

## Jeff Koons, Kiehl's and the Art Production Fund Fête the Reveal of 'Seated Ballerina'

By Barry Samaha | May 15, 2017



"Seated Ballerina" at Rockefeller Plaza

Jeff Koons stood atop a chair with a camera phone in hand, giddily snapping the view of Rockefeller Center from the rooftop terrace at Saks Fifth Avenue. He was taking a picture of his most recent work, the "Seated Ballerina"—a 45-foot-high inflatable sculpture that depicts a metallic female figure in a powder blue leotard and tutu adjusting her slippers. Even as one of the most respected, in-demand fine artists working today—one who has achieved an overwhelming amount of fanfare in his decades-long career—Koons appeared humbled by the unveiling of the art installation, and the cocktail party that was celebrated later that evening.

"Seated Ballerina" marks the third time Koons has displayed a monumental piece at the New York City landmark, but last week's reveal seemed to be a much more personal enterprise for the American artist. Created in conjunction with beauty brand Kiehl's and the Art Production Fund, a firm that produces ambitious public art projects, the work is intended to bring awareness to National Missing Children's Month, as well as the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC).

"I have got to know Jeff for a while," said Chris Salgado, President of Kiehl's USA, to guests comprised of mainly fashion and art professionals. "His art work is so incredible on so many levels. When I knew about his involvement with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, I knew I just had to be involved."

As a board member of the ICMEC, Koons helped co-found The Koons Family Institute on International Law & Policy, an initiative that researches the status of child protection legislation around the world. And seeing how children's issues are one Kiehl's of "charitable pillars," as Salgado pointed out, he saw it as a great honor to partner with Koons on a venture that not only provides monetary aid, but also highlights the cause in a profound way. The beauty brand will offer a limited edition Seated Ballerina tin for the Midnight Recovery Collection at Saks Fifth Avenue, where 100% of the net profits (up to \$100,000) will go to the charity. Furthermore, he enlisted the Art Production Fund to make certain that the message reached the masses.

"We have a relationship with Rockefeller Plaza, and we approached them about hosting [this piece of art]," explained Casey Fremont, the Executive Director of the Art Production Fund. "Being a part of the process from the beginning—from the first rendering to seeing how it was fabricated and installed—was a total thrill. I mean, it's Jeff Koons!"

To be sure, the name Jeff Koons carries a great deal of weight in the art world, perhaps more so than others. He has the ability to draw a crowd and spark conversation that extends beyond the industry's niche confines, which he put to good use by spotlighting the widespread issue plaguing youths across the globe. In the same way, he is also bringing attention to the importance of public art in today's climate, and how such installations can inspire change for the better.

"I think public art is having a really great moment right now because people are recognizing the value and the importance of it," said Fremont, who also commended Koons for advancing the category. "He is an innovative and interesting artist who obviously changed the way we think in everyday life. It's the most significant thing you can do as an artist."

Koons, for his part, was appreciative of the efforts made by all the partners involved. Stepping up to the microphone, beaming an infectious smile, he affirmed: "That's why we're in the art world. We really love each other."



L to R: Chris Salgado, Marc Metrick, Casey Fremont Crowe, Jeff Koons. Photos courtesy of Tiffany Sage/ BFA