

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 21 January 2014

JEFF KOONS' ICONIC 'CRACKED EGG' IS COMING TO AUCTION FOR THE FIRST TIME AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON ON 13 FEBRUARY 2014

ON VIEW AT CHRISTIE'S KING STREET 8-13 FEBRUARY



JEFF KOONS (B. 1955)
Cracked Egg (Magenta), Executed in 1994-2006
mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent colour coating
198.1 x 157.5 x 157.5cm and 45.7 x 121.9 x 121.9cm
Estimate: £10,000,000-15,000,000

"Cracked Egg is a symbol of birth. It's already happened so it's about moving on and transcendence, like Botticelli's Birth of Venus. It was technically very difficult to create due to both the concave and convex surfaces." - JEFF KOONS

London - Christie's will present a central sculpture from Jeff Koons' highly acclaimed *Celebration* series at the *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction* on 13 February 2014 in London. A key work by the world's most expensive living artist at auction, *Cracked Egg (Magenta)* is the most significant work by Koons to be offered in London since 2008 and is expected to realize £10 million to £15 million. This is the first time a *Cracked Egg* has come to auction.

Francis Outred, Christie's Head of Post-War & Contemporary Art, Europe: *"Following on the world record \$58.4 million Christie's achieved for the Jeff Koons' Balloon Dog in New York last November – making the world auction record for a living artist - we are proud to be offering this iconic and important work from the same landmark 'Celebration' series – originally conceived by Koons to mark important moments in the calendar year with universal images of childhood joy and wonder. One of the only works in the 'Celebration' series to have double-faced reflective surfaces, 'Cracked Egg' is an extraordinary engineering feat which took 12 years to create. With a mirrored interior and exterior, it reflects the viewer and their surroundings, and encourages us to delve deep inside and all around it. Presented on a simple, yet monumental scale in the bright candy colours of an Easter egg, 'Cracked Egg (Magenta)' also links to the tradition of the egg symbol in Western culture, for example in the works of Botticelli and Brancusi. Here its playfully magnified size elevates this ubiquitous object into an uncanny monument."*

Cracked Egg (Magenta) plays with the fragile nature of the egg to explore themes of the ephemeral and the eternal. The fragments of shell emphasize the fusion of opposites, appearing simultaneously organic and synthetic, fragile and resilient. To contrast the vulnerability of the eggshell, Koons managed to perfect casting techniques that result in a mirror-sheen surface that is virtually indestructible. As the artist explains, *"I was interested in the dialogue with nature and aspects of the eternal, the here and now, the physical with the ephemeral... the symmetrical and asymmetrical, a sense of the fertile ..."* (J. Koons, quoted in P. Schuster 'In Conversation with Jeff Koons', in A. Hüsck (ed.), *Jeff Koons: Celebration*, exh. cat., Berlin, 2008).

Cracked Egg (Magenta) is the most significant work by Koons to be offered in London since 2008 when *Balloon Flower (Magenta)* sold for £12.9 million – a record price at the time. Works from Koons' much-admired *Celebration* series, which he embarked upon in the 1990s, represent the top five prices for works by the artist at auction. The most recent record was set at Christie's New York in 2013 which saw *Balloon Dog (Orange)* selling for \$58.4 million, setting a new world auction record for a living artist, and becoming the most expensive contemporary art sculpture ever sold.

Standing at almost two metres tall, the monumental Koons' *Cracked Egg (Magenta)* conjures a sense of wonder in the viewer, amplified through both its huge scale and its mesmerising reflective surface. Its polished shell is split open to reveal a glistening mirrored interior. The pristine perfection of the two reflective surfaces is the culmination of years of arduous research and development. Simultaneously presenting its interior and exterior, the hyper-reflective steel makes a dazzling visual impression induced by the combination of the immaculate gleam of the magenta shell against the silvery flashes of its interior.

One of five unique two-part *Cracked Egg* sculptures made from precision engineered, mirror-polished stainless steel and finished with an exterior translucent coating of magenta (the others are red, violet, blue and yellow), *Cracked Egg* represents a feat of technical virtuosity resulting in the impossibly thin, delicate appearance of the shell. No detail has been spared in the rendering of this perfect yet playful form: the pureness of line along the convex contour, the cartoon-like saw-tooth edges, the saturation of the magenta surface set off against its brilliant silver interior.

The *Celebration* series represents the first time Koons moved beyond ready-made objects and images to create a body of work out of his own imagination. The series, which also includes works based on balloons, hearts and toys, was originally inspired by a commission from art dealer Anthony d'Offay to make a calendar. While this was never realized, the *Celebration* series began as a celebration of the birth of Koons' son Ludwig and the eggs are symbols of birth and creation. The series creates universal archetypes to reflect the sense of childhood joy and wonder Koons experienced as he played with his young son. *Cracked Egg* at once references the cycle of life and the youthful fun of Easter eggs, as well as art historical traditions. Imagery of cracked eggs and eggshells appears in the works of Bruegel the Younger and Hieronymus Bosch as a key symbol of sexual creation. Speaking specifically about this work, Koons suggested that "*Cracked Egg is a symbol of birth. It's already happened so it's about moving on and transcendence, like Botticelli's Birth of Venus*" (J. Koons, December 2013).

PRESS CONTACT: Matthew Paton | +44(0)207 389 2965 | mpaton@christies.com

NOTE TO EDITORS: JEFF KOONS AT CHRISTIE'S

In June 2008, *Balloon Flower (Magenta)* achieved \$25.8 million at Christie's, then the world auction record for the artist.

Christie's holds the world record for a painting by the artist at auction, achieved when *Loopy* sold for \$5.1 million in June 2010

In November 2012 Christie's set the world auction record when *Tulips* sold for \$33.7 million

In November 2013 *Balloon Dog (Orange)* achieved \$58.4 million, setting a new world auction record for a living artist, and becoming the most expensive contemporary art sculpture ever sold

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

###

Visit Christie's Website at www.christies.com

Complete catalogue available online at www.christies.com or via the Christie's iPhone app

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:

