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# FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Joannou's newly launched *Guilty*, its skin a unique Jeff Koons artwork, dwarfs a nearby fishing boat.

Sittings Editor:  
Hamish Bowles.



Photographed by Raymond Meier



# wet 'n' wild

Is it a motor yacht or a moving sculpture? Art collector Dakis Joannou has enlisted Jeff Koons and a crew of contemporary artists to create the most original sight on the seas. Dodie Kazanjian reports.





#### COMIC EFFECT

Jeff Koons's spectacular exterior pays homage to Roy Lichtenstein and to the "dazzle"-painted warships of World War I, designed to baffle the enemy.



anyone cruising the Aegean this season should be warned: That fantastically colorful, wildly eccentric apparition cutting across your bow is not a mirage. It's *Guilty*, Dakis Joannou's new boat. Joannou, the Greek construction magnate who is also one of the world's most active and astute collectors of contemporary art, asked his close friend Jeff Koons to paint the yacht's exterior, and Koons, a master of art-expanding spectacles, surpassed all expectations. Koons and the boat's designer, Ivana Porfiri, broke free of classic nautical architecture and gave birth to what their delighted patron calls "a totally magical object."

More than 100 luminaries of the international art world—artists, collectors, dealers, museum directors, curators—were on hand for the yacht's christening in mid-June in Greece. Superdealer Larry Gagosian was overheard asking Dakis (no one calls him anything else) if the boat was for sale. The artist Maurizio Cattelan, who consumed the lion's share of the bottarga (silver mullet roe), said that *Guilty* made all conventions about boat design look outdated. Jean "Johnny" Pigozzi, the Italian collector and high-society photographer, who sails the seas in a reconfigured trawler designed by Ettore Sottsass, was clearly impressed: "I thought my boat was crazy," he told Dakis, "but this is something else." Many of the guests had attended the previous night's opening for "Fractured Figure," the second installment of a darkly thematic show of works from the Joannou collection. (One of the highlights is Cattelan's *All*, nine life-size shrouded





#### GUILT TRIP

In the living room, Anish Kapoor's *Untitled*, 2008, hangs above the Campana brothers' 2002 velvet knot sofa for Edra. Bone chaise, 2006, by Joris Laarman (CENTER).

figures carved in grayish-white Carrara marble and lined up on the floor.) But the mood at the marina was anything but dark. The international turnout was a tribute to Dakis, Koons said to me: "a wonderful confirmation of his vision, his commitment to young artists, and his openness to new ways of making art."

Dakis had told Koons and Porfiri to "start from zero" on the boat. He didn't want a megayacht. What he had in mind was an "upgrade"—something a little larger and more comfortable than his 87-foot cruiser, *Protect Me from What I Want*—but he also hoped it would be as adventurous and startling as the cutting-edge art he loves. (The previous boat, its name taken from a Jenny Holzer piece, was full of art on the inside but conventional otherwise. It now belongs to the Joannous' son Christos.)

Koons, who took up the challenge with great enthusiasm, knew immediately what to do: "I thought it would be great

to use camouflage, but not the traditional kind. There was a camouflage that was used in the First World War called 'razzle dazzle,' which doesn't try to hide but to confuse, so you don't know exactly what you're looking at." He was referring to what the British Navy called "dazzle painting," when it began, in 1917, to paint its warships in bright geometric patterns that supposedly made it more difficult for German U-boats to assess their speed and direction. (The U.S. Navy adopted the same painting technique and called it "Razzle Dazzle"; both countries abandoned it when radar and sonar technology became available during World War II.) By a wild coincidence, it turned out that Ivana Porfiri had the exact same idea and was about to propose it. Dakis, naturally, gave them the green light. "It's really rare," Porfiri said at the christening, "to be collaborating with two people who are both pushing you to try the most unusual things."



Jeff and Ivana broke the mold, inside and out. The boat has three decks rather than the normal two. The middle or main deck is like a New York City loft, a long, white, unbroken room with glass walls on both sides, a floor of seamless white Corian, and a remarkable sense of luminous, open space. It is dominated by Anish Kapoor's round, faceted-mirror sculpture and a braided blue velvet legless sofa by the Brazilian Campana brothers—an anti-form that looks like a superluxurious dog bed. A large flat-screen TV serves up a menu of provocative videos by the fast-rising young Swedish artist Nathalie Djurberg. *Guilty's* art, selected and installed with the help of independent curator Cecilia Alemani, leans in the direction of electronic and text-based works by younger artists from several countries.

On the next level up, where the wheelhouse sits on ordinary boats, is the owners' private quarters: a glorious bedroom, a study, and two large terraces with views in all directions. "We asked ourselves, Why does the master bedroom always have to be down below with no views?" Porfiri tells me. "So we decided to put it upstairs, in the best location." The staircase that connects this level to the main deck has a gemlike skylight made of Dichroic glass, and water flowing over it from a small jet; the result is an illusion of constantly changing light and movement.

There are four more bedrooms on the lowest deck, which can accommodate seven guests. Each cabin contains a single artwork, featuring a single word. The VIP cabin has Sarah Morris's *Guilty*; the word is emblazoned in large red capitals on a white ground. Dakis saw the painting in an auction catalog, just after he had named his new boat, and decided he had to have it. In Dakis and his wife, Liotta's, own light-filled cabin, Martin Creed's neon light-sculpture flashes off and on against the mirrored wall behind their bed, spelling out the word FEELINGS.

Koons's razzle-dazzle paint job boggles the mind as well as the eye. Diagonal stripes, Benday dots, pyramid shapes and other strange and complicated geometries, and high-contrast colors (yellow, blue, and light purple, plus black and white) not only make the boat's actual structure virtually unreadable but confuse the blunt-nosed bow with the stern so that it's hard to tell which direction the craft is moving in. Viewed in open water, surrounded by its own vivid reflections, the 118-foot *Guilty* reminds you of an early Cubist painting reimagined by the late Roy Lichtenstein. "Yes, it's an homage to Roy," Koons tells me. "I love Roy's yellow, that very bright, vibrant yellow. I liked the references to Roy, and Roy painting a sailboat." Lichtenstein, whose sailboat painting was owned by Andy Warhol, also painted a real boat—his 80-foot-long mermaid design enveloped the hull of *Young America*, which competed for (but lost) the America's Cup in 1995. Another of Koons's heroes, the punk-rock singer Iggy Pop, makes an appearance on top of the boat, bending over backward as he belts out a song. The image is visible only from above, but that's no problem in Hydra, Corfu, and the other Greek harbors that the Joannous frequent, where steep hills afford overhead views.

At first, Koons was thinking that maybe the boat's name should be *Iggy*; until he heard it was going to be *Guilty*. "*Guilty* is fantastic, absolutely perfect," he says. "It's in the tradition of Dakis's boats. When I first went to see him in 1985, Dakis had a boat that was called *The Donald Duck*. It had a presidential seal with Donald Duck in the center, and all the plates on board had that, too."

Massimiliano Gioni, the New Museum curator who organized the "Fractured Figure" show, also feels that *Guilty* is just right. "Like *Protect Me from What I Want*, it's a statement, maybe an indirect one, about collecting, or desire. *Guilty* recognizes the fact that Dakis is now beyond that point. He can't be protected anymore."

## LIME TWIST

Laarman's Bone chair, 2006, and Ivana Porfiri's custom-designed sofa in the study.



To Dakis, the Koons-Porfiri collaboration is not just applied design. "It's completely integrated," he tells me proudly. "Art, design, the architecture, the light—the whole is just one thing." So, does that make *Guilty* a work of art? Jeff Koons's work—basketballs submerged in fish tanks, a 40-foot-high puppy made of blooming flowers, a stainless-steel replica of a balloon rabbit—has been making us rethink this question for more than two decades. (Last Thanksgiving, his bunny loomed over Broadway as a helium balloon for the Macy's parade; this month, sixteen Koons sculptures go on view at the palace of Versailles, the first contemporary art ever to appear there.) Roy Lichtenstein's America's Cup boat is now on permanent display, as sculpture, in the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, New York. "It's always great to be in a position where you have to ask whether something is art or not," says the dealer Jeffrey Deitch, who introduced Koons to Dakis in the early eighties. "This is where Dakis lives—art is everywhere, art is part of life."

The other day, I reached Dakis by E-mail on his new boat, at Symi in the Dodecanese Islands, and put the question to him directly: Is *Guilty* a work of art? "This is really a question I cannot answer," he E-mailed back. "Maybe you guys could figure that one out!" □



Joannou  
hoped his boat  
would be as  
adventurous and  
startling as the  
cutting-edge  
art he loves



#### MIDAS TOUCH

ABOVE: The mirror-shard dining table, by Fernando and Humberto Campana for Edra, 2006, throws golden light on the living-room ceiling. The chairs are by Karim Rashid for Bonaldo, 2007.



#### SHOCK AND AWE

*Guilty*—which was built at the Cantieri Navali Rizzardi shipyard in Sabaudia, Italy—seen from the cliffs of Hydra. LEFT: An example of British "dazzle painting," *Liverpool Shipping*, 1918, by Edward Alexander Wadsworth.









"Why does the master bedroom always have to be down below with no views?" asks designer Ivana Porfiri

Feelings (Work No. 836), 2007, © MARTIN CREED, purple neon, flashing three seconds on, three seconds off, 5 1/4" x 43 1/2".



#### DECKED OUT

Martin Creed's *Feelings* (Work No. 836), 2007, in the master bedroom. OPPOSITE PAGE: Jeff Koons incorporated an iconic image of Iggy Pop, visible only from above, into his concept for the boat.