

## Jeff Koons: *Balloon Venus*

January 14 – 30  
 340 Royal Poinciana Way, Suite M333  
 Palm Beach



Jeff Koons, *Balloon Venus Hohlen Fels (Magenta)*, 2013-2019 © Jeff Koons

Palm Beach – Pace is pleased to present Jeff Koons’s sculpture *Balloon Venus Hohlen Fels (Magenta)* (2013-2019) at its Palm Beach gallery. On view from January 14 to 30, this sculpture is one of the largest works from the artist’s renowned Antiquity series, and marks the first time the work is being exhibited publicly.

Koons, who is among the world’s most influential living artists, is internationally renowned for sculptures and paintings that unite conceptualism and the readymade. Over the course of more than four decades, Koons has redefined Minimalism and Pop art with his boundary-pushing practice. Often working at ambitious scales, the artist has created iconic artworks deeply engaged with popular culture, mass media, art, and human history.

For his first presentation with Pace since joining the gallery in 2021, Koons will show *Balloon Venus Hohlen Fels (Magenta)*, a mirror-polished stainless-steel sculpture that references the ancient mammoth ivory *Venus of Hohlen Fels* statuette, dated between 40,000 and 35,000 years ago, uncovered in a cave near Schelklingen, Germany in 2008. *Balloon Venus Hohlen Fels* is part of Koons’s Antiquity series, a body of work that includes four sculptures inspired by Paleolithic sculptures of Venuses.

In Koons’s *Balloon Venus* sculptures, the artist utilizes his quintessential balloon formations to represent female bodies and cultivate a dialogue between contemporary aesthetics and early examples of human ingenuity. As with other bodies of work by Koons, the Antiquity series forges connections across geographical and temporal boundaries.

“You have a surface that very much is about the moment, and you view it, and it affirms you, and when you move, the abstraction changes. But at the same time it draws you back around 35,000 years ago,” the artist has said of *Balloon Venus Hohlen Fels*.

Koons's solo exhibitions at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence and the Qatar Museums in Doha will run concurrently with his presentation with Pace in Palm Beach. In June 2022, the artist will open a presentation at the DESTE Foundation Project Space in Hydra, Greece.

In 2023, Koons will present a solo exhibition of new work at Pace's New York gallery.

**Jeff Koons** (b. 1955, York, Pennsylvania) exhibited a passion for art at an early age. When he was nine, his father Henry, an interior designer, placed Old Master paintings that Koons had copied in the window of his furniture store to promote his son's artwork.

Koons went to Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and through a student mobility program studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago under Ed Paschke, whose technicolor renderings of superheroes and other pop icons were an early source of inspiration. Koons received a BFA from Maryland Institute of College of Art in 1976. After moving to New York City in the beginning of 1977, Koons's first job was at the Museum of Modern Art, where he worked several years until he began working as a Wall Street commodities broker to support his studio practice. His first major works invoked commodity fetishism: titled *The New*, they comprised vacuum cleaners displayed on or in Plexiglas boxes over grids of fluorescent light. Exhibited for the first time in the window of the New Museum in New York in 1980, they were glossy reliquaries of American consumer culture that cemented Koons's reputation as a rigorously conceptual artist.

In 1983, Koons began the *Equilibrium* series, suspending basketballs in aquarium tanks filled with water. Working with Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman, he devised a precise mixture of water and salt that would make the balls float in the middle of the tanks, as if suspended. Koons's interest in buoyancy was always within his inflatables, which would soon vault him to stratospheric fame: taking air-filled vinyl toys and casting them in polished stainless steel, he once again transformed a cheaply manufactured commodity into a precious object, capable of reflecting a viewer's desiring gaze. Over time, these sculptures grew in scale, from the modestly-sized *Rabbit* (1986) to the monumental *Balloon Dog* (1994–2000). In 2007, *Rabbit* floated more than 50 feet over New York's Fifth Avenue, reimagined as a gigantic helium-filled balloon in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

In the mid-1980s, Koons cast for the first time sculptures in stainless steel, including the *Jim Beam – J.B. Turner Train* that was a liquor decanter set filled with Jim Beam bourbon and *Kiepenkerl*, a life-sized statue of a 17th-century traveling merchant, which Koons created for the 1987 edition of *Skulptur Projekte Münster*. For the *Banality* series, Koons changed his materials. He collaborated with workshops in Germany and Italy to produce larger-than-life-sized sculptures in porcelain and wood inspired by banal and dislocated images that we are surrounded by in our lives. Several of these sculptures, polychromed in bright colors, represented American pop icons such as Buster Keaton and Michael Jackson, cradling his chimpanzee *Bubbles*. Rendered to scale, they are simultaneously exuberant and unsettling.

Koons's combining of rococo fantasy and pop kitsch reached its apotheosis in *Made in Heaven* (1989–91), a series of sculptures and paintings. The works were sensationally controversial for their graphic content and bold transgression of social norms. After *Made in Heaven*, Koons made his world-renowned *Puppy* sculpture made out of 60,000 live flowering plants, which was a continuation on the Baroque and Rococo tradition.

Inspired by the cycles of life within a calendar year, Koons embarked on the *Celebration* series in 1994, his most ambitious and technologically demanding work yet. While completing the complex *Celebration* sculptures, Koons turned his attention to oil painting, a medium in which he has continued to work ever since. In the *Easyfun* and *Easyfun-Ethereal* series, culling images from magazines and product packaging, particularly those involving food and sex, Koons used computer software to create densely layered digital collages that he then transferred to canvas by hand in compositions. His engagement with pop culture extended to comic book characters, inflatable pool toys, and everyday life in the series *Popeye* (2002–13) and *Hulk Elvis* (2004–21).

Most recently, Koons has returned to the art of classical antiquity and the Renaissance. His *Venus* sculptures from the *Antiquity* series (2008–) in mirror-polished stainless steel, invoke the goddess of love and beauty—themes that

recur throughout his work—while using mass-produced figurines as models. Koons’s Gazing Ball series (2012–21) embeds mirrored orbs into reproductions of Old Master paintings, offering viewers a chance to experience a metaphysical state within time and space contained within these great works of art and our relationship to them and the artist.

**Pace** is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.

Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon.

The gallery has also spearheaded explorations into the intersection of art and technology through its new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists cultivating advanced studio practices. Pace’s presence in Silicon Valley since 2016 has bolstered its longstanding support of experimental practices and digital artmaking. As part of its commitment to innovative, technologically engaged artists within and beyond its program, Pace launched its own dedicated NFT platform in November 2021. The gallery’s past NFT projects have spotlighted digital works by Lucas Samaras, Simon Denny, Urs Fischer, John Gerrard, and other artists.




Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide including London, Geneva, a strong foothold in Palo Alto, and two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. In 2020, Pace opened temporary exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach, with continued programming on a seasonal basis.

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