ALMINE RECH

Jeff Koons
'Venus' Lespugue

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Koons' Balloon *'Venus' Lespugue (Orange)* draws inspiration from the prehistoric Venus of Lespugue, a mammoth tusk ivory figurine that dates back approximately 28,000 years. Jeff Koons has been influenced by this figure since the late 1970s. In his series Antiquity, which he started in 2008, the artist's interpretation of the Venus of Lespugue engages a variety of art historical reference points, from Botticelli and Titian to Duchamp and Brancusi, where the notions of beauty and form play a central role. Through an intensive, yearslong process, Koons has transposed the fetishized original, renowned for its exaggerated curves, into a towering balloon sculpture of Giacometti-esque proportions.

Next to Koons' work, the museum will present a series of ten Venus replica figurines from the Upper Paleolithic era, each on loan from museums that house the immovable originals. Among these will be the copy of the Venus of Lespugue from the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle in Paris, which served as the direct source of inspiration for Koons' mirror-polished stainless-steel sculpture. The Venus figurines represent one of humanity's earliest aesthetic codes – a profound abstraction of fertility, survival, and continuity – made into something compact and portable. Koons' version revisits this prehistoric visual language through a radically different medium and context: the industrial, hyper-material world of the 21st century.

Ultimately, Koons' work examines how ancient forms of reverence are echoed in today's fascination with form, surface, desire, and artifice. Through the polished surface of Koons' Balloon 'Venus' Lespugue (Orange), viewers can explore how material transformation alters or preserves symbolic meaning, and how contemporary art might help us reconnect to ancient aspects of human experience.