ALMINE RECH

Jeff Koons
Works from the Pinault collection

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The exhibition "Jeff Koons Mucem. Works from the Pinault Collection" is a collaborative effort between the renowned American artist and the Mucem. It showcases some of Koons's most celebrated works while exploring the connection between his art and popular objects, photographs, and documents from the Mucem's extensive collection, which is highly regarded in this field.

Jeff Koons, born in 1955 in York, Pennsylvania, USA, is widely recognized as one of the most influential living artists. His artistic inspiration stems from everyday life and objects found in contemporary American culture. By reinterpreting the concept of the Duchampian readymade, Koons challenges the traditional notion of what constitutes a work of art. His diverse range of subjects, constant references to art history and advertising, and use of various mediums and techniques have made his work an integral part of our collective imagination. Koons's art offers a fresh interpretation of our relationship with everyday life and the objects that surround us. While reflecting on his own time, the artist also displays a curious gaze towards artistic and cultural objects from the past. This passion for everyday items, combined with the Mucem's vast collection, sets the stage for an engaging cultural dialogue.

Featuring an exceptional loan of 19 works from the Pinault Collection, the exhibition provides an opportunity to delve into Koons's oeuvre. It includes seminal sculptures like "Balloon Dog" (1994-2000) and "Lobster" (2007-2012), as well as notable paintings such as "Backyard" (2002) and "Dutch Couple" (2007). Spanning the artist's career over the last 35 years, the exhibition presents a chronological journey through recurring themes, visual associations, and modes of expression found in Koons's art. It encompasses his early works from The New series, iconic pieces from the Celebration series, and his most recent creations from the Gazing Ball and Antiquity series.

By lending these significant works, the Pinault Collection is delighted to contribute to an exhibition at a prominent national museum. Concurrently, the Pinault Collection will also open its museum, the Bourse de Commerce, in Paris to the public and present a major exhibition dedicated to Bruce Nauman at Punta della Dogana in Venice.

The distinctive aspect of this project lies in the juxtaposition of Koons's works with the Mucem's collections. Each artwork is deliberately associated with a set of objects from the museum, sparking various conversations, whether formal, symbolic, or poetic, between Koons's masterpieces and the Mucem's collections. This unique experience allows for an unprecedented reexamination of the Mucem's holdings. Koons revisits their history, plays with their aesthetics and interpretations, and at times imbues them with contemporaneity, reshaping their meaning. This journey takes visitors on a free and spontaneous exploration.

The objects chosen from the Mucem's collections are the result of extensive research and meticulous work in their archives. Jeff Koons delved into all available resources to select everyday items, traditional art masterpieces, documents, and photographs, paying tribute to the richness of the collections. The final selection encompasses over 300 pieces and was informed by discussions about the objects' meaning, use, and form. The intention is to invite visitors to embark on a contemplative walk through the exhibition, where the beauty of the objects themselves resonates with the artist's gaze.

The exhibition "Jeff Koons Mucem. Works from the Pinault Collection" not only showcases Koons's artwork but also emphasizes the connection between his work and the Mucem collections through a unique installation. The exhibition commences with the display of "New Hoover Convertible, New Shelton Wet/Dry 10 Gallon Doubledecker" (1981), representing the predominant approach of The New series. In this artwork, a vacuum cleaner is presented in an acrylic case, facing one of the Mucem's historically significant museographic devices called "unité écologique," which was utilized in the former museum of folk arts and popular traditions. This juxtaposition creates a dialogue between Koons's work and the Mucem's collections, establishing a link between contemporary art and historical artifacts.

The exhibition path then leads to the conclusion, featuring the monumental artwork "Bluebird Planter" (2010-2016) from the Antiquity series. This mirror-polished stainless steel piece, coated with transparent colors, appears as if it has been magnified from a small porcelain original. It engages with a wide selection of bird-shaped works, including bird calls, roof ornaments, and other decorative objects. This concluding artwork further reinforces the connections between Koons's creations and various objects found within the Mucem collections.

"Jeff Koons Mucem. Works from the Pinault Collection" follows in the footsteps of previous exhibitions at the museum, such as "Un génie sans piédestal, Picasso et les arts et traditions populaires" or "Jean Dubuffet, un barbare en Europe." It continues the museum's legacy of hosting exhibitions dedicated to legendary artists who contribute profound meaning to the societies they observe and reflect upon.