d'Honneur; and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton honored Koons with the U.S. Department of State's Medal of Arts for his outstanding commitment to the Art in Embassies Program and international cultural exchange. In 2017, Koons was made the first Artist-in-Residence at Columbia University's Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute and, also, made an Honorary Member of University of Oxford's Edgar Wind Society for Outstanding Contribution for Visual Culture. Koons has been a board member of The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) since 2002, and co-founded the Koons Family International Law and Policy Institute with ICMEC; for the purpose of combating global issues of child abduction and exploitation and to protect the world's children.

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Title	<i>Jeff Koons. Shine</i>
Venue	Florence, Palazzo Strozzi
Dates	2 October 2021- 30 January 2022
Exhibition curated by	Arturo Galansino and Joachim Pissarro
Promoted and organised by	Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze
Patronage	United States Mission to Italy
Institutional supporters	Comune di Firenze, Regione Toscana, Camera di Commercio di Firenze, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, Comitato dei Partner di Palazzo Strozzi
Main Partner	Intesa Sanpaolo
Educational Partner	Polimoda
Thanks to	Beyfin
Technical sponsors	Trenitalia, <i>laFeltrinelli</i> , Ufficio Turismo Città Metropolitana di Firenze, Toscana Aeroporti, Unicoop Firenze, Rinascente, Mercato Centrale Firenze, Destination Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau, Publicacqua
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Catalogue	Marsilio Editori, Venezia
Information and reservation	T. +39 055 2645155 prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org
Opening hours and Tickets	www.palazzostrozzi.org

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2	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Inflatable Flowers (Four Tall Purple with Plastic Figures)</i>, 1978.</p> <p>Vinyl, mirrors, and plastic; 16 x 57 ¼ x 19 inches, 40.6 x 145.4 x 48.3 cm.</p> <p>Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons</p> <p>Inflatables series – Room 4</p>	
4	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Nelson Automatic Cooker / Deep Fryer</i>, 1979.</p> <p>Cooker/deep fryer, acrylic, and fluorescent lights; 27 x 17 x 16 inches, 68.6 x 43.2 x 40.6 cm.</p> <p>Private collection. © Jeff Koons</p> <p>Pre-New series - Room 4</p>	
5	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Spalding Dr. JK 241 Series)</i>, 1985.</p> <p>Glass, steel, sodium chloride reagent, distilled water, and one basketball; 64 ¾ x 30 ¾ x 13 ¼ inches, 164.5 x 78.1 x 33.7 cm.</p> <p>Edition 1 from an edition of 2. Private collection. © Jeff Koons</p> <p>Equilibrium series – Room 4</p>	
6	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Jim Beam - J.B. Turner Train</i>, 1986.</p> <p>Stainless steel, bourbon; 11 x 114 x 6 ½ inches, 27.9 x 289.6 x 16.5 cm.</p> <p>Edition 1 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Private collection. © Jeff Koons, Photo: © 2014 Christie's Images Limited</p> <p>Luxury and Degradation series – Room 2</p>	

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9	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Italian Woman</i>, 1986. Stainless steel; 30 x 18 x 11 inches, 76.2 x 45,7 x 27.9 cm. Edition 3 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of Barbara Bertozzi Castelli. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Douglas M. Parker Studios, Los Angeles. Statuary series– Room 2</p>	
12	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Rabbit</i>, 1986. Stainless steel; 41 x 19 x 12 inches, 104.1 x 48.3 x 30.5 cm. Edition 1 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, partial gift of Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson, 2000.21. © Jeff Koons, Photo: © 2019 Christie's Images Limited Statuary series – Room 2</p>	
13	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Balloon Dog (Red)</i>, 1994-2000. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 121 x 143 x 45 inches, 307.3 x 363.2 x 114.3 cm. One of five unique versions. Private collection. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Mike Bruce, Gate Studios, London / Courtesy the Royal Academy of Arts, London Celebration series – Room 3</p>	
14	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Sacred Heart (Magenta/Gold)</i>, 1994-2007. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 140 1/2 x 86 x 47 5/8 inches, 356.9 x 218.4 x 121 cm. One of five unique versions. Jereann and Holland Chaney. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Sergey Illin, Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre (Kyiv, Ukraine) Celebration series – Room 1</p>	

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15	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Bread with Egg</i>, 1995-1997. Oil on canvas; 128 x 108 inches, 325.1 x 274.3 cm. Noirmontartproduction, Paris. © Jeff Koons Celebration series – Room 3</p>	
16	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Tulips</i>, 1995-1998. Oil on canvas; 111 3/8 x 131 inches, 282.9 x 332.7 cm. Private collection. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Tom Powel Imaging Celebration series – Room 3</p>	
19	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Dolphin</i>, 2002. Polychromed aluminum, stainless steel, and coated steel chain; 63 x 72 1/2 x 38 inches, 160 x 184.2 x 96.5 cm, plus chain at variable length. Edition 3 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. The Sonnabend Collection Foundation. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Tom Powel Imaging, Courtesy Sonnabend Gallery Popeye series – Room 5</p>	
21	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Balloon Monkey (Blue)</i>, 2006-2013. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 150 126 x 235 inches, 381 x 596.9 x 320 cm. One of five unique versions. Courtesy Private collection. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Courtyard</p>	

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22	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Lobster</i>, 2007-2012. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 57 7/8 x 37 x 18 7/8 inches, 147 x 94 x 47.9 cm. Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Marc Damage, Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery Room 5</p>	
23	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Hulk (Tubas)</i>, 2004-2018. Polychromed bronze and brass; 97 1/4 x 82 11/16 x 48 1/8 inches, 247 x 210 x 122.2 cm. Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons Hulk Elvis series – Room 5</p>	
25	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Seated Ballerina</i>, 2010-2015. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 83 x 44 11/16 x 78 5/8 inches, 210.8 x 113.5 x 199.7 cm. Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons, Photo: © 2017 Fredrik Nilsen, Courtesy Gagosian Antiquity series – Room 1</p>	
26	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Bluebird Planter</i>, 2010-2016. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating and live flowering plants; 82 1/2 x 110 3/4 x 40 inches, 209.6 x 281.3 x 101.6 cm. Edition 2 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Courtesy Private Collection. © Jeff Koons, Photo: © 2017 Fredrik Nilsen, Courtesy Gagosian Antiquity series – Room 7</p>	
28	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Balloon Venus Lespugue (Red)</i>, 2013-2019. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 105 1/16 x 48 13/16 x 41 3/16, 266.9 x 124.1 x 104.7 cm. One of five unique versions. Private collection, Courtesy of David Zwirner. © Jeff Koons Antiquity series – Room 8</p>	

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29	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Gazing Ball (Apollo Lykeios)</i>, 2013. Plaster and glass; 94 ¼ x 37 1/8 x 34 ½ inches, 239.4 x 94.3 x 87.6 cm. Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Tom Powel Imaging Gazing Ball series – Room 6</p>	
32	<p>Jeff Koons, <i>Gazing Ball (Rubens Tiger Hunt)</i>, 2015. Oil on canvas, glass, and aluminum; 64 ½ x 83 1/8 x 14 ¾ inches, 163.8 x 211.1 x 37.5 cm. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Tom Powel Imaging, Courtesy Gagosian Gazing Ball series – Room 6</p>	

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EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH

COURTYARD

Jeff Koons (b. York, Pennsylvania 1955) is one of the most important artists of the past forty years. Palazzo Strozzi's courtyard hosts his *Balloon Monkey (Blue)* (2006–13). Approximately six metres long and weighing almost five tonnes, the monumental sculpture represents a twisted balloon animal that would commonly be found at a child's birthday party—an object that triggers joyful memories of celebrations. The monkey is a recurring motif in Koons's art that appears in several of his most significant works. Its symbolic meaning varies according to the culture but is universally associated with themes such as playfulness, cleverness, sexuality and fertility.

Installed at Palazzo Strozzi, the sculpture's luminous reflective surface captures the architecture of the courtyard and gives the viewer a new perspective of their environment.

ROOM 1

From the mid-1970s to present, Koons has been well known for his appreciation of lustrous, bright, reflective materials. This exhibition is the first to survey a fundamental characteristic of his art: *shine*—or the perceptible glow, reflection, or emission of light from an object. Like the brilliance of the sun, a bright light, or a gemstone, shine is an aesthetic phenomenon that captures and captivates the eye. Here, it is important to note that the English word “shine” is derived from the German word, *schein*, which holds the same meaning. However, in the German language there is also a popular secondary definition of *schein*: appearance. As in English, appearance is understood to be entirely different from reality, just as “to seem” is not “to be.”

The present artworks engage the aesthetics of shine, while also considering the philosophical concept of *schein*. Through reflection, Koons demonstrates how art is a visceral experience that engages the senses. Shining stainless steel and vibrant colors brought to a mirror finish elevate moods, create feelings of euphoria, and produce heightened experiences of reality. His luminous surfaces provide visual feedback, which affirms the viewer's presence in the space and reminds them they are part of a larger community and dialogue. This is essentially what Koons would describe as connectivity:

To connect the present to the past is to continue to tie people to biological memory. It is different from instinct but similar; we carry information with us in a very profound way, and this connecting force is a powerful narrative.

Jeff Koons

ROOM 2

Koons produced his first stainless steel sculptures for the 1986 series *Luxury and Degradation*. Using alcohol as an allegory, the series illustrated how chasing after abstract signifiers of wealth and desire only leads to despair. The surfaces of luxuries and decorative objects are often reflective, as this implies a sense of excess and decadence. Yet, it is crucial to note that stainless steel is an industrial material and not a precious metal or artistic medium that would ever be associated with luxury. Koons intentionally cast his *Jim Beam - J.B. Turner Train*, whose seven cars each hold a fifth of bourbon, in stainless steel rather than a traditional material like bronze or silver to show how appearances can be deceptive. While the exterior of the work shimmers like an extravagant luxury, its interior holds a common alcohol that can be found in any liquor store.

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To me stainless steel is the material of the proletarian, it's what pots and pans are made of... these pieces have no desire to be in a truly luxurious material. The works are communicating empowerment and to avoid degradation.

Jeff Koons

In 1986, Koons also embarked on his next series, Statuary, or what he often refers to as his “panoramic view of society.” For this body of work he cast ten sculptures, of differing styles, in stainless steel. This delivered a uniformity to sculptures as diverse as *Italian Woman* and *Mermaid Troll* and blurred the lines between high art statuary and decorative ornamentation. The centerpiece of this “panoramic view,” *Rabbit* —which is now one of the most iconic sculptures of the twentieth century art— is at once inviting and impassive; visible and immaterial; innocuous and threatening; animated and lifeless; child-like and hyper-sexual. It's shining brilliance welcomes contradictions and recalls the Modernist sculptures of Constantin Brâncusi and Hans Arp.

ROOM 3

It's not about finding relevance, perfection, or imperfection in objects but it's about you accepting yourself and then being about to go out and accept others.

Jeff Koons

Several of the works in this room come from the Celebration series, conceived in 1994, where Koons took ambitious technological leaps. For his ten foot high *Balloon Dog*, the artist worked with a specialized foundry to cast and finish the work's numerous precision-engineered, stainless steel parts. He intended that the sculpture internally and externally mimic the tight twists and curves of a balloon that a party clown would inflate. The resulting contrast between the perfectly polished exterior and the spacious, hollow interior also poetically recall the mythic Trojan horse: a colossal wooden horse that the Greeks hid within and “gifted” to the Trojans to infiltrate their land. This work is one of five unique versions coated with a simple and bright color coating of blue, magenta, yellow, orange, or red.

Bread with Egg and *Tulips* similarly rely on the simplistic beauty of rich, vibrant colors. For these paintings, also from the Celebration series, Koons began by photographing objects in front of a reflective mylar backdrop. The composition was then broken down by outline and color, transferred to canvas, and meticulously hand painted. The precision and photographic rendering of highlights, shadows, and refracted colors strengthen our belief in the spectacular reality of the images. Later works *Donkey* (1999) and *Elephant* (2003) capture true reflections of their surroundings while referencing Koons's interest in abstraction. They also incorporate the recurring use of common material and popular imagery.

ROOM 4

I am trying to capture the individual's desire in the object, and to fix his or her aspirations in the surface, in a condition of immortality.

Jeff Koons

There is no object more related to shine, reflection, or appearance than a mirror. The mirror has become an indispensable, everyday device that society looks to and relies on for truth. It is regarded as the most accurate account of appearances, as it reflects the surrounding environment and oneself in real-time.

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Shortly after moving to New York City in 1977, Koons began working with mirrors. On the floor of his apartment, which also served as a studio, he would arrange objects such as sponges or vinyl inflatable toys around 12 x 12 inch mirrors. These works continued in the tradition of Marcel Duchamp's readymade, but were also inspired by the mirrors used in the Minimalist sculptures of Robert Smithson. The viewer is more aware of their participation in viewing art as they see themselves reflected with the objects. At the same time, in the reflection of the object there is something elusive—something that constantly shifts with changes in light and the movement of the viewer, thereby ascribing a constant mutability. The artist has expressed that he was drawn to this “visually intoxicating” experience of reflection that heightened one's senses.

In one of his first formal series, the Pre-New (1978), the artist took appliances, like the one seen in the *Nelson Automatic Cooker / Deep Fryer*, and affixed them to florescent light strips. As no one will ever cook with this appliance, its immaculate surface brightened by artificial light will remain forever new. This is both alluring and somewhat threatening to the viewer, who feels their own mortality and inevitable aging. *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Spalding Dr. JK 241 Series)* from the 1985 Equilibrium series, uses the reflectivity of water to instill a comparable awe in the viewer, as a basketball hovers like an embryo in a moment of nothingness that is pre-birth and after death. One's experience of this phenomenon is recorded in the abstracted reflection they encounter as they walk around the works.

ROOM 5

In the Popeye series, which began in 2002, Koons returned to the Duchampian readymade by recreating in aluminum inflatable pool toys like *Dolphin*. He selected well-known subjects with a rich depth of meaning in pop culture and art history.

His stainless steel *Lobster*, also based on a readymade inflatable, makes reference to Surrealist artworks by Salvador Dalí and even resembles his famous mustache. However, the pool toy also has a very interesting shape that recalls elements of both male and female anatomies. This allows the work to function on several levels of meaning.

When I look at an object in order to make a choice, I can't just take any object and put it in metal. It's not going to work. There are a lot of objects that I just can't touch, because they're not going to transform and present themselves with any pertinent psychological, artistic information in my vocabulary as an artist. But then there are some objects that are just perfect for them.

Jeff Koons

Hulk (Tubas), from the series Hulk Elvis, blends concepts from Eastern and Western culture. A character from the American publisher, Marvel Comics, the Incredible Hulk is a man who transforms into an all-powerful destroyer when threatened. Koons likens this Western superhero to an Eastern deity by pairing an inflatable version of the figure transformed into bronze with a functioning large brass instrument. In many Eastern religions, guardian gods make noise to announce their arrival. As the lowest-pitched instruments in the brass family, tubas make a deep, commanding noise fitting of such authority.

ROOM 6

The gazing ball reflects the here and now, it reflects you the viewer. So it affirms your presence while it also mirrors the artworks', and in some way this allows you to time-travel.

Jeff Koons

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Adopting a humanist philosophy, the Gazing Ball series celebrates the notion of artistic dialogue and connectivity. Koons invites the audience to participate in the works by placing highly reflective spheres, or gazing balls, on the sculptures and on shelves affixed to the canvases. The spherical mirrors absorb the light of the surrounding environment and return the 360-degree view with a convex and colored spin.

For the Gazing Ball Paintings (2014-2021), the artist created fifty versions of masterpieces from the canon of Western art. His selection process was intuitive, as he chose those paintings he has been most moved by and inspired by. Each painting is comprised of more than 3,000 colors, all of which are mixed and tubed by hand at Koons's studio. Those colors are included in Koons's library of color, which is organized by RGB value and digitally archived. Koons's *Gazing Ball (Tintoretto's Origin of the Milky Way)*, for example, represents the "idea" of the Venetian master Tintoretto by expertly recreating his color palette and composition – down to the cracks.

Alternatively, the Gazing Ball Sculptures (2013-2014) in this room are strikingly devoid of color other than the reflective blue gazing balls. Like classical marbles long stripped of their pigments, their gleaming white surfaces appear timeless and confront the history of the gaze in the past as well as in the present.

ROOM 7

A reflective surface requires light, and, in biology, a flower needs the sunlight, and life needs the sun's energy. We are pulled to that energy and have a physical response of being pulled to-wards light. On such a basic level, our biology is based in that: chemically, we need light.

Jeff Koons

The two sculptures in this room, *Bluebird Planter* and *Metallic Venus*, are from the Antiquity series – a body of work dedicated to the enduring themes of sex, love, fertility, and beauty in art. They are in dialogue with Koons's previous topiary sculptures like *Puppy* (1992) and *Split-Rocker* (2000). Each sculpture has a planter filled with a unique arrangement of local varieties; the present planting includes begonias, cyclamen, and kalanchoe. These flowering plants are a celebration of organic life and natural beauty, while the reflective stainless steel surface centers on how beauty can be abstracted.

The mesmerizing turquoise exterior of *Metallic Venus* updates the classical goddess for a contemporary audience. She erotically lifts up her peplos to reveal her buttocks. Koons's sculpture is based on a small figurine that references the Callipygian Venus, an Ancient Roman copy of a lost Greek bronze, which is currently located in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples.

ROOM 8

I think that when you leave the room, the art leaves the room. Art is about your own possibilities as a human being. It's about your own excitement, your own potential, and what you can become. It affirms your existence.

Jeff Koons

In this final room, sculptures from Antiquity are paired with the painting *Olive Oyl* from the Popeye series. The present *Balloon Venus* sculptures are based on female figurines made roughly 26,000 years ago. The relatively small, prehistoric totems exaggerate the female breasts and buttocks to

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stress the importance of fertility in maintaining all humankind. By abstracting and enlarging these forms, Koons demonstrates the great potential that human beings have going forward.

In *Olive Oyl*, it is clear that Koons utilizes distinctly American imagery, yet abstracts his references to the degree that the audience cannot fully untangle them. The one image that remains intact and above the fray is the image of Superman, which appears in Andy Warhol's *Superman*, 1961. Koons chose this hero for his optimism as well as for his omnipotence— "that kind of power has an aspect of pop, but it's not nostalgic. It's very fresh, and Superman's just like God almighty," he reasoned.

Mixing powerful male and female energies, Koons's works look to the distant and not-so-distant past to show the viewer they have the strength to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others.

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by Arturo Galansino

(Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi Director General and exhibition co-curator)

Jeff Koons. Shine continues the sequence of exhibitions that Palazzo Strozzi has devoted to the most important players on the contemporary art scene. The exhibition explores a unique aspect of this American artist: the concept of the reflective and luminous quality of his work. Jeff Koons considers the notion of "shine" to be a key principle in his innovative sculptures and installations that aim to question our relationship with reality and indeed the very concept of a work of art. For Jeff Koons, the meaning of the term "shine" is something that transcends the mere notion of decoration or embellishment to become an intrinsic feature of his art. Endowed with reflective properties, his works boost our metaphysical perception of time and space, of surface and depth, of the material and the immaterial.

Looking at the sequence of works chosen, one is surprised by the consistency of the issues addressed and by the ceaseless formal, technical and expressive research conducted by Koons over a career more than forty years long, into issues such as ridding images of all notion of hierarchy, interacting with cultural history, accepting the self and every aesthetic viewpoint, involving the onlooker, spirituality and transcendence.

Autobiography and memory play an important role in his art, not only at the personal level but also in the sense of an almost meta-historical collective reminiscence deeply rooted in the anthropological and cultural aspects of Western civilisation, prompting him to merge both lofty and low-level culture.

Born into a middle-class Pennsylvania family in 1955, Jeff Koons began to paint by copying the famous works of art that his father displayed in his interior design store. Immediately after completing his schooling in Baltimore and Chicago, he moved to New York in 1976 and devoted his energy to his first ready-made works that merged Duchamp and Warhol, using mirrors and trinkets typical of American consumer society.

From this initial phase, his ready-made technique evolved towards the recreation of everyday items in different and often reflecting materials: a fundamental constant in his art from the mid-eighties onwards. Thus he moved from the inflatable plastic rabbit of his first series, *Inflatables*, to the stylised, reflecting *Rabbit* (1986), a Brancusian idol in stainless steel, a popular material and an everyday feature of life in the middle classes, in a series he christened *Statuary*. That rabbit worth \$100 million, the most expensive work of art ever sold by a living artist, was to become one of the most iconic sculptures of the second half of the 20th century, personifying both its impulses and its contradictions.

His "silvery" *Statuary* series mixes "lofty" works with "low", cheap pieces whose polished surface conveys abstraction and eroticism. These works offer contrasts that are not simply iconographical, they describe levels and differences in society. Refusing to create an elitist art, Jeff Koons uses reassuring, familiar images to dispense with the negative view of popular taste: a democratisation that also involves steel. The removal of guilt feelings is a mantra for the artist: removing the embarrassment of the bourgeois media over their own aesthetic tastes.

Also moving in that inclusive direction is his series *Celebration*, possibly the series best-known to a broader audience, explosive in its forms and colours.

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Behind these giant, shiny and highly coloured stainless steel sculptures there lies a shared world made of joyful experiences typical of Western consumer society associated with the world of childhood and the family, idealised and imbued with symbolism like some kind of everyday lost paradise. A world made up of birthday parties and coloured balloons from which there emerges, with the sacred aura of a totem and with the ambiguity of a Trojan Horse, the iconic *Balloon Dog* (1994-2000).

His surfaces reflect the onlooker, bringing him into the work in an autobiographical game of memories and references, in a stratification of social and collective rituals and experiences. They are objects of desire heavy with duplicity that emerges from their very physicality.

It is his material that transfigures them, deceiving us, because they seem very light, like the originals, were it not for their size; in fact Plato would have argued that they are even more real than the originals because they are ideal. This series marks the start of a "Baroque" phase in Koons' output, characterised by technical prowess designed to trigger amazement and desire in the onlooker.

Equally prodigious in terms of technique are the very heavy metal sculptures that sublimate the shapes of amusing inflatable buoys, metaphors of human existence because they contain breath, like *Dolphin* and *Lobster*. We are facing an illusion, a *trompe-l'œil*, to the point where we are tempted to verify the material with our own hands. Jeff Koons feigns different materials, as in so-called "deceptions", but rather than simulating something more valuable as artists did in the past, he makes sculptures of sophisticated and complex execution appear light and commonplace.

In Jeff Koons' work, the references to the ancient world, to mythology and to classical culture become explicit with the series entitled *Antiquity*, in which he merges the past with the contemporary, and with the series *Gazing Ball* which includes "copies" of works of crucial importance for the history of Western art. The meticulous care that he lavishes on execution and his search for perfection are evident both in his sculptures and paintings, and in the blue blown-glass balls or *gazing balls* (a common garden ornament in homes in his native Pennsylvania) that shine in contrast with the white of his plaster sculptures and with the colours of his pictures, including, and reflecting in a perfect bubble of human breath, the onlooker, his biological reality and his personal story within a long cultural history that unites and dissolves all differences and all hierarchies.

People often resort to the use of superlatives for record-breaking artist Jeff Koons: the greatest, the most important, the most influential, the most famous, the most subversive, the most controversial, the most expensive, the wealthiest, the most highly criticised... We hope that the exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi, in probing both above and below the skin of his works, may prompt people to add new adjectives to the list, recalling that Jeff Koons has worked to make art more inclusive, more open, more democratic and more spiritual.

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SHINE: JEFF KOONS IN CONVERSATION WITH JOACHIM PISSARRO

by Joachim Pissarro,

(Bershad Professor of Art History and Director of the Hunter College Art Galleries Hunter College/CUNY and exhibition curator) (excerpt from the interview in the catalog)

Joachim Pissarro

Let's begin with the story of Shine. As a brief distinction between the two words, "*shine*" and *schein*: In German, *schein* is all about the appearances, or what we can perceive or glean from the senses. In English, "to shine" commonly means "to shed light, be radiant, resplendent, to illuminate, be conspicuous"—all terms that address forthrightly the visual effect of light. What I find interesting is that both words, English and German, come from exactly the same Old Saxon root, and, in a way, the distinction between "*shine*" and *schein* is central to the whole history of philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche. The philosophical debate surrounding *schein* is simply about two things: appearances versus reality. Like saying, "Oh he looks like a nice guy." Though, in truth, he's not a nice guy. From Plato to Aristotle and up until Kant, appearance is minimized because it is understood to be the seat of deceit. Here when we talk about deception or lies, it signifies an inability to understand the metaphysical or transcendent truth of the real person and what they're like in their essence. And so, "aesthetics"—going back to the Greek *aisthētikos*—means, "I feel, I perceive: I see this bottle. I taste this coffee." This is all about the senses and the senses are the foundation of the *schein*, of the appearance, but not of the truth. In philosophy, the truth could only be intellectual, theoretical, philosophical, until Kant explained: we are not angels or intellectuals, we are sensible people.

Jeff Koons

But wouldn't religion go a different way on that? Even though, in many ways, religion plays down our senses, here, I think, religion embraces the senses in a transcendental light.

Joachim Pissarro

Yes, you're right. The senses are definitely geared against religion, metaphysics, and the idea that there is some supreme being or supreme truth. But Kant doesn't deny belief in a higher truth, he simply explains we are made of flesh and bones, and if you take our flesh and bones away from us—our *schein*, our appearances, our sensation—we're nothing! So, therefore, we should give up fighting the senses and realize we cannot do anything without them. We can construct systems very theoretical, scientific, metaphysical systems—but only by returning to our good old senses. So *schein* is not only irreplaceable, but, also, the cornerstone of Kantian philosophy. From Kant on, philosophers (especially Schiller and Nietzsche) begin to accept that appearances are not bad or weak, because we are not God; we are not divine. Of course, there is the argument that we are divine creatures, but we are inarguably finite. We cannot escape the fact that we are born on this earth to die . . . It's a fact. You and I will die. We are defined and limited by time and space. What's fascinating with your work is where the dialectic of shine/*schein* and spirituality collide: the *schein*, or appearance, is brought together with the notion of transcendence. So, in a way, you create a paradox. You use that word frequently, "transcendence." That's what it means to take us on an elevator from floor one to floor 110. There's a sense of elevation, or even elation, because there's some- thing very joyful about it. You start with the appearance and elevate us from there, with you.

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I think that trajectory you invite us to take is really fascinating. That's how I would summarize what you do. Would you agree?

Jeff Koons

Yes, I think you have it. [laughs] I mean, do we need the interview? If I think back to my first involvement with art and making different objects and images, completing a work, or bringing it to final state, was about coordinating information to reach some state of refinement. But then I started to realize that to simply create something refined wasn't very pleasing to me. When I began working with my inflatable pieces and readymades I would purchase square, store-bought mirrors and place them on the floor side by side in different configurations, maybe using four mirrors: two on the floor, and two propped against the wall. Then I placed some inflatable flowers in front of these mirrors and realized it was not only abstract, refined, and precise in its description, but, also, ethereal and boundless. There was a sense that time was diffracted between looking at the inflatable and then its reflection in the mirror. There was a difference in time and the sensory response to the two things.

Joachim Pissarro

I find this is so interesting. Could you put this in simpler terms? How did you understand this time differential or diffraction between the reality of the inflatable flowers versus their own reflections?

Jeff Koons

In real time, the reflection seemed to move a little slower than the object and somehow heightened one's awareness to time itself, so it became sort of a hyper situation. I know after creating one of the first pieces like this—my Inflatable Flower and Bunny—I had to go out and drink a couple of beers to come down from the heightened experience. It felt so supercharged, and I felt my work had moved onto another level. The intensity of the colors and experience were so fresh. And, you know, until this day, I'm still dealing with time. I moved from these inflatables into The New, where I was displaying objects for their newness. Those works dealt with time as a confrontation between our biology and the gestalt of an object that is better prepared to survive, as far as its durability. In the Equilibrium series, the tanks are kind of a metaphysical representation of prebirth and also this moment of death. Time plays a role all the way up to the present in my Gazing Ball paintings. The gazing balls are situated in the present moment but the images let you travel back in time. You're able to pick up on the interests of the artists who created those images and what they were referencing that might also come from a different time period, while thinking about the future as well.

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TIMELINE



1955 JANUARY 21

Jeffrey Lynn Koons is born to Gloria and Henry Koons in York, Pennsylvania. He is their second child after a daughter, Karen, who is three years his senior. Koons's upbringing and childhood have a profound effect on his artistic practice.



1960

Koons's parents enroll him in drawing class at the age of five. Looking back on his kindergarten portrait from this age, Koons recalls, "I felt great about being alive. And I'm right there with my crayons as an artist. And I felt like an artist too, for the first time in my life." In 1980, he transforms this image into an artwork, *The New Jeff Koons*.



1963

Jeff spends time in his father's furniture store, "Henry J. Koons Interiors", helping him uncrate and deliver furniture while being able to learn aesthetics from him. The constantly changing environment has a significant impact on his aesthetics.

1972

After graduating from high school, Koons enrolls at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

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1974

Koons contacts Salvador Dalí, who agrees to meet with him in the lobby of the St. Regis Hotel in New York. Dalí then invites Koons to his exhibition, where he poses for Koons's photographs.

1975

Koons attends the School of Art Institute of Chicago, studying with Chicago Imagists, Jim Nutt and Ed Paschke. He becomes Paschke's studio assistant.

1977

Attracted to the city's underground music scene and avant-garde, Koons moves to New York. He works at the Membership Desk in the Museum of Modern Art, where he becomes well known for eccentric outfits that help him bring in sales. While at MoMA, Koons becomes inspired by the Duchampian readymade and begins the Inflatables series, where vinyl blow-up flowers and a rabbit are arranged on small mirrored bases.



1980

Koons is given his first solo exhibition when the New Museum displays the earliest sculptures from his series, The New, in their entrance window. This includes three vacuum cleaners lit by florescent bulbs and a neon sign with the series title.

1985

Koons's Equilibrium series is presented at International With Monument Gallery in New York's Lower East Side. The title alludes to the impossibility of maintaining balance in biological and social scenarios. By consulting with Nobel laureate physicist Richard P. Feynman, Koons is able to temporarily create this equilibrium and hover basketballs at the center of water-filled tanks.

1986

Koons becomes a leading figure in the East Village art scene. He presents the series Luxury and Degradation at International With Monument Gallery. The series illustrates how alcohol advertisements use different levels of luxury and abstraction to lure in different socioeconomic groups. Months later, Koons begins Statuary—a series of ten stainless steel sculptures that form “a panoramic view of society.” His iconic Rabbit sculpture from this series debuts at Sonnabend Gallery.

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1987

Koons continues to work in stainless steel and produces his first public sculpture, Kiepenkerl, for Skulptur Projekte—a project held in Münster, Germany, every ten years. The original, carved by August Schmiemann in 1896, had been destroyed in World War II and replaced in 1953 by a bronze copy.



1988

For his Banality series, Koons creates large-scale sculptures inspired by figurines, postcards, advertisements, toys, comics, and celebrities. To attain the highest degree of craftsmanship, Koons collaborates with Italian and German workshops specialized in the traditional production of wood and porcelain sculpture. The series premieres simultaneously at Galerie Max Hetzler in Cologne, Sonnabend Gallery in New York, and Donald Young in Chicago.



Koons produces Michael Jackson and Bubbles, a large porcelain sculpture inspired by a publicity photo showing the pop singer with his chimp. However, the sculpture also references Egyptian Pharaohs and the composition of Michelangelo's Pietà.

1990

Three oil paintings (transformed from photographs through an industrial ink jet process) and a polychromed wood sculpture from the Made in Heaven series are shown in the Venice Biennale's Aperto '90 section—marking Koons's artistic debut in Italy.



1992

Puppy, a floral sculpture of a West Highland terrier, is installed at Arolsen castle in Hesse, Germany, to coincide with documenta 9 in nearby Kassel. Over 12 meters tall, the sculpture has an internal irrigation system to water the more than 60,000 flowers it comprises, that are replaced every season.

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1994

Koons creates Celebration – a series of monumental paintings and sculptures celebrating cyclical occasions in life such as birthdays and holidays.

1997

Koons debuts two works from the Celebration series at the 47th Venice Biennale.

1999

While Celebration remains in production, Easyfun opens at Sonnabend Gallery. Within this light-hearted series, Koons produces whimsical animal-shaped mirrors in an array of vibrant colors.



2000

Koons's second monumental flower sculpture, Split-Rocker, is shown at the Palais des Papes in Avignon. The Easyfun-Ethereal series is conceived and shown at the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin.

2001

Koons moves his New York studio to Chelsea. French President Jacques Chirac awards Koons the title of "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur."

2002

Koons embarks on Popeye—a series of paintings and sculptures centered on the popular cartoon sailor who first appeared in a comic strip in 1929.

2003

The Popeye series debuts at the Sonnabend Gallery. Koons's first major exhibition in Italy comprises thirty-two works, dating from 1981 to 2001, are displayed at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.



2004

Production begins on Hulk Elvis, a series similarly influenced by comic books, art history, and the readymade. The paintings feature the Ben-Day dots and masking procedures popularized by Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol.

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2006

A selection of works, including Balloon Dog (Magenta) are displayed on the Grand Canal as a part of, Where Are We Going: Selections from the François Pinault Collection. This exhibition marks the reopening of Palazzo Grassi in Venice, following its renovation.

2007

French President Jacques Chirac promotes Koons from Chevalier to Officer de la Legion d'honneur. The Koons Family Institute on International Law & Policy launches as the official research arm of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children—its efforts are dedicated to preventing and combating child abuse and abduction.



2008

In the Antiquity series, Koons layers references to lesser-known artworks and masterpieces alike to illustrate the enduring art historical connectivity between the themes of sex, love, fertility, and beauty. His Balloon Venus sculptures allude to much earlier fertility icons, such as the Venus of Willendorf.

2010

Koons creates the 17th BMW Art Car, a M3 GT2 model, which participates in the prestigious 24-hour Le Mans race. He becomes an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. In conjunction with RxArt, the artist covers the Philips CT Scanner and the CAT Room walls at Advocate Hope Children's Hospital at Oak Lawn, Illinois, with colorful and uplifting images of his iconic artworks.



2012

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton awards Koons the U.S. State Department's Medal of Arts. For Jeff Koons: The Painter & The Sculptor, forty-four sculptures by the artist are placed in dialogue with the Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung's collection that spans five millennia while 45 paintings are concurrently presented at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt.

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2013

The exhibition Jeff Koons: Gazing Ball at David Zwirner, New York, marks the debut of the Gazing Ball sculptures. Through the use of highly reflective gazing balls, the artist invites the audience to participate in this conversation.

2014

Koons is given his most comprehensive retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, which subsequently travels to the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

After twenty years of production, the monumental Celebration sculpture, Play-Doh, is presented. Inspired by a mound of Play-Doh made by one of Koons's children, the hyperrealistic sculpture consists of twenty-four interlocking pieces of aluminum that weighs over 5 tons (4.5 metric tons).

2015

The Gazing Ball paintings are shown at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. Koons recreates masterpieces by artists such as from Giotto to Picasso, who make up his "artistic DNA." In each work, a hand-blown glass gazing ball placed in front of the painting on a shelf, reflects both the painting and its surroundings.

Koons displays works at Palazzo Vecchio and Piazza della Signoria during Florence's International Biennial Antiques Fair. He is presented with the keys to the city of Florence by Mayor Dario Nardella.

2016

Koons begins the Porcelain series, which contrasts classical notions of beauty with advanced technology, materials, and fabrication techniques.



2019

Rabbit sells for a staggering \$US91,075,000 (€76.8m) at Christie's New York—setting the record for the highest price achieved at auction by a living artist to date.

A tribute to the victims of the 2015–2016 terror attacks in France, Bouquet of Tulips is installed in the Champs-Élysées gardens, near the Petit Palais in Paris.

Koons is made an Honorary Professor of Sculpture at the Fine Arts Academy of Carrara, Italy, as they commemorate their 250th anniversary.

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2020

On 26 March, during lockdown, Jeff Koons addresses a message of support through Palazzo Strozzi's In Contact project: "Palazzo Strozzi thank you. Italy you can do this!"

2021

In May, the sale of Quad Elvis set a personal auction record for a Koons painting (\$US9,456,000).

Works from the Pinault Collection are shown at Mucem, Marseille.

Jeff Koons: Shine opens to the public on October 2.

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AN EXHIBITION, A PLATFORM OF EXPERIENCES

Palazzo Strozzi devotes special attention to its visitors and offers a broad selection of activities designed to turn their encounter with art into an even more fascinating experience for all age groups.

Reservations are required in order to take part in the activities. Discover our full programme, our events calendar and how to book on: www.palazzostrozzi.org/en/educational

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

Tours and workshops designed to allow children and adults to discover the exhibition together in a creative and fun way.

A splendid sheen (families with children aged 7 to 12): Sunday mornings at 10.30, from 10 October.
Mirror mirror (families with children aged 3 to 6): Wednesday afternoons at 17.00, from 13 October.
Family Kit for visiting the exhibition under your own steam and playing with art, for children aged 6 to 12. Available from the ticket office. The Kit has been produced with the generous support of Beyfin S.p.A.

ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

Interactive tours for classes conducted by a museum educator to discover the life and work of Jeff Koons. Available for all school levels; the tour content is tailored to cater to different age groups.

The forms of art: encounters designed for kindergarten and primary school teachers to experiment with materials and techniques inspired by Jeff Koons's work. Exploration, hands-on manipulation and creative experiences that you can then take back to the classroom.

Kindergarten: 27 October and 4 November at 15.00

Primary school: 3 and 5 November at 15.00

ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS

Half an Hour of Art

Every week we host an encounter on Jeff Koons allowing 30 minutes to familiarise oneself with the art of this great contemporary artist. Every Tuesday at 18.00, starting 19 October. Reservations are not necessary.

In conjunction with the Dipartimento Comunicazione e Didattica per i Musei dell'Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze and with the support of Unicoop Firenze.

Exhibition tours

Guided tours exploring a selection of works by Jeff Koons, for groups of no more than 15 visitors.

ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAMMES

A programme of activities designed to make Palazzo Strozzi's exhibitions inclusive and accessible. Schemes for people with Alzheimer's (*With Many Voices*), autism (*Nuances*), intellectual disabilities and mental disorders (*Connections*) and a dance programme devised for the inclusion of people with Parkinson's (*Free Flowing*).

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LIST OF THE WORKS

1.

Jeff Koons, *Sponge Shelf*, 1978.

Sponges, mirrors, and acrylic; 21 3/8 x 12 x 12 inches, 54.3 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm.

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Early Works – Room 4

2.

Jeff Koons, *Inflatable Flowers (Four Tall Purple with Plastic Figures)*, 1978.

Vinyl, mirrors, and plastic; 16 x 57 1/4 x 19 inches, 40.6 x 145.4 x 48.3 cm.

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Inflatables series – Room 4

3.

Jeff Koons, *Five Double-Sided Floor Mirrors with Inflatable Flowers (Short Blue, Short Orange, Short Pink, Short Purple, Short Yellow)*, 1978.

Vinyl, mirrors, and acrylic; 15 3/16 x 23 x 23 inches, 38.6 x 58.4 x 58.4 cm.

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Inflatables series – Room 4

4.

Jeff Koons, *Nelson Automatic Cooker / Deep Fryer*, 1979.

Cooker/deep fryer, acrylic, and fluorescent lights; 27 x 17 x 16 inches, 68.6 x 43.2 x 40.6 cm.

Private collection. © Jeff Koons

Pre-New series - Room 4

5.

Jeff Koons, *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Spalding Dr. JK 241 Series)*, 1985.

Glass, steel, sodium chloride reagent, distilled water, and one basketball; 64 3/4 x 30 3/4 x 13 1/4 inches, 164.5 x 78.1 x 33.7 cm.

Edition 1 from an edition of 2. Private collection. © Jeff Koons

Equilibrium series – Room 4

6.

Jeff Koons, *Jim Beam - J.B. Turner Train*, 1986.

Stainless steel, bourbon; 11 x 114 x 6 1/2 inches, 27.9 x 289.6 x 16.5 cm.

Edition 1 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Private collection. © Jeff Koons

Luxury and Degradation series – Room 2

7.

Jeff Koons, *Baccarat Crystal Set*, 1986.

Stainless steel; 12 1/2 x 16 x 16 inches, 31.8 x 40.6 x 40.6 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of B.Z. + Michael Schwartz. © Jeff Koons

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Luxury and Degradation series – Room 2

8.

Jeff Koons, *Louis XIV*, 1986.

Stainless steel; 46 x 27 x 15 inches, 116.8 x 68.6 x 38.1 cm.

Edition 1 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Private collection. © Jeff Koons

Statuary series – Room 2

9.

Jeff Koons, *Italian Woman*, 1986.

Stainless steel; 30 x 18 x 11 inches, 76.2 x 45.7 x 27.9 cm.

Edition 3 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of Barbara Bertozzi Castelli. © Jeff Koons,

Statuary series – Room 2

10.

Jeff Koons, *Cape Codder Troll*, 1986.

Stainless steel; 21 x 8 1/2 x 9 inches, 53.3 x 21.6 x 22.9 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. The Sonnabend Collection and Antonio Homem. ©

Jeff Koons

Statuary series – Room 2

11.

Jeff Koons, *Mermaid Troll*, 1986.

Stainless steel; 20 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, 52.1 x 21.6 x 21.6 cm.

Edition 3 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP.

The Sonnabend Collection and Antonio Homem. © Jeff Koons

Statuary series – Room 2

12.

Jeff Koons, *Rabbit*, 1986.

Stainless steel; 41 x 19 x 12 inches, 104.1 x 48.3 x 30.5 cm.

Edition 1 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art Museum of

Contemporary Art Chicago, partial gift of Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson, 2000.21. © Jeff Koons

Statuary series – Room 2

13.

Jeff Koons, *Balloon Dog (Red)*, 1994-2000.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 121 x 143 x 45 inches, 307.3 x 363.2 x 114.3 cm.

One of five unique versions. Private collection.

Celebration series – Room 3

14.

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Jeff Koons, *Sacred Heart (Magenta/Gold)*, 1994-2007.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 140 1/2 x 86 x 47 5/8 inches, 356.9 x 218.4 x 121 cm.

One of five unique versions. Jereann and Holland Chaney. © Jeff Koons

Celebration series – Room 1

15.

Jeff Koons, *Bread with Egg*, 1995-1997.

Oil on canvas; 128 x 108 inches, 325.1 x 274.3 cm.

Noirmontartproduction, Paris. © Jeff Koons

Celebration series – Room 3

16.

Jeff Koons, *Tulips*, 1995-1998.

Oil on canvas; 111 3/8 x 131 inches, 282.9 x 332.7 cm.

Private collection. © Jeff Koons

Celebration series – Room 3

17.

Jeff Koons, *Elephant*, 2003.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent colored coating, 36 1/2 x 29 x 19 inches, 92.7 x 73.7 x 48.3 cm.

Edition 2 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Courtesy of PinchukArtCentre, Kyiv, Ukraine. © Jeff Koons
Room 3

18.

Jeff Koons, *Donkey*, 1999.

Mirror-polished stainless steel, 78 x 60 x 1 1/4 inches, 198.1 x 152.4 x 3.2 cm.

Edition 2 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels. © Jeff Koons

Easyfun series – Room 3

19.

Jeff Koons, *Dolphin*, 2002.

Polychromed aluminum, stainless steel, and coated steel chain; 63 x 72 1/2 x 38 inches, 160 x 184.2 x 96.5 cm, plus chain at variable length.

Edition 3 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. The Sonnabend Collection Foundation. © Jeff Koons
Popeye series – Room 5

20.

Jeff Koons, *Olive Oyl*, 2003.

Oil on canvas, 108 x 84 inches, 274,3x 213,4 cm.

Private collection. © Jeff Koons

Popeye series – Room 8

JEFF KOONS SHINE

FIRENZE
PALAZZO
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21.

Jeff Koons, *Balloon Monkey (Blue)*, 2006-2013.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 150 126 x 235 inches, 381 x 596.9 x 320 cm.

One of five unique versions. Courtesy Private collection. © Jeff Koons
Courtyard

22.

Jeff Koons, *Lobster*, 2007-2012.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 57 7/8 x 37 x 18 7/8 inches, 147 x 94 x 47.9 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist.
Room 5

23.

Jeff Koons, *Hulk (Tubas)*, 2004-2018.

Polychromed bronze and brass; 97 1/4 x 82 11/16 x 48 1/8 inches, 247 x 210 x 122.2 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP.

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons
Hulk Elvis series – Room 5

24.

Jeff Koons, *Metallic Venus*, 2010-2012.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating and live flowering plants; 100 x 52 x 40 inches, 254 x 132.1 x 101.6 cm.

FABA - Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte. © Jeff Koons
Antiquity series – Room 7

25.

Jeff Koons, *Seated Ballerina*, 2010-2015.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 83 x 44 11/16 x 78 5/8 inches, 210.8 x 113.5 x 199.7 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons
Antiquity series – Room 1

26.

Jeff Koons, *Bluebird Planter*, 2010-2016.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating and live flowering plants; 82 1/2 x 110 3/4 x 40 inches, 209.6 x 281.3 x 101.6 cm.

Edition 2 from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP.
Courtesy Private Collection. © Jeff Koons
Antiquity series – Room 7

JEFF KOONS

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27.

Jeff Koons, *Balloon Venus Dolni Vestonice (Violet)*, 2013-2017.

Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 109 1/8 x 43 13/16 x 28 1/4, 277.2 x 111.3 x 71.7 cm.

Mugrabi Collection. © Jeff Koons

Antiquity series – Room 8

28.

Jeff Koons, *Balloon Venus Lespugue (Red)*, 2013-2019. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating; 105 1/16 x 48 13/16 x 41 3/16, 266.9 x 124.1 x 104.7 cm.

One of five unique versions. Private collection, Courtesy of David Zwirner. © Jeff Koons

Antiquity series – Room 8

29.

Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Apollo Lykeios)*, 2013.

Plaster and glass; 94 1/4 x 37 1/8 x 34 1/2 inches, 239.4 x 94.3 x 87.6 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons, Photo: Tom Powel Imaging

Gazing Ball series – Room 6

30.

Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Diana)*, 2013.

Plaster and glass; 68 7/8 x 31 3/4 x 40 3/8 inches, 174.9 x 80.6 x 102.6 cm.

Artist's proof from an edition of 3 plus 1 AP. Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Gazing Ball series – Room 6

31.

Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Titian Diana and Actaeon)*, 2014-2015.

Oil on canvas, glass, and aluminum; 68 1/8 x 74 x 14 3/4 inches, 173 x 188 x 37.5 cm.

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Gazing Ball series – Room 6

32.

Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Rubens Tiger Hunt)*, 2015.

Oil on canvas, glass, and aluminum; 64 1/2 x 83 1/8 x 14 3/4 inches, 163.8 x 211.1 x 37.5 cm.

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Gazing Ball series – Room 6

33.

Jeff Koons, *Gazing Ball (Tintoretto The Origin of the Milky Way)*, 2016.

Oil on canvas, glass, and aluminum; 63 x 70 1/2 x 14 3/4 inches, 160 x 179.1 x 37.5 cm

Collection of the artist. © Jeff Koons

Gazing Ball series – Room 6

JEFF KOONS BETWEEN FLORENCE AND MILAN. AT THE INTESA SANPAOLO GALLERIE D'ITALIA, A MAJOR WORK BY THE FAMOUS AMERICAN ARTIST

On the occasion of the exhibition *Jeff Koons. Shine* at Palazzo Strozzi, Florence

Gallerie d'Italia – Piazza Scala, Intesa Sanpaolo museum in Milan, hosts **GAZING BALL. CENTAUR AND LAPITH MAIDEN (2013)**, until 7th November 2021, an impressive work by the American artist **Jeff Koons**, creating an ideal link between Milan and Florence, on the occasion of the major exhibition *Jeff Koons. Shine* at Palazzo Strozzi from 2nd October 2021, with Intesa Sanpaolo as its Main Partner.

The work on display in Milan belongs to the famous series *Gazing Ball*, in which the artist places shiny blue mirrored glass balls on faithful replicas of famous works, including paintings and sculptures by various artists: from Leonardo da Vinci to Édouard Manet, from Giotto to Vincent van Gogh, from Prassitele to Christophe-Gabriel Allegrain.

Gazing Ball (Centaur and Lapith Maiden) belongs to the series dedicated to classical statuary, in which Koons replicates famous sculptural groups, positioned on monumental pedestals and crafted from a white plaster specially developed by the studio of Koons, on which blue blown glass spheres are placed. Typical garden decorations of the American province, commissioned by Koons and executed by specialised professionals.

The mirrored ball is placed on a plaster cast of a grandiose marble sculpture (over two and a half metres tall and almost two metres twenty wide), part of the western pediment of the *Temple of Zeus* in Olympia, Greece, depicting the fight between a centaur and a Lapith woman. Koons created the cast using one from the nineteenth century, already part of a collection from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The portrayed episode is drawn from the Greek myth of the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths, one of the most popular subjects in the history of classical and renaissance art, a symbol of the fight between order and chaos, civilisation and barbarity.

Combining references to history of art, the concept of ready-made and the obsession for matter and appearance, Koons creates a work that becomes a hybrid, suspended in different temporal dimensions and above all, a reflection on the relationship between the public and the work of art. The mirrored ball is the protagonist here: it attracts the gaze, captivating and bewitching the spectator, drawing them into the work, together with the surrounding environment.

Michele Coppola, Executive Director for Art, Culture and Historical Heritage, declared: *“The exhibition of the work by Jeff Koons at Gallerie d'Italia in Milan, in partnership with Palazzo Strozzi, anticipates and accompanies the exhibition which the Florentine museum will host from early October, on the American artist, with Intesa Sanpaolo as the Main Partner. By participating with its museums in the relaunch of cultural life and consolidating relations with the country's major cultural institutions, the Bank confirms its attention to the world of contemporary art, vibrant and forever on the move by definition.”*

Arturo Galansino, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Director General, stated how *“the renewed partnership between Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and Intesa Sanpaolo, on this special occasion for Gallerie d'Italia, is grounded in a strategic alliance for culture as a driver for restarting our Country.”* *“We are proud to work together with Gallerie d'Italia in celebrating an international artist the likes of Jeff Koons, who for over forty years has been challenging perceptions and reflections on the concept and role of contemporary art in the world”.*

The exhibition *Jeff Koons. Shine* will be held at Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, from 2nd October 2021 to 30th January 2022; it is promoted and organised by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. Supporters: Municipality of Florence, Tuscany Region, Florence Chamber of Commerce, Fondazione CR Firenze, Comitato dei Partner of Palazzo Strozzi. Main Partner: Intesa Sanpaolo.

Present the entry ticket from one of the three Gallerie d'Italia sites at the ticket office of Palazzo Strozzi, or vice versa, to receive a discount.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Gallerie d'Italia – Piazza Scala
Piazza della Scala 6, Milan

Opening times

Tuesday - Sunday 9.30-19.30 (last entry at 18.00). Closed on Monday.

Opening times may vary according to the ongoing health emergency; check the website for any updates.

Entry

From 14th September to 3rd October 2021: full €10, reduced €8, special reduced €5 for Intesa San Paolo customers and under 26 year-olds, free for members, schools, under 18 year-olds.

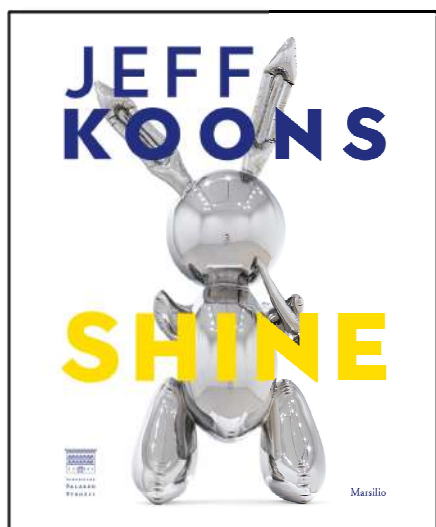
From 5th October to 7th November 2021: full €5, reduced €3.

Free for members, schools, under 18 year-olds, Intesa Sanpaolo Group customers.

Information

For full details on ensuring a safe visit, information and bookings, go to www.gallerieditalia.com, info@gallerieditalia.com,

Toll-free number 800.167619



Jeff Koons. Shine

edited by **Arturo Galansino**
and **Joachim Pissarro**

pp.196 with 150 col. Ills.

euro 40,00, 24 x 29 cm

Available from October 28, 2021

Developed in close dialogue with the artist, the exhibition (Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, October 2, 2021 – January 30, 2022) and this publication represent the largest project, ever dedicated in Italy to

Jeff Koons, one of the most important figures of the global contemporary art scene.

Responsible for works that have married high and popular culture, Koons regards "shine" as a key feature of his art work, from the postmodern reinvention of *the ready-made* to works in perfectly polished metal that look like inflatable toys. Indeed, "shine" is far more than an ornament: it is the very substance of these works, as this reflective property brings together form and meaning, appearance and essence. Thanks to more than thirty reflective and brilliant works, from a broad selection of the artist's paintings and sculptures, this volume explores the concept of "shine" from the splendorous to the gleaming, from preciousness to banality, and from being to seeming: an ambiguous game that characterizes Koons's work using materials and subject matter that call into question our relationship with daily reality and with the very concept of a work of art.

«When I deal with reflection and light, - explains Jeff Koons - it's also as the celebration of life energy. The opposite of light is darkness, and these works need light. Without light, they're not seen. Their presence exists, but they can't be a benefit to anyone. They can't be of service. (...) But I find shine is also about philosophically viewing the world as Apollo, or maybe even Silenus or Dionysus would. An optimistic dialogue about becoming is taking place within the work».

Arturo Galansino has been director general of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in Florence since 2015. An art historian and curator, he has studied in Turin, Milan and Paris, working for the Louvre in Paris and the National Gallery and Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Joachim Pissarro is an art historian, theoretician, curator, educator, and director of the Hunter College Galleries of the City University of New York. Since 2002, Pissarro has served as the Editorial Director of Wildenstein Publications. Pissarro was curator at the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Painting and Sculpture from 2003 to 2007.