

Urs Fischer – False Friends

MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE, GENEVA

APRIL 28 – JULY 17, 2016

PRESS RELEASE

A selection of the Dakis Joannou Collection in Geneva for the first time

March 2016 - Beginning on April 28, 2016, the Museum of Art and History of Geneva welcomes the DESTE Foundation, introducing the exhibition *Urs Fischer – False Friends*, in collaboration with of ART for The World. *Urs Fischer – False Friends* brings together a selection of works from the Dakis Joannou Collection. Conceived as an unusual synthesis between a solo show and a group exhibition, *False Friends* pairs works by a range of highly recognized artists with an ensemble of 20 works by Swiss artist Urs Fischer (b. 1973).

In *False Friends*, Urs Fischer's work is seen alongside sculptures and paintings by artists such as Pawel Althamer, Maurizio Cattelan, Fischli and Weiss, Robert Gober, Martin Kippenberger, Jeff Koons, Paul McCarthy, Cindy Sherman and Kiki Smith, all of whom engage with fundamental themes in the history of art – the representation of the human body, the transformative power of materials, and the virtues of subtle observations.

Establishing unexpected connections between artworks and aesthetics, methods and materials, *False Friends* traces similarities and differences among a group of artists whose work has animated and sustained critical debates in contemporary art throughout the past thirty years.

The work of Urs Fischer, one of the most innovative Swiss artists of his generation, is central to *False Friends*. Fischer celebrates metamorphosis and change through works that reveal a particular attention to process and time. Coupling the legacy of Pop art with a neo-baroque taste for the absurd, Fischer's creative universe trembles under the forces of entropy, decay and failure. With materials both organic and durable – from wax and bread to aluminum and bronze – Fischer's work invites a complex reflection on the function of monuments and the frailty of life, a meditation that becomes even more peculiar when observed in the grand spaces of Geneva's Museum of Art and History.

Curated by Massimiliano Gioni, *False Friends* continues the tradition of experimental exhibitions organized by Dakis Joannou's DESTE Foundation, celebrating the 33rd anniversary of the not-for-profit organization which was founded in Geneva in 1983. Since its creation, the DESTE Foundation has invited a range of artists and curators, including Andreas Angelidakis, Maurizio Cattelan, Jeffrey Deitch, Urs Fischer, M/M (Paris), Jeff Koons, Joseph Kosuth, and Haim Steinbach among others, to generate creative interpretations of the collection in exhibitions held at various museums around the world.



Exhibition Concept

In language and translation studies, *False Friends* describes words in various languages that look or sound alike but differ in meaning. As the title of the exhibition, the expression “false friends” suggests couplings of works that appear similar but are profoundly different, offering a reading of the Dakis Joannou Collection – and, equally, of contemporary art – as a magnetic field traversed by lines of tension that trace both elective affinities and striking variations.

Throughout the exhibition space, sympathetic relationships and dramatic dissonances resonate, establishing surprising dialogues across the works of different artists. As a result, the exhibition unravels as a cacophonous concerto of forms and interpretations, playing both with and against conventions.

In the first room of the exhibition, Urs Fischer’s sculptures, paintings, and installations are interspersed with works by Jeff Koons and Fischli and Weiss, which appear to reinterpret ancient statuary traditions. Koons’s busts both celebrate and undermine the monumentality that signals official representations of power, and a similar attitude recurs in many works throughout the exhibition – particularly in Fischer’s equestrian sculpture and Maurizio Cattelan’s iconoclastic and irreverent gestures.

A darker sensibility pervades other sections of the exhibition, where familiar objects assume uncanny presences. Cindy Sherman’s ghostly apparitions contrast with one of Robert Gober’s early dollhouses, whose eeriness is also juxtaposed with Fischer’s melting candles and his aluminum cast of a piano that seems to liquefy like wax.

In the final majestic room of the east wing of the museum, the mirrored sculptures of Fischer’s *Concert/Cornichon* (2011) initiate a succession of artworks in which surfaces and materials play off one another in multiple reflections: the inflated forms of Jeff Koons’s *Hanging Heart* (1995–98) are in dialogue with Martin Kippenberger’s pneumatic sculpture *Memorial of the Good Old Time* (1987), and one of Koons’s “Antiquity” paintings is presented near the crumbling walls of Fischer’s legendary *Bread House* (2004–2006), which resembles an ancient ruin but is, in fact, fashioned out of bread and wood.

Fischer’s peculiar type of magical realism reverberates throughout the exhibition, establishing unexpected and intriguing correspondences among the works on view by continuously drifting between resemblance and difference.

Participating Artists

Pawel Althamer, Maurizio Cattelan, Urs Fischer, Fischli/Weiss, Robert Gober, Martin Kippenberger, Jeff Koons, Paul McCarthy, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith

The Curator

Massimiliano Gioni is the Artistic Director of the New Museum, New York, and the Director of the Nicola Trussardi Foundation, Milan. He has curated numerous international exhibitions and biennials including the 55th Venice Biennale, which he directed in 2013; the 8th Gwangju Biennial (2010); the 1st New Museum Triennial (2009); the 4th Berlin Biennial, co-curated with Maurizio Cattelan and Ali Subotnick (2006); and Manifesta 5, co-curated with Marta Kuzma (2004). Gioni has contributed to many publications and magazines including *Artforum*, *frieze*, *Parkett*, *Tate Etc.*, and *Flash Art*, for which he



served as the US editor from 1999 to 2003. He cofounded The Wrong Gallery with Maurizio Cattelan and Ali Subotnick, with whom he has directed the independent art magazines *The Wrong Times* and *Charley*. He is the commissioning editor of “2000 Words,” a series of monographic books published by the DESTE Foundation, with which he has frequently collaborated.

The DESTE Foundation

The DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art is a not-for-profit institution established in Geneva in 1983 by collector Dakis Joannou, originally to support projects of the Contemporary Art Centre of Geneva. Through its exhibition space in Athens, Greece, DESTE engages in an extensive exhibition program that promotes emerging as well as established artists and aims to broaden the audience for contemporary art, enhance opportunities for young artists, and explore the connections between contemporary art and culture. The flexibility of DESTE’s exhibition schedule enables the Foundation to respond to what is current in the art world, both nationally and internationally, and to embark on interesting projects as they emerge in today’s society. The DESTE Foundation, which celebrates its 33rd anniversary in 2016, has presented more than 80 exhibitions, including *A Guest + A Host = A Ghost* (2009), *Artificial Nature* (1990), *Fractured Figure* (2007), *Global Vision* (1998), *Monument to Now* (2004), *Post Human* (1992), *The System of Objects* (2013), along with solo exhibitions and special projects by, among others, Pawel Althamer, Matthew Barney, Paul Chan, Roberto Cuoghi, Jeff Koons, and Elizabeth Peyton.

The Dakis Joannou Collection

The Dakis Joannou Collection is one of the most important collections of contemporary art internationally. Started in 1985 with the acquisition of Jeff Koons’s *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank* from the artist’s first solo exhibition at the gallery International With Monument in New York, the collection has grown to incorporate more than 1500 works by 450 artists, with in depth holdings by Pawel Althamer, Robert Gober, Jeff Koons, Chris Ofili, Charles Ray, and many others.

The Museum of Art and History of Geneva

Built between 1903 and 1910 by the Geneva-based architect Marc Camoletti, the Museum of Art and History is one of the most important encyclopedic museums in Switzerland. With a collection of more than 500.000 works which comprises masterpieces and unique series, conferring it its internationally recognized status, the museum shows in its permanent spaces a selection of its applied art, fine art and archaeological pieces. The museum has a presence in other parts of the city through the Rath Museum and the Maison Tavel, which make up the Museums of Art and History.

ART For The World

ART for The World is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), associated to UNDP, which aims to mobilize contemporary art and independent cinema on the key issues of our society. Since its foundation in 1996 by Adelina von Fürstenberg, ART for The World has curated large number of travelling exhibitions and produced several short films. It operates mainly in Europe, Brazil, India, Africa, and in the USA. In 2015, in collaboration with ART for The World Europa, its sister association, Adelina von Fürstenberg, curator of the National Pavilion of Armenia at the 56th Biennale di Venezia, received the Golden Lion for the best national participation.



Practical information

Opening: **April 27**, 2016 between 18:00 and 21:00

Duration: **April 28 – July 17, 2016**

Venue

Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève | Museum of Art and History

Rue Charles-Galland 2 – 1206 Genève

Opening Hours: Daily from 11:00 to 18:00, Mondays closed

Admission: CHF 15.- / CHF 10.-

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Service de presse

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