

MCCABE FINE ART

First Show

McCabe Fine Art (April 15 - May 25, 2013)

April, 2013

Launching the exhibition program at McCabe Fine Art, "First show" brings together work by world-renowned artists Damien Hirst, Joseph Kosuth, Roy Lichtenstein, Paul McCarthy, and Richard Prince. In addition to inaugurating the exhibition space showroom, "First show" also lays the groundwork for a lively conceptual exchange. Seen together, these six seminal works—which span fifty years, diverse styles, and a range of media—overcome obvious differences to engage in a productive dialogue about lifecycles and methods of (re)production. In addition to bearing visual signifiers of rebirth and renewal (butterflies, circles, sunrise) the exhibited works also bond over a less obvious theoretical affinity. In this group exhibition, divergent artistic practices such as appropriation, petrification, serial production, and abstraction are reconsidered in terms of their shared connection to themes of recycling and renaissance.

Often interpreted as a symbol of regeneration, the circle is the core of Hirst's spot paintings. *Sodium Hydrosulfite* (2004)—one of over 1,000 compositions featuring circles of various colors and sizes that Hirst produced over a twenty-five year period—is so perfectly executed it would seem to have been mechanical reproduced. On the contrary, this work (like all of Hirst's "Spots") is a unique hand-painted permutation. Visual and conceptual connections to Lichtenstein's Ben-Day dots are reinforced by the presence of the elder artist's *Sunrise* (1965)—wherein cartoonish sunrays are surrounded with a hallmark motif of vibrating red, white, and blue "printer" dots. Commentaries on mass reproduction, Hirst and Lichtenstein's works also both play upon the circle's symbolic importance.

A second work by Hirst, *Contemplation* (2007), is a large-scale kaleidoscopic arrangement of hundreds of butterflies that gives the impression of a radiant stained glass church window. Appearing vibrant as in life, the butterflies encased in household gloss suggest a beautiful, but eerily unnatural, limbo where mortal decay is moot. Similarly, the aesthetic allure of McCarthy *Stainless Steel Butt Plug* (2007) belies the object's true nature. Instead of masking death with beauty, McCarthy creates a gleaming curvaceous totem out of a sex toy. Both of these works illustrate metamorphoses wherein existent forms are imbued with new life, reemerging as a quasi-devotional objects with otherworldly connotations.

Decontextualizing and reproducing existing texts, Kosuth and Prince impregnate carefully chosen words with new meaning. In the 1960s Kosuth began presenting quotes by artist-friends in the form of large-scale photographs. With works like *Andy Warhol quote* (1968)—which is based on an excerpt from Warhol's description of his own 1965 film, *Camp*—Kosuth appropriates other artists' words to create his own visual language. A similar Kosuth featuring a more oft-cited Warhol quote ("In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes") was part of the 2008 Moderna Museet exhibition, "Kosuth and Warhol: An Exchange." What is interesting in light of the cyclical themes explored in our current show is the fact that Kosuth found this quote in a catalogue published on the occasion of Warhol's 1968 exhibition, curated by Pontus Hultén and also held at the Moderna Museet. Working in a similar spirit decades later, Prince adopts an anonymous joke by spelling it out with his own cancelled checks. With *My Wife, My Wife* (2004) Prince personalizes a common text and resurrects tasteless humor as high art. Showing how context and presentation can influence meaning, these works also bring issues of authorship and origin into the discussion of artistic reincarnations.