

# PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

## Phillips to Offer Seminal Sculpture by Jeff Koons at 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale on 8 May

*Naked* from the Pivotal *Banalities* Series  
Expected to Realize \$5-7 Million



Jeff Koons, *Naked*, 1988

Estimate: \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000

**NEW YORK - 21 APRIL 2016** – Phillips will offer *Naked* from Jeff Koons' *Banalities* Series at the 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale on 8 May in New York. A seminal work from the pivotal series that is credited with launching the artist to international fame, it is offered at auction for the first time having been in the current collection for over 25 years. It is expected to realize \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000.

Jean-Paul Engelen, Phillips' Worldwide Head of Contemporary Art said, "We are very pleased to be offering Jeff Koons's *Naked*, a key work from the breakthrough series of one of the world's most famous living artists. In the *Banalities* series, Koons represents a kind of Garden of Eden with this work portraying Adam and Eve, playing on themes of cultural shame and guilt, of high and low art and seduction. When it was first shown in 1988 with concurrent exhibitions in New York, Chicago and Cologne, it was a sea-change moment for Koons, as well as for the contemporary art world. Works from

the series, including *Naked*, have since been widely exhibited at major museums around the world, including the Guggenheim, the Whitney and Centre Pompidou, and we look forward to showing this important sculpture at Phillips New York in May.”

*Naked*, 1988, from the *Banality* series, is executed in porcelain and addresses the timeless and profound dilemma of shame and guilt. Financed by his New York dealer Ileana Sonnabend, the *Banality* sculptures are credited for launching the artist to international fame, in no doubt partly due to their simultaneous global showing with Sonnabend in New York, Donald Young in Chicago and Max Hetzler in Cologne. Culling his content from popular culture, the series of near life-sized polychrome wood and porcelain sculptures presents a diverse range of twenty cultural icons from comedian Buster Keaton to the Pink Panther, to Michael Jackson and his pet chimpanzee Bubbles, thematically held together by what Hans Werner Holzwarth notes are “several basic elements: saccharine cuteness, sexual clichés, and Christian symbolism [that] materialize in an explosion of pastel, white and guilt.” (Hans Werner Holzwarth, ed., *JEFF KOONS*, Cologne 2009, p. 252).

The series, conceived from a flurry of pop culture imagery and religious iconography amassed by the artist from high and low visual culture, puts forward a cast of characters which inhabit Koons’ idealized world of art or “Garden of Eden.” As the artist explains, “In the *Banality* work, I started to be really specific about what my interests were. Everything here is a metaphor for the viewer’s cultural guilt and shame. Art can be a horrible discriminator. It can be used either to be uplifting and to give self-empowerment, or to debase people and disempower them. And on the tightrope in between, there is one’s cultural history. These images are aspects from my own, but everybody’s cultural history is perfect, it can’t be anything other than what it is—it is absolute perfection. *Banality* was the embracement of that.” (Jeff Koons in Hans Werner Holzwarth, ed., *JEFF KOONS*, Cologne 2009, p. 252).

The present work is the artist’s proof from an edition of 3. Other examples of *Naked* have been shown at major museums around the world, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Chicago Museum of Modern Art, the Fondation Beyeler, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Centre Pompidou and the Guggenheim. The last work from the edition to be offered at auction sold in May 2008 in New York and realized \$9 million against a pre-sale estimate of \$1.5-2 million.

**Auction:** Sunday, 8 May 2016, 7pm

**Auction viewing:** 30 April-8 May | Monday to Sunday 10am-6pm

**Location:** 450 Park Avenue, New York

**Link to more information:** <https://www.phillips.com/auctions/auction/NY010316>

*For members of the press interested in attending the sale, please contact Jaime Israni at [jisrani@phillips.com](mailto:jisrani@phillips.com) or +1 212 940 1398.*

*For members of the public, admission to this sale is by ticket only. To request tickets please call +1 212 940 1236 or email [tickets@phillips.com](mailto:tickets@phillips.com).*

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer’s premium; prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer’s premium.*

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