

**A CONVERSATION  
JEFF KOONS AND ANSELM REYLE**

**JEFF KOONS**

**“What do you  
think is the real  
meaning of art?”**

## ANSELM REYLE

The real meaning in art is to render another world possible. A world that also has other rules and associations. This world is an island, and for some of us also a life raft. We can gather new experiences on this island. And we can transfer many of them into the real world. They can add something to and even change our lives.

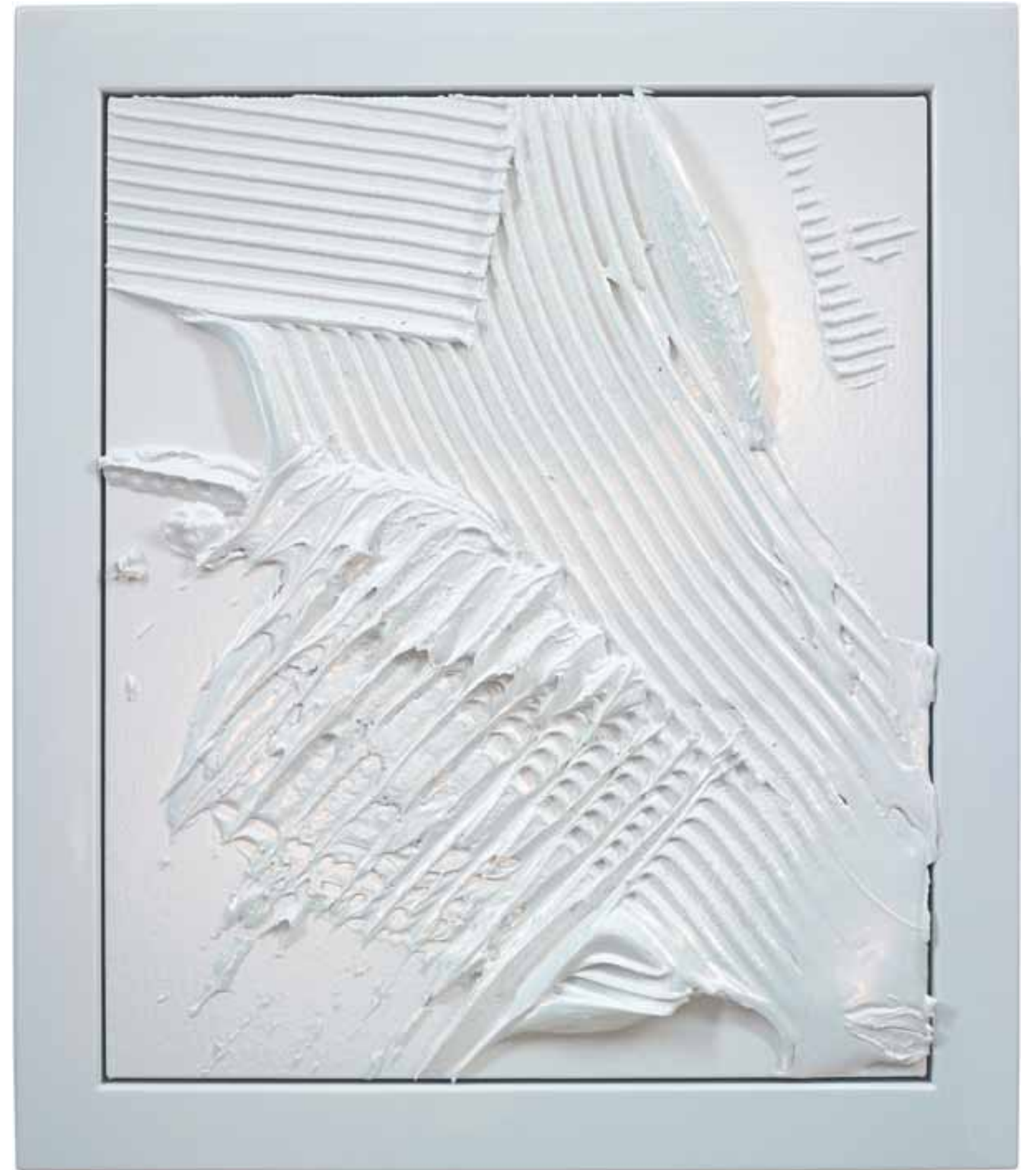


**JEFF KOONS**

**“Do you believe  
art functions more  
importantly as an  
interior or exterior  
component in  
our lives?”**

## ANSELM REYLE

I think that expression requires experience. The external component also needs an internal component. If I were to have had, for example, negative experiences during my childhood or youth, these experiences would certainly, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, influence my artwork. Just like when a stunning sunset inspires me to make a picture. But there are also other experiences, such as those with drugs or sexuality, which can leave traces in the artworks. All these experiences are reflected in the art or they bring about alternate forms of expression.



*White Earth*, 2009  
Mixed media on canvas, steel frame, effect lacquer  
80 x 69 centimeters (framed)

**JEFF KOONS**

**“Is art just an illusion?”**

## ANSELM REYLE

Yes, art is simultaneously illusion, vision, and a statement of a new truth. True art cannot be explained through logic. One can only try to get closer to the truth. Here I would like to give you an example from my own work: A few years ago I painted a wagon wheel neon yellow and declared it art. Essentially, there are only two components here; the wagon wheel and the neon yellow color. But I joined the two components together and it became more—they reacted to each other and became something new, astonishing—and this is art. However, it is visible only to those who want to engage with it, who are ready to leave the well-known, everyday reality. And this essentially applies to all artwork, whether it is a landscape painting, a monochrome painting, or a blown-up and polished, stainless steel rabbit.



JEFF KOONS

**“Do you believe  
humankind’s first  
acknowledgment  
of art was emotional  
or intellectual?”**



## ANSELM REYLE

I think it was like this: One beautiful summer day, a group of cave dwellers collected an overabundance of berries and made a lot of berry mush, more than they could actually eat. After everyone had eaten enough of it, one of the cavemen noticed that a splodge of the berry mush had fallen onto the cave floor. The splodge somehow fascinated him. So he took some of the remaining berry mush and smeared it onto the cave wall. It became an abstract painting. It was generated out of an emotional action. He was exhilarated by it and so were the others. They too began to take some of the remaining berry mush and proceeded to smear it on the rest of the wall until it was all used up. They then fell asleep completely exhausted. When they woke up the following morning to the painted wall, they began to discuss it. Some were of the opinion that there was now too much and they should have stopped earlier. Some even felt that the best results actually happened at the beginning, when there were only three lines. Here is when the intellectual moment came about.

*Black Earth*, 2008  
Mixed media on patterned fabric  
67 x 56 centimeters



**JEFF KOONS**

**“Is it possible  
for art to free itself  
from narrative?”**

## ANSELM REYLE

As I have described, the first painting to ever appear was abstract. One wonders now why these abstract paintings were not passed down, rather than only the stickmen and figurative works. The abstract images are too old and therefore no longer exist. Later on cave people began to paint figures with the berry mush. So an intellectual translation of the original impulses took place. It was from this point on that stories could be told. The narrative became the rule, pushing the original emotional excitement of the first abstract picture further and further into the background. It was only with the onset of modernity that it was rediscovered. Within a relatively short period of time, a continuous retrogression to abstraction began. Abstract painting was rediscovered roughly a hundred years ago, and since then, it is once again possible and legitimate to make non-narrative art.

*Untitled, 2010*  
Mixed media on canvas, acrylic glass  
143 x 121 x 18,5 centimeters

