

BOOKS

Koons: complete, with the kitsch in synch

A cool £600 will buy you the entire output to date (reproduced) of the prince of post-pop shock

Jeff Koons's work does not come cheap. Three of his sculptures (*Michael Jackson and Bubbles*; *Jim Bean J.B. Turner Train* and *New Hoover Convertibles*) have sold for over \$5m at auction and the waiting list to purchase the work of this notoriously perfectionist artist on the primary market is long.

Now the German publisher Taschen is releasing the first major book on Koons in 15 years in a limited edition of 1,500 copies with a further 100 numbered copies, each signed by the artist, to be accompanied by a specially-created work of art (price undisclosed). Taschen's huge 33x44 cm monograph of the artist's work, the first of the publisher's "XL Series", will be released next month. While Koons's book is not cheap (£600/\$1,200) it will undoubtedly sell well to the artist's many eager collectors.

Speaking to *The Art Newspaper* from his New York studio, Koons said he had been waiting for the completion of his latest body of work, the "Hulk Elvis" series, before giving the book the "ok". The "Hulk Elvis" series consists in part of 24 paintings which go on show at the Gagosian Gallery on Britannia Street in London on 1 June (until 27 July). Koons said:



Hulk (Jungle), 2005 and the cover of Taschen's oversized Koons book

welcome immediacy that seems appropriate for the artist's incessantly morphing, magpie-like work.

Koons said the book was a collaborative effort, and heaped praise on book designer and editor Hans Werner Holzwarth. Intriguingly, the artist did veto "the use of a couple of images from my own history that didn't really present a serious quality", although when pressed, hinted that these were half-finished photographs of an unpolished *Balloon Dog*, one of his most famous pieces (and not, thankfully for him, an embarrassing college photo). "There's an almost desperation for history...but I didn't want it jumping all over the place," he continued.

Other books in the XL series to be released over the next two years include monographs of Christopher Wool, Neo Rauch, Albert Oehlen, Beatriz Milhazes, Glenn Brown, Richard Prince and Mike Kelley. At the time of going to press Koons had yet to decide what the accompanying works of art would be for the 100 signed copies of the book.

Rob Sharp

□ Hans Werner Holzwarth (editor), *Jeff Koons* (Taschen, 2007), 600 pp, £600 ISBN-13: 978-3822849446

and bunnies put on display by the artist. "Hulk Elvis" shows how far his embrace of kitsch has developed—in one picture Koons apparently larks about with six Hulk inflatables, adopting their fixed, body-builder pose.

The chronological chapters are accompanied by the words of Katy Siegel—assistant professor of art history and criticism at Hunter College, City University of New York—and hundreds of large-format images. Professor Siegel's journalistic style brings a

wife, porn star and briefly Italian MP, Cicciolina, and ending with "Hulk Elvis", a series started in 2005 and still continuing—its sculptures will not be finished for another 18 months. While "Inflatables" often consisted of store-bought blow-up flowers

then on, the book is organised chronologically, split into chapters according to Koons's evolving bodies of work, beginning with "Inflatables" in 1979, via the 1989-91 series "Made in Heaven" which depict the artist having sex with his ex-

"Finally we decided it was time." The tome weighs in at 600 pages, and needless to say, is relentlessly comprehensive. To begin, Ingrid Sischy, editor-in-chief of US magazine *Interview*, provides a carefully crafted biographical essay. From