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Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Takashi Murakami

«A History of Editions»

76 rue de Turenne & 10 impasse Saint Claude : June 24 - July 30 2011

Galerie Perrotin is pleased to announce the exhibition Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Takashi Murakami «A History of Editions» presented from June 24 to July 30, 2011.

The exhibition brings together multiples by Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys and Takashi Murakami who devoted a large part of their artistic creation to the production of editions (as opposed to unique works).

Other 20th century artists devoted themselves to this practice like Andy Warhol of course, but also Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, etc. in the line of the Fluxus movement, which advocated an art of action that was democratic and anchored in life but also Dali, Bernard Buffet, Keith Haring, Victor Vasarely and others, which would make an ideal exhibition around this theme.

The avant-garde of the end of the 19th century and beginning of 20th (the Nabis, Matisse, Miro, Munch...) also seized hold of the most varied techniques including prints, which made it possible to circulate new art that was not being seen in official salons, to a more open public. Engraving has held a special place since its invention, accompanying the development of printing and the circulation of ideas through book illustration. It allowed the eclosion of darker or more libertine series of iconography that criticized power and the established order (Los Caprichos of Goya, the erotic engravings of Giulio Romano, etc.). Founded in 1797, the Chalcography of the Louvre has therefore a collection of more than 13,000 engraving plates and regularly invites contemporary artists to make new ones for unlimited printing.

Marcel Duchamp naturally resorted to multiples because of his preoccupation with authorship and so redefined the notion of uniqueness. He was the first to look upon print series as unique works. He thus produced 275 portable retrospective museums of his work he called «Box in a Valise» that were ubiquitous being present in the most celebrated collections around the world («Everything important I have done can be held in a small valise.» M.D.). Beyond that, he allowed his imagination to run free on all kinds of media like posters, invitations, telegrams, enamelled plates, etc. The private collection, here unveiled, gathers 80 relevant works.

Joseph Beuys extended this approach by adding social and political speculations through the continuous production of 567 multiples from 1965 to 1986, to which numerous post cards were added. The Reinhard Schlegel Collection, which Galerie Perrotin reveals a selection of 120 artworks, displays an original collection of this «Enlarged Art» that includes manifestos, political concepts and forms of language. They thus escaped the art market at the time. «Each edition has the character of a kernel of condensation for me on which a multitude of things can settle. [...] I am interested by the transmission of physical vehicles in the form of editions, because I am passionate about spreading ideas. The objects are only in relation to my intelligible ideas.» J.B.

A Doctor in Nihonga painting from the University of Arts in Tokyo, Takashi Murakami developed a unique protean style of the most modern techniques associated with the precision and virtuosity of traditional Japanese art and that of the Ukiyo-e engraving (pictures of the floating world) in particular. Inspired by Manga and Kawai (cuteness) culture, his irresistible world is peopled by monstrous and charming characters, facetious descendants of past myths. His theory of the Superflat aesthetic, which he introduced in 2001, attempts to blur the frontiers between popular art and grand art. The absence of perspective, the two-dimensionality of ancient art, filters in to every support – painting, sculpture, prints/silk-screens, wallpaper, animation films and accessories. He has even created his figures on T-shirts (Hiropon) or giant balloons (Mr.Dob) before having them appear in his paintings, sculptures and films; quite the reverse of the Hollywood system that sells spinoff products after a blockbuster has come out. More than 160 prints, from 2001 to 2011, now are visible.

The art market has tended to underestimate these productions without taking the artists' generosity into consideration in offering their art to the greatest number of people. Indeed, the profitability of a print is uncertain. Murakami's prints for example have high production costs tied to the number of colours used, though the artist wants their selling price to remain reasonable.

Duchamp, Beuys and Murakami succeeded in convincing collectors that editions were an integral part of their artistic production with the underlying idea of «art for all».



Marcel Duchamp
Box containing the limited edition of «Sur Marcel Duchamp», by Robert Lebel, 1958
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Joseph Beuys
«Sled», 1969
Wooden sled, felt, belts, flashlight, fat and rope.
35 x 90 x 95 cm.
Edition of 50, numbered, unsigned.
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Courtesy Collection Reinhard Schlegel



Takashi Murakami
« Hommage to Francis Bacon
Study of Isabel Rawsthorne » , 2004
Offset lithography 4c process
with white (UV) on Sherin Plain paper
(Tokyo Paper Mfg., Co., Ltd.)
683 x 683 cm
Edition of 300
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