

Russian magazine article in Moscow:

**1/ Your artworks are funny and entertaining and at the same time - philosophic, satiric, socially and politically sharp. Many of them carry a critique and irony to brands & wealth-worshipping (Luxury Therapy, Because You're Worth It), 'democracy export wars' (And the Award Goes To; Totems To Warmongering, The invisible Enemy), religious abuse and misuse (The Missionary), authority violence (Hard Facts), nature of big business (Oligasaurus). So at the first sight they entertain and how do you think – do people give attentive and serious look on the artworks to think about the ideas, message, moral - and to change something? Or most of audience became just the passive cynical 'art eaters' without deep thinking & right doing?**

I am delighted you saw so clearly and spontaneously what's behind just the pretty face. It makes me very happy. You are part of the public with whom I have a dialogue and that's the most rewarding type for me, no matter what their reaction is.

Even though the concept behind my work is most important and I could probably drive that home with much easier techniques of execution, I go out of my way (the only way I know) to create art that is perfectly crafted and esthetically beautiful in the tradition of the old masters, unlike some trends where it's all concept and no art.

It is understandable therefore if the work can attract shopaholic people mostly interested in decorating their homes and themselves with luxury goods. This is ironic as it puts my work in the same line of fire as many of the things I comment on with it.

In any case I really believe that for most people, after the initial visual impact, the question "why" must come to mind and then I'd like to think that a smile would appear on their faces.

I once made a sign that said :

" I CAN'T CHANGE THE WORLD AND IT PISSES ME OFF ",

but there is room for improvement and we can talk about it.

**2/ How do you think does the leitmotiv of your art, the Jelly Baby, portraits the contemporary earthlings? And if yes, Is these features of facelessness, cute infantilism and sameness are sad, natural or optimistic? How do you treat one of the key heroes of your art?**

In the 90's there was a lot of talk about cloning and, after Dolly the sheep, techniques were developed to clone humans.

That was horrifying and I decided to do a body of work exploring the dilemma between cloning and religion and cloning and medical ethics.

I decided to use the Jelly Baby as an impersonation for cloned humans.

I later revived the character as you see it today and in my eyes this perfectly embodies the multiculturalism of the societies we live in, where all of the adjectives you used above, to mention a few, can be applied.

**3/ How do you think what is the secret and magic of glossy and sparkling minimalistic pop-art? Why this style is so actual for audience nowadays?**

I think the boom of information is partly responsible for this. People can follow the lives of famous artists now in a way that was more reserved to Hollywood stars and musicians. News are constantly circulated about record prices being achieved and the eccentric life styles of celebrity artists, dead or alive. More museums are being opened and generally speaking art has become more easily available to larger audiences.

But also for the first time artists, especially POP artists have become a brand.

**4/ Mnenie Magazine gives a special attention to futurology. So we are interested in investigating of different spheres of life in future. Can you imagine 'art of future", at the end of XXI and in XX centuries?**

I think we'll never get rid of people wanting to paint and sculpt with their hands like we'll never stop wanting to dance or make love, but definitely technology will improve to the point that artists will be able to use materials and techniques which simply were not available before. Look at architecture for example, some modern buildings are extraordinary, but visionary people have been wanting to make things like these for a long time. The technology was simply not available.

I have encountered a similar problem with my own work. When I decided to make the first large Jelly Babies I looked around the globe to find a company that could manufacture them for me, as I didn't have the expertise to produce resin casts on a large scale. I was surprised to find only a couple of companies worldwide, were willing to give it a go without guarantees from their side and a lot of risk for me. That's when I started to experiment in my workshop and eventually, after a few years, I mastered the technique that allows me to do what I do today.

Resin has become an aspect of my art that is instantly recognizable.

I can't tell what will happen in the future but, if I was around, I would like to experiment with nano technology,. Perhaps with armies of nanoparticles that can be swallowed in a capsule and would take you through the most incredible visual and sensorial trip created by the artist of your choice.

I think it would be great also to create some kind of holographic paintings and sculptures that looked completely real and could be exhibited as floating in mid air. Imagine how extraordinary it would be to see these in the sky the size of buildings.

#### **5/ Is it possible to tell us and our readers how do you work with glowing resin in your workshop in Amersham while realizing the concepts?**

After living for years in London with the manufacturing downstairs and my bed upstairs I had to succumb to the fact that it's not very healthy to live with chemicals 24/7. So I moved my production to a brand new factory and I only produce the prototypes and masters in Amersham . It looks very serene compared to the hard core production.

#### **6/ May we name your art objects as 'the satirical fables' or 'the sharp social anecdotes'? How do state your own genre? May be it's the formula mentioned on your official site - "Moralized Pop"? And do you relate your own art style to some traditions of Arte Povera or to American Pop Art or else?**

People often ask me what kind of art I do. Maybe in 50 years time somebody will look back and find that a few artists of our time were performing with collective thinking and slap a new movement label on us. In 1999 I was sitting at a restaurant in Munich with an artist friend of mine, discussing some projects, I wrote on a piece of paper : today I start my own APOCALYPTIC art movement. I am still the only member.

Having said that if I had to describe my work I would probably call it CONCEPTUAL POP.

#### **7/ I heard that many of contemporary artists have their teams of assistants, e. g. there are 80 assistants in Jeff Koons' team – and I heard that many of art critics are not happy about it. What do you think about this trend to collective art under the popular art brand?**

When I was doing everything by myself the final out put was very limited as there are only 24hours in a day and the result was constant frustration as I never managed to do all the things I wanted to do. I soon had to employ some assistants which didn't help much as I still tried to personally do everything . Eventually I had to accept that, unless you want to produce two works of art a year, you need help.

So I finally allowed the most talented in the team to take more responsibility under my very very watchful eyes. This caused a lot of friction for a while as I found difficult to accept why they couldn't do what I did as satisfactorily.

Eventually some of these people learn my skills and become like my arms and hands and,

most importantly, they become very tuned with my creative energy.

I now have assembled what I call my A TEAM. Thank you all for bearing with me!

How can one man cope with productions that require so many different trades, paint, metal fabrication, foundries, marble, engineering, health and safety, sizes that are physically challenging etc etc .

I am sure Jeff Koons has an eye on everything his personally trained team do for him and I am sure he must have some personal input above just his intellectual involvement. Art critics just have to push a pen.

### **8/ Tell us please briefly about your recent events? Your popularity makes you to travel a lot – did you notice any preferences in your artworks in different audiences, countries and cultures?**

I married my wife Lorena three years ago after dating for the same length of time. As she has a background in arts, mainly working in galleries she became more and more involved with my work. I think she felt sorry for me as I work unacceptable hours.

She has been dealing with promoting me on new markets and public installations, leaving me to do what I do best.

The results are showing as we are getting requests for installations in different countries, the last ones of which were in the first Roma Biennale, Singapore and Paris in Place du Louvre.

I think that different individuals have different preferences no matter which Country they are from. It's not a Country or culture thing, it's a personal sensibility.

I think this confirms the fact that globalization is definitely taking place and we live in a multicultural society, which is more powerful than borders.

### **9/ You turn to contemporary art relatively not long ago – so what did you do before and what urged you to become an artist? Please tell us a little bit about yourself.**

From an early age in Milan I was probably spending more time drawing, painting and making things with my hands than studying. Every time I opened a book my imagination and unstoppable tendency to dream turned the school book into a "Harry Potter" one . When, for my parent's sake, I tried to decide what I was going to do in life, I was overwhelmed by all the possibilities. This, I think, is the first unfortunate sign of a creative mind. To give you a quick rundown, at the age of nineteen I moved to Rome where I became an actor.

My first movie 'The Driver's Seat' was with Elisabeth Taylor and Andy Warhol, who was acting in a cameo role. Quite interesting, when you think that thirty five years later I just had a show in London called Warhol/Mauro.

After several movies I realized that by being an actor I was not quite in charge of my own life and started a production company with two partners.

One got killed and the other went to prison, just to give you an idea of how crazy Rome was at that time.

I thought it was time to leave.

I had been floating between Rome, London, New York and Los Angeles and my first pick was London where I had a place, in view of eventually moving to Los Angeles.

London in the 60's and 70's was much safer than Rome but just as crazy !

I ended up staying much longer and, as there were no movie opportunities for me, I eventually started to make a living using my artistic skills on a practical level and soon had a thriving business in design and architecture.

I also designed motorcycles and a car which was invited at the London Motor Show as a one off.

At some point I invented a material which is used in interior design and I was sent all over the world with my team of specialists to carry out projects.

I ended up working for many top international architects. It was fun.

For the next 30 years or so I lived as freely as possible, whilst allowing for the need to make a

living, until, at the age of 50 (thirteen years ago), I woke up one morning and decided that no amount of money or worldly comforts should keep me from being creative on my own account rather than just on behalf of other people. I sold my business and my house to finance my move into art.

**10/ May I ask you to give a little advise to our readers about their own art education – please name several contemporary artists which are interesting for you and especially worthy to draw attention on their art.**

This is a tough thing for me to do, because I do not follow what other artists are doing as I find it clatters my mind.

I probably would have a different approach if I new the artists personally.

On the whole if I had to give viewers advise, I would tell them to listen to their emotions and instincts . When something looks beautiful and interesting to you it is a positive experience that nobody should be able to change for you. Your taste and expertise will mature and even change with time, but life is made of small episodes as well, the accumulation of which is as important as big events.