

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

PRESS RELEASE

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's iconic *Puppy* by Jeff Koons, reveals a new look sporting a face mask to encourage everyone to protect themselves during the pandemic

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has revealed Jeff Koon's iconic *Puppy* has a new look. Koons' famous sculpture, which has welcomed visitors since the museum opened in 1997, will sport a brand new face mask made from flowers as a nod to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The outline of the mask is not clearly visible yet, as the newly repotted plants will need a few weeks to grow and bloom; visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy the full effect then.

Jeff Koon said: "What an honor it is to be able to have *Puppy* communicate the importance of wearing a mask during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. A Bilbao resident sent me a letter asking if *Puppy* could wear a mask which I thought was wonderful idea. I was thrilled that the Museum agreed as now *Puppy*, adorned with a mask made of white and blue flowers, can communicate the importance of wearing a mask to protect against the spread of COVID-19. One of the most important acts that we can make to each other during this pandemic is to share information on how we can protect each other. I can imagine that the *Puppy* has appreciated all of the love shown towards it and is so happy to communicate safety and well-being to the citizens of Bilbao and the world."

Juan Ignacio Vidarte, Director General of the Guggenheim Bilbao said: "We thought the suggestion from a follower of the Museum was excellent, since it drew on the admiration and warmth that people have for *Puppy* to encourage everyone to follow the guidelines of the health authorities in these highly difficult times. After all, *Puppy* has transcended its status as a work of art to become an emblem of the museum and the city of Bilbao itself as well as an icon of optimism. Moreover, contemporary art is—and must be—linked to the present day, so it makes perfect sense to harness the popularity of *Puppy* to support a cause, such as protecting ourselves and others, that is of vital importance at this moment in time".

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao took advantage of *Puppy's* customary changing of flowers at this time of year to add the new feature. Ever since it was installed in 1997, *Puppy*, the 12.4-meter-tall sculpture of a West Highland Terrier, has its flower mantle changed every year in spring and fall in order to adapt to the new season. While in spring and summer *Puppy* wears different colored begonias, impatiens, Mexican marigolds and petunias, in fall and winter these are replaced by pansies and other types of plants that can tolerate the change in season.