

Artsy Editorial: 'Jeff Koons' Gazing Balls Glimmer at Art Basel', June 16, 2014.

"When he is on, Koons has his finger to the pulse of the audience whose adulations he hungers after, as ravenous as the phallic nozzle of the vacuum cleaner he encased in Plexiglas," American poet and critic John Yau once wrote of the ever-polarizing Jeff Koons. Following the launch of his "Gazing Ball" series at David Zwirner last year, he presents two new works this year at Almine Rech's Art Basel booth: *Gazing Ball (Demeter)* (2014) and *Gazing Ball (Standing Woman)* (2014). Both indeed embody the seductive gloss and spectacle that Koons is variously celebrated and chastised for.

Plaster casts of Roman sculptures, their limbs and heads chipped off like the time-worn classical ruins they reference, Koons' figures come with shiny, blue hand-blown glass orbs—his "gazing balls"—perched, respectively, on their shoulder and knee. The series marks the first time Koons has addressed the human body, "since the works that featured him and Cicciolina, who was then his wife, in flagrante delicto," as Roberta Smith noted in the *New York Times*. The pristine white of the sculptural forms contrasts with these glinting globes, which readily conjure associations with kitsch ornaments decorating the manicured lawns of suburbia. Their reflective surfaces draw in the surrounding environment in a distorted-mirror effect that imbues the works with the mesmerizing force of the looking glass, invoking the future alongside sculptural figures that speak to bygone millennia.

Demeter is the goddess of fertility and, as Joachim Pissarro notes in his text on the two works, *Gazing Ball (Demeter)* and *Gazing Ball (Standing Woman)*, Koons' Demeter's manifest their own kind of fecundity, serving as nexuses of art historical references. The icon of 20th-century modernism, Pablo Picasso, owned a plaster copy of the Greco-Roman sculpture *Standing Woman* from the 1930s onwards, as well as a cast of Demeter, works that are considered to have played the muse for the Spanish artist throughout his prolific oeuvre. Koons thus summons the more recent past, as well as antiquity, refracting thousands of years of the human gaze through the hypnotizing glimmer of his azure globes.

Visit Almine Rech at Art Basel 2014, Galleries, Booth H12, June 19th–22nd, 2014.



Jeff Koons
Gazing Ball (Standing Woman), 2014
Almine Rech