ALMINE RECH

Jeff Koons
Paintings and Banality – Selected Works from the Collection

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Marking the 20th anniversary of the Espaces Louis Vuitton and the 10th anniversary of the Fondation Louis Vuitton's Hors-les-murs programme, Espace Louis Vuitton Osaka presents an exhibition devoted to the work of American artist Jeff Koons, tracing his practice from his early iconic series of the 1980s to his recent monumental paintings. This show is part of the Hors-les-murs programme, showcasing holdings of the Collection at the Espaces Louis Vuitton in Tokyo, Munich, Venice, Beijing, Seoul and Osaka, thereby embodying the Fondation Louis Vuitton's mission to mount international projects and reach a broader global audience.

Jeff Koons has held a singular position in contemporary art since the 1980s. His work transcends artistic triviality to explore the tension between popular and high cultures by combining household objects, advertising vocabulary, children's iconography and art-history references. *Paintings and Banality* explores how Koons, for more than four decades, has taken what society considers worthless and has given it value, thereby shedding light on the symbolic and emotional weight of everyday objects and images. Through works taken from some of his iconic series that form a significant part of his *oeuvre*, this exhibition reveals how the artist holds a mirror up to observers, reflecting what constitutes their identity — both individual and collective — while exploring universal concepts, such as beauty and pleasure.

The artist first gained renown in the mid-1980s when he presented glass or plexiglass display cases holding manufactured objects, mass-produced consumer goods or readymades, such as vacuums and carpet cleaners and, as exhibited here, basketballs of *Three Ball 50/50 Tank* (1985). These are all symbols of the American Dream which, in Koons's repertoire, are given the stature of genuine works of art. He abandoned readymades a few years later to produce his own common objects. In the 1988 *Banality* series, represented here by *Woman in Tub* and *Wild Boy and Puppy*, he fused cartoonesque references, pop imagery and his own memories, creating technically virtuosic sculptures that blur the lines between art, industry and mass culture.

In his pictorial work, Koons takes the collage concept a step further. From his early paintings such as *The Bracelet* (1995–1998) to the more recent *Hulk Elvis* series, which includes *Landscape (Tree) II* and *Monkey Train (Birds)* (2007) presented here, Koons assembles disparate visual elements onto monumental canvases. These dense compositions convey the degree to which contemporary society is saturated with images and symbols.

Rendered accessible through instantly recognisable references, Koons's work impels engagement on the part of the viewer. One of his characteristic techniques, the use of reflective surfaces, further draws observers in, as when, for example, they see their reflection in the mirror of *Little Girl* (1988), becoming an integral part of the work. Mirrors, shiny surfaces and masterful *trompe-l'oeil* give rise to an experience in which perception, memories and desires intertwine.

Through collage, exaggeration and technical refinement, Koons questions the value of the object, the function of the image and the power of art as a vehicle for emancipation and contemplation. For over forty years, his work has transformed the trivial into a space for reflection and pleasure, turning banality into a vector for intense aesthetic experience.