Inside Art

Jeff Koons Tries Hand as Guest Curator

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By [CAROL VOGEL](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/v/carol_vogel/index.html?inline=nyt-per)

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A white foam-core model of the New Museum’s gallery spaces arrived at Jeff Koons’s Chelsea studio on Wednesday morning. Its appearance there doesn’t mean that Mr. Koons is creating a painting or sculpture for the building, on the Bowery on the Lower East Side. The model is a visual aid — a kind of blank canvas — to help him start thinking beyond his own work.

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Enlarge This Image



Dakis Joannou Foundation

Jeff Koons’s “Donkey” (1996), in Dakis Joannou’s collection.

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For an artist who seems to have been everywhere and done everything for nearly three decades, Mr. Koons is taking a new direction. He is trying his hand as a curator, agreeing to organize an exhibition of the Greek industrialist Dakis Joannou’s contemporary-art collection when it comes to the New Museum in February.

Mr. Koons is no stranger to Mr. Joannou’s holdings: they just happen to include seminal examples of Koons pieces from every period, like the sculptures “Balloon Dog,” “Michael Jackson and Bubbles” and one of his first “Equilibrium Tanks” (a basketball suspended in a container filled with water).

But the Joannou collection, which contains thousands of artworks, also includes in-depth holdings of paintings, sculptures, drawings and installations by other celebrated artists like Maurizio Cattelan, Urs Fischer, [Robert Gober](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/robert_gober/index.html?inline=nyt-per), [Chris Ofili](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/o/chris_ofili/index.html?inline=nyt-per), Charles Ray and [Kiki Smith](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/kiki_smith/index.html?inline=nyt-per).

The show will take up the entire museum, something that is becoming a trend at the New Museum. Its show “The Generational: Younger Than Jesus,” which ended in July, occupied the whole building, as will a show opening in October dedicated to work by Mr. Fischer. Like Mr. Koons, Mr. Fischer, who used a jackhammer to pummel a Chelsea gallery floor to smithereens awhile back, will double as curator and creator, installing giant sculptures made of unusual materials like bread or giant teddy bears.

Lisa Phillips, director of the New Museum, said she had been talking to Mr. Joannou, a trustee there, about the possibility of an exhibition of his holdings since 2000. “He especially wanted artists to be involved,” she added.

Mr. Joannou has been showing his collection since the 1980s at the Deste Foundation, his public space in Athens. “It’s been seen in Paris and Vienna,” he said. “This will be the first time it has been shown in the United States.”

The New Museum project will inaugurate an exhibition series called “The Imaginary Museum,” which will showcase the best private collections of contemporary art from around the world that are rarely seen by the public.

That Mr. Koons should be an integral part of this exhibition is not surprising. He and Mr. Joannou have been close friends since 1985, when Mr. Joannou first saw “Equilibrium,” a show of Mr. Koons’s work at the International With Monument gallery on the Lower East Side. Since then Mr. Joannou has been a passionate Koons collector. He even asked Mr. Koons to decorate the exterior of Guilty, his 114-foot yacht.

“In the summer my family and I spent 10 days with Dakis in Corfu,” Mr. Koons said. “And in the afternoons we would go through the collection. He has books with printouts of everything, so I’m pretty familiar with it.”

“I plan to work on the project for a few hours every day,” Mr. Koons added. “I’m curious to see what it will look like at the New Museum.”

Just how many examples of his own work — and how prominently they will be displayed — is likely to be a challenge. “I’m sure there are going to be artworks that I will become engaged with and learn from,” Mr. Koons said of his colleagues’ creations. “I can assure you, the show will not revolve around my work.”

**Filling a New Wing**

After abandoning their controversial idea of building their own museum in the historic Presidio park in San Francisco, Don Fisher, the art collector and Gap store founder, and his wife, Doris, have settled on a new location. They will lend their collection to the [San Francisco Museum of Modern Art](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/san_francisco_museum_of_modern_art/index.html?inline=nyt-org), where it will be in a new wing that will also incorporate art from the museum’s holdings.

The expansion is part of a plan announced in April to triple the institution’s gallery space.

The Fishers’ art — 1,100 works by major contemporary figures like Calder, de Kooning, Diebenkorn, Warhol and Lichtenstein, as well as by living artists like Cy Twombly, [Ellsworth Kelly](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/ellsworth_kelly/index.html?inline=nyt-per) and Brice Marden — dovetails with the museum’s collection.

Under the agreement, the Fishers, who have long been trustees at the museum, will create a trust to oversee the care of the collection; the trust will be renewable after 25 years. The couple are also planning to make a significant contribution toward building the galleries, as well as a separate donation to the museum’s endowment.

[**Art Basel**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/a/art_basel_festival/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) **Gets Creative**

Between the sagging economy and the proliferation of competitors, the organizers of art fairs have to shake things up continually to make sure that collectors keep coming back. So when [Art Basel Miami Beach](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/a/art_basel_miami_beach/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) opens on Dec. 3, visitors will find the main exhibition floor reorganized. There will also be additional programs and an array of new dealers, many replacing those who decided not to return.

With 15 percent of the dealers dropping out of the fair, Art Basel Miami Beach had little choice but to get creative. “We’re finding that a lot of galleries are doing fewer fairs, and those that are participating want better spaces,” said Marc Spiegler, the fair’s co-director, who said the redesigned space would give exhibitors larger booths.

Along the waterfront, where a row of shipping containers once featured the work of emerging artists, there will now be a large-scale architectural space designed by the multimedia artist Pae White. Creative Time, the nonprofit arts organization known primarily for presenting public art around New York, is overseeing Ms. White’s project. And the emerging artists who occupied the shipping containers there will now move inside, to the middle of the main exhibition hall.

Creative Time’s involvement at Art Basel Miami Beach is a first. “Two years ago we started working nationally when we did a project with Paul Chan in New Orleans,” Anne Pasternak, Creative Time’s president and artistic director, said. So when Art Basel approached her about collaborating on a project along the beachfront, she jumped at the chance.

“Initially we went to 12 artists,” Ms. Pasternak said. “Pae seemed as though she had a great design sense.”

Ms. White is creating a three-dimensional environment the organizers are calling a “social space.” It will include piazzas and a performance platform, along with a series of scrims that change in appearance from day to night. Within the space the fair will present discussions, concerts and performances.