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## **“SKIN FRUIT”**

**First U.S. Exhibition of the Dakis Joannou Collection from Athens, Greece,  
to Open at New Museum on March 3, 2010**

New York, NY...The New Museum today announced details of **“Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection,”** its much-anticipated exhibition curated by artist **Jeff Koons**. “Skin Fruit” will be the first exhibition in the United States of the Athens-based Dakis Joannou Collection, renowned as one of the leading collections of contemporary art in the world. This will also be the first exhibition curated by Koons, whose early work inspired the evolution of the Joannou collection.

“Skin Fruit” will be on view from **March 3 through June 6, 2010**, and will include over 100 works by 50 international artists spanning several generations. Focusing on the body in contemporary art, the exhibition will spotlight the age-old preoccupation with the human form as a vessel of and vehicle for experience. Koons’s title “Skin Fruit” alludes to notions of genesis, evolution, original sin, and sexuality. Skin and fruit evoke the essential tensions between interior and exterior, between what we see and what we consume.

Starting with the first, now-legendary exhibitions, such as “Artificial Nature” and “Post Human,” at his DESTE Foundation’s non-profit museum in Athens, Dakis Joannou has focused on works that present a new image of man. It is no coincidence that his collection developed in the cultural context of Greece, where Classical sculpture defined the Western canon of anatomical representation. Artists have arrived at a much more uncertain image of mankind in this new century, in which bodies are still idealized but also are assaulted by forces of our own making.

Joannou’s collection is comprised of more than 1,500 works by 400 contemporary artists, from the most eminent to those just emerging. For “Skin Fruit,” Koons has selected sculptures, works on paper, paintings, installations, and videos by a group of artists including David Altmejd, Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Nathalie Djurberg, Robert Gober, Mike Kelley, Terence Koh, Mark Manders, Paul McCarthy, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, Kiki Smith, Christiana Soulou, Jannis Varelas, Kara Walker, and Andro Wekua, among others.



Tim Noble and Sue Webster, *Masters of the Universe*, 1998-2000. Translucent resin, fiberglass, plastic and human hair, 56 x 27 x 31 in. The Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens



Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 2009. Beeswax, cotton, leather, aluminum, pull tabs, human hair, and oil paint, 28 x 22 x 19 3/4 in. The Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens



The show will also premiere new works such as Charles Ray's re-envisioned *Revolution Counter-Revolution* (1990/2010); a new public installation of Jenny Holzer's *Selections from the Survival Series* (1984); and a special 3-D book project by Italian artist Robert Cuoghi, and will include living sculptures by Pawel Althamer and Tino Sehgal.

"Skin Fruit" will feature only one work by Koons—his *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank* (1985)—the first major artwork that Dakis Joannou acquired, initiating the collection that would grow to be one of the world's finest. Within the context of the exhibition this influential object, with its both familiar and mysterious orb suspended in fluid, becomes a womb, a point of origin and of departure.

The installation for "Skin Fruit" has been conceived by Koons as a kind of panorama, with frequent shifts in scale and unconventional juxtapositions. Role-playing games and dramas occur: a man will stage a religious ritual; a sculpture literally sings out; white chocolate monuments tower above visitor's heads; voracious creatures eat themselves and each other while bodies are buried or frozen; icons and deities are adored or dethroned.

### The Imaginary Museum

With the exhibition "Skin Fruit," the New Museum launches The Imaginary Museum, a new exhibition series that will periodically showcase leading private collections of contemporary art from around the world, providing the opportunity for rarely seen, great works of art to be accessible to a broader public.

### Koons as Curator

The Museum invited Jeff Koons to curate the first in this series. Koons had his first museum exhibition at the New Museum in 1981. In addition to being one of the most accomplished artists of our time, Koons is a committed and highly informed art lover and collector whose interests span from Greek and Roman sculpture to contemporary art. Koons has said that he collects art "to have a world besides my world, to have another field of experience." It is the combined perspective of artist, collector, and connoisseur that he brings to the task as curator of the New Museum exhibition. Jeff Koons and Dakis Joannou have enjoyed a close friendship and artistic dialogue for nearly three decades. Joannou has been a great supporter of Koons's work from the beginning of his career, and a large concentration of Koons's work from all periods is at the core of the Joannou collection. Koons's role as curator reflects the ideals at the forefront of Joannou's collection: ongoing conversations and collaborations with artists. In addition, it also signals the New Museum's continued experimentation with adventurous curatorial formats. With this exhibition, the Museum seeks to further dialogues about alternative collaborations and the history of artist-curated exhibitions.



### Catalogue

A full-color catalogue titled "Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection" will accompany the exhibition, and will feature Jeff Koons in conversation with the New Museum's Lisa Phillips, *Toby Devan Lewis Director*, and an essay by Massimiliano Gioni, Director of Special Exhibitions. An edited anthology of previously commissioned essays for DESTE Foundation publications will be included in the catalogue, featuring texts by Nicolas Bourriaud, Jeffrey Deitch, Peter Halley, Nancy Spector, and Lynne Tillman. The catalogue will include more than 100 full-color illustrations of works in the exhibition, as well as images of other artworks in the Dakis Joannou Collection.

### Symposium: Art Museums, Private Collectors, and the Public

On Saturday, March 13, the New Museum will host a daylong symposium on the past, present, and future of the cooperation between private collectors and public institutions. The first session will focus on the importance of public/private partnerships to the rise and development of the American art museum. It will look at the history of

patronage in America, the proliferation of institutions during America's first Gilded Age, and how this set the stage for cultural dynamics in this century.

The second session will focus on new models of public/private partnerships currently being implemented or considered. It will look at changing conditions in the cultural landscape and the need for museums to find innovative solutions to meet the challenges of a new century.

### About the Dakis Joannou Collection and the DESTE Foundation

Dakis Joannou, a noted philanthropist, arts patron, and New Museum Trustee based in Athens, Greece, has worked closely with artists and curators since 1985 to assemble an unparalleled collection of iconic contemporary works that reflect his distinctive passion and fervor. Focusing on contemporary art from the 80's to the present, the collection is constantly enriched with works by emerging artists. The collection contains major concentrations of works by some of the most distinguished and influential artists of the late 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, such as Maurizio Cattelan, Urs Fischer, Robert Gober, Jeff Koons, Chris Ofili, Charles Ray, Kiki Smith, and Kara Walker, among many others. Curated shows from the collection have been presented at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Kunsthalle, Vienna; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki; and the Nicosia Municipal Arts Center, Cyprus, among other international venues.

"Collecting is, for me, an adventure, a set of different 'lived' experiences, a constant flow of meeting, talking, listening, looking. It is an act of understanding and participating. And within this never ending involvement with 'what is happening,' the moments when I see exciting works for the first time constitute some of the highlights of my life," said Joannou.

In 1983, Joannou established the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art—a non-profit institution based in Athens, Greece—at the suggestion of Pierre Restany. Ever since, DESTE has been organizing exhibitions and supporting projects and publications internationally. Through an exhibition program that promotes emerging as well as established artists, the DESTE Foundation aims to broaden the audience for contemporary art, to enhance opportunities for young artists, and to explore the connections between contemporary art and culture. From its inception until 1998, the DESTE Foundation has organized and supported exhibitions in Greece, Cyprus, and Switzerland, including "Cultural Geometry" (1988); "Psychological Abstraction" (1989); "Artificial Nature" (1990); "Post Human" (1992-93); and "Everything That's Interesting Is New" (1996). In 1998, the DESTE Foundation moved to its first permanent space in Neo Psychico, Athens, where the exhibitions "Global Vision" (1999); Jeff Koons's "A Millennium Celebration" (1999-2000); and Tim Noble and Sue Webster's "Masters of the Universe" (2000) took place. As part of the 2004 Athens Cultural Program, DESTE organized the notable exhibition "Monument to Now" which featured more than 60 artists. Since January 2006, DESTE has been housed in a renovated former sock factory in Nea Ionia, Athens. Recent exhibitions include "Panic Room" (2006-07); "Fractured Figure" (2007-08); and "A GUEST + A HOST = A GHOST" (2009). Apart from the shows that draw on works from the collection, the DESTE Foundation has also initiated several ongoing projects including the DESTE Prize, awarded biannually to an emerging Greek artist; and the annual Hydra Slaughterhouse Project, which was inaugurated in 2009 with a collaboration by Matthew Barney and Elizabeth Peyton. DESTE has also established the Contemporary Greek Artists Archive, a resource for curators and researchers, as well as a specialized art library which is open to the public.



Andrea Vekua, *Shoelaces 1*, 2008. Wax figure, aluminum casted table and pallet, akrystal board, and ceramic shoes, 59 x 72 7/8 x 39 3/8 in. The Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens



Jeff Koons, *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank*, 1985. Glass, iron, water, and basketball, 64 1/2 x 30 1/2 x 13 1/4 in. The Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens

### About the New Museum

Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a leading destination for new art and new ideas. It is Manhattan's only dedicated contemporary art museum and is respected internationally for the adventurousness and global scope of its curatorial program. For more information, visit [newmuseum.org](http://newmuseum.org).