THE INSISTENT IMAGE:
RECURRENT MOTIFS IN THE ART OF SHEPARD FAIREY AND JASPER JOHNS

JASPER JOHNS:

Jasper Johns has long incorporated printmaking as a primary expressive form alongside his painting and sculpture. He frequently creates a complex interplay of content among his paintings, prints, and sculpture. Using a variety of printmaking techniques and media, Johns builds up textured layers of imagery, often incorporating imaginative combinations of graphic images from his personal mental archive.

In the 1967 series The Seasons, Johns incorporates imaginative combinations of graphic images from his personal mental archive. His work complicates the relationship between the subject and its depiction in a work of art. Johns has had one of the most illustrious careers of any American artist, with major exhibitions at both New York’s Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunstmuseum Basel, and, most recently, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, to list a few.

Johns is represented in this exhibition by a series of prints made in collaboration with master printmaker Bill Goldston at Universal Limited Art Editions, in New York. This selection emphasizes many of Johns’s recurrent motifs and themes over the past thirty years, including flags, the face-vase optical illusion, targets, galaxies, gestures from American Sign Language, paint cans, and fragments of works by such international stalwarts as Picasso, Holbein, da Vinci, and George Ohr, among others. This personal iconography has named him well, and often has been blended with family photographs and childhood mementos.

In the 1987 series The Seasons, Johns references the allegorical concept of the Ages of Man, and additionally incorporates a flotilla of other art-historical touchstones addressing this persistent subject. In fact, Johns’s art is so dense with associational possibilities that it often leads critics into pretzel-like contortions trying to parse the fragmented narratives and historical references. With The Seasons, Johns provides us with a great mystery to unravel.

MAY 22 – JULY 12, 2014

The Insistent Image: Recurrent Motifs in the Art of Shepard Fairey and Jasper Johns features new work by Shepard Fairey and a survey of prints made, between 1982 and 2012, by Jasper Johns at Universal Limited Art Editions. Both Fairey and Johns recycle graphic elements in the works they produce, and in each case those repeated fragments gain new meaning through fresh juxtapositions and associations. Additionally, both artists employ the power of the complex formal devices they have developed to transform the familiar into the iconic. The exhibition demonstrates the relationship between the subject and its depiction in a work of art. Johns has had one of the most illustrious careers of any American artist, with major exhibitions at both New York’s Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunstmuseum Basel, and, most recently, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, to list a few.

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