

PROJECT 10

Jeff Koons

1999

Puppy

12 December 1995 - 17 March 1996

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

BIOGRAPHY

Jeff Koons challenges traditional understandings of art with his particular fusion of fine art and mass produced objects. By elevating unapologetically kitsch objects to the status of fine art, Koons explores contemporary obsessions with sexuality and desire, celebrity, advertising and the media. His incomparably nuanced take on contemporary cultural marketing and consumption serves to disconcert and revitalise viewers' thinking about art.

FACTS

- *Puppy* marked the 25th anniversary of Kaldor Public Art Projects.
- Created as a symbol of love and happiness, *Puppy* stood 12.4m high on the harbourside forecourt of the MCA.
- *Puppy* was designed, engineered and constructed by DW Knox & Partners.
- *Puppy* contained 55 tonnes of soil, adorned with 60,000 flowers.
- 3D modelling and the latest in computer technologies were required to realise the thirteen levelled frame offsite. On-site it took more than one month to construct.
- The structure was overlaid with a wire-mesh skin, shaped to resemble the curls and folds of *Puppy's* flowering fur.
- The plants chosen by Koons were impatiens in four colours, begonias in three colours, marigolds in four colours, petunias in four colours and chrysanthemum, brachyscome and erigeron.
- More than 1.8 million people saw *Puppy* in Sydney and it remains the most popular contemporary art project created in Australia and the most purchased postcard in the MCA store.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Jeff Koons created *Puppy* outside Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art in 1995, celebrating 25 years of Kaldor Public Art Projects. Created as a symbol of love and happiness, *Puppy* stood 12.4 metres high on the harbourside, carpeted in flowering blooms like a monolithic topiary. Presented as part of the 1996 Sydney Festival, *Puppy* became one of the most memorable projects and was viewed by more than 1.8 million people in Sydney, before relocating to its permanent home outside the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

Jeff Koons created a new iconography for late capitalist culture, fusing pop and surrealist traditions with baroque and rococo excess. Constructing his works with a studio of assistants and a team of master craftsmen, Koons assumed the role of artist as a composer or director. Universally adored, animals and flowers form an important aspect of Koons' vocabulary and these elements were combined in *Puppy*. The basis for the work is the small wooden sculpture of a West Highland White Terrier by Koons, *White Terrier*, 1991, from the Made in Heaven series – chosen for its endearing appearance, unthreatening at any scale.

Puppy for Sydney was very detailed, supporting 55 tonnes of soil adorned with 60,000 cascading plants. Three-dimensional modelling and the latest computer technologies were used to conceive the enormous structure as a steel armature in 13 levels constructed offsite. This structure was then overlaid with a wire-mesh skin, carefully shaped and moulded to form the curls and folds of *Puppy's* flowering fur. Onsite, the work took more than a month to construct. Concrete foundations were poured in and then segments of the structure were positioned before the hydraulics were installed. Finally, soil and plants were inserted into the frame.

Kaldor Public Art Project 10: Jeff Koons, *Puppy*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 12 December 1995 - 17 March 1996

Photo: Eric Sierins



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Photo: Brendan Read

