

Jeff Koons, **Balloon Flower**, 1999

chrome stainless steel, transparent paint, 289cm

Owned by Daimler, put up for sale.

- Christie's approached the German fabrication firm **Arnold**, which had been involved in making the work with Koons more than a decade ago. "The sculpture had a life outside," Gorvy said. "We wanted to restore the precision it had in the factory. This is not like working with a **Giacometti**, where one has a sense of the patina. The expectation of the buyer is that the work is going to look close to how it did when it left the fabricator." The meticulous restoration process, personally overseen by Koons, took more than six months.
- Koons "treats his objects like children," Gorvy said. "He is extraordinarily hands-on." In fact, just Thursday morning, Koons had been up at **Rockefeller Center**, where the work is now installed, helping a Christie's photographer pick angles from which to shoot the work *in situ*. The auction house's promotion of the sculpture has been relentless, including the production of a special catalogue devoted solely to the work. Koons "color-checked every single picture" in the book, Gorvy said.
- Christie's also recently brokered a private sale of a yellow version of the balloon flower. (The work was made in an edition of five, and New Yorkers can also see the red version — reportedly owned by Koons himself — outside **World Trade Centre 7**, right next to Ground Zero.) "Balloon Flower (Magenta)," surpassed that price, fetching \$25.7 million in a **Christie's** showroom.
- In 1980 Koons exhibited a series of sculptures comprising of wall-mounted vacuum cleaners displayed in Plexiglas cases. Over the next seven years the artist produced several more configurations, using readymade objects in the creation of highly conceptual artworks. Referred to broadly as 'The New' these works explored the way our fantasies and desires are transferred on to ordinary objects. Gleaming seductively under the glare of fluorescent lighting, it is the newness of the 'New Hoover Convertibles' that gives them their appeal. Suspended in a state of ultimate

perfection, Koons commented "if one of my works was to be turned on, it would be destroyed."

- Postmodernism was a reaction against modernism. Modernism was generally based on idealism and a utopian vision of human life and society and a belief in progress. It assumed that certain ultimate universal principles or truths such as those formulated by religion or science could be used to understand or explain reality. Modernist artists experimented with form, technique and processes rather than focusing on subjects, believing they could find a way of purely reflecting the modern world.
- While modernism was based on idealism and reason, postmodernism was born of scepticism and a suspicion of reason. It challenged the notion that there are universal certainties or truths. Postmodern art drew on philosophy of the mid to late twentieth century, and advocated that individual experience and interpretation of our experience was more concrete than abstract principles. While the modernists championed clarity and simplicity; postmodernism embraced complex and often contradictory layers of meaning.
- Tate.
- Anti-authoritarian by nature, postmodernism refused to recognise the authority of any single style or definition of what art should be. It collapsed the distinction between high culture and mass or popular culture, between art and everyday life. Because postmodernism broke the established rules about style, it introduced a new era of freedom and a sense that 'anything goes'. Often funny, tongue-in-cheek or ludicrous; it can be confrontational and controversial, challenging the boundaries of taste; but most crucially, it reflects a self-awareness of style itself. Often mixing different artistic and popular styles and media, postmodernist art can also consciously and self-consciously borrow from or ironically comment on a range of styles from the past.

Modern

- Factory
- Centralised
- Manufacturing
- Production
- Faceless architecture
- Sameness
- Function / depth
- Economy
- Live music
- Hard

Postmodern

- Computer
- Decentralised
- Services and banking
- Consumption
- Playful architecture
- Diversity
- Style / surface
- Culture
- Fat Boy Slim / sampling
- Soft

The phrase was introduced in McLuhan's book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, published in 1964. McLuhan proposes that a medium itself, not the content it carries, should be the focus of study. He said that a medium affects the society in which it plays a role not only by the content delivered over the medium, but also by the characteristics of the medium itself.

McLuhan frequently punned on the word "message", changing it to "mass age", "mess age", and "massage"; a later book, *The Medium Is the Massage* was originally to be titled *The Medium is the Message*, but McLuhan preferred the new title, which is said to have been a printing error.

McLuhan understood "medium" in a broad sense. He identified the light bulb as a clear demonstration of the concept of "the medium is the message". A light bulb does not have content in the way that a newspaper has articles or a television has programs, yet it is a medium that has a social effect; that is, a light bulb enables people to create spaces during nighttime that would otherwise be enveloped by darkness.

He describes the light bulb as a medium without any content. McLuhan states that "a light bulb creates an environment by its mere presence."

Likewise, the message of a newscast about a heinous crime may be less about the individual news story itself — the content — and more about the change in public attitude towards crime that the newscast engenders by the fact that such crimes are in effect being brought into the home to watch over dinner.

Hence in *Understanding Media*, McLuhan describes the "content" of a medium as a juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind. This means that people tend to focus on the obvious, which is the content, to provide us valuable information, but in the process, we largely miss the structural changes in our affairs that are introduced subtly, or over long periods of time. As society's values, norms, and ways of doing things change because of the technology, it is then we realize the social implications of the medium. These range from cultural or religious issues and historical precedents, through interplay with existing conditions, to the secondary or tertiary effects in a cascade of interactions that we are not aware of.

Marshall McLuhan argues technologies — from clothing to the wheel to the book and beyond — are the messages, not the content of the communication.

McLuhan suggests modern audiences enjoy MainStream media as soothing, enjoyable, and relaxing; however, the pleasure we find in the MainStream media is deceiving, because the changes between society and technology are incongruent, perpetuating an Age of Anxiety.

All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences, they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.(p. 26).

The Medium is the Massage demonstrates the ways the MainStream media are extensions of human senses; they ground us in physicality, but expand our ability to perceive our world to an extent impossible without the MainStream media. These extensions of perception

contribute to McLuhan's theory of the Global Village, which would bring humanity full-circle to an industrial analogue of tribal mentality.