



MADE IN HEAVEN?
WHEN ART AND PORNOGRAPHY SHARE A BED
Cory Wayman (Sarah Hollenberg, PhD)
Department of Art & Art History

This Art History thesis investigates the relationship between the categories of pornography and art primarily through a visual and textual analysis of American artist Jeff Koons's series *Made in Heaven* in addition to works by contemporary artists Marilyn Minter, Ghada Amer and Thomas Ruff. I note that existing scholarship and critical response to the series downplays Koons's engagement with pornography, arguing instead for the works' "non-pornographic" contextual qualities and fixating on Koons's celebrity, marriage and self-representation. I argue conversely for the centrality of pornography to the works, suggesting that Koons's appropriation of pornography posits new understandings of the relationship between high art and popular visual culture. I study the peculiar lack of discussion of "the pornographic" in relation to representations of low-status yet highly-desired commodities that have been widely studied in Koons's oeuvre, in addition to scholarship on the American Pop art of the 1960s. Comparing contemporary art by Koons and other artists which engages visual forms of pornography with Roy Lichtenstein reveals historical similarities in public receptions of art that engages "non-art" imagery. Reception of Koons's *Made in Heaven* echoes many of the same modernist notions put forward in the public and critical discourse around Roy Lichtenstein's comic book paintings. In both cases, contemporaneous audiences demonstrated a strong investment in concepts of stylistic originality and authorship while ignoring the critical effect of the artist's practice of appropriation of pop cultural imagery. This thesis argues that the upholding of the belief in the incompatibility of art and pornography is neither an objective nor effective means of interpreting art.

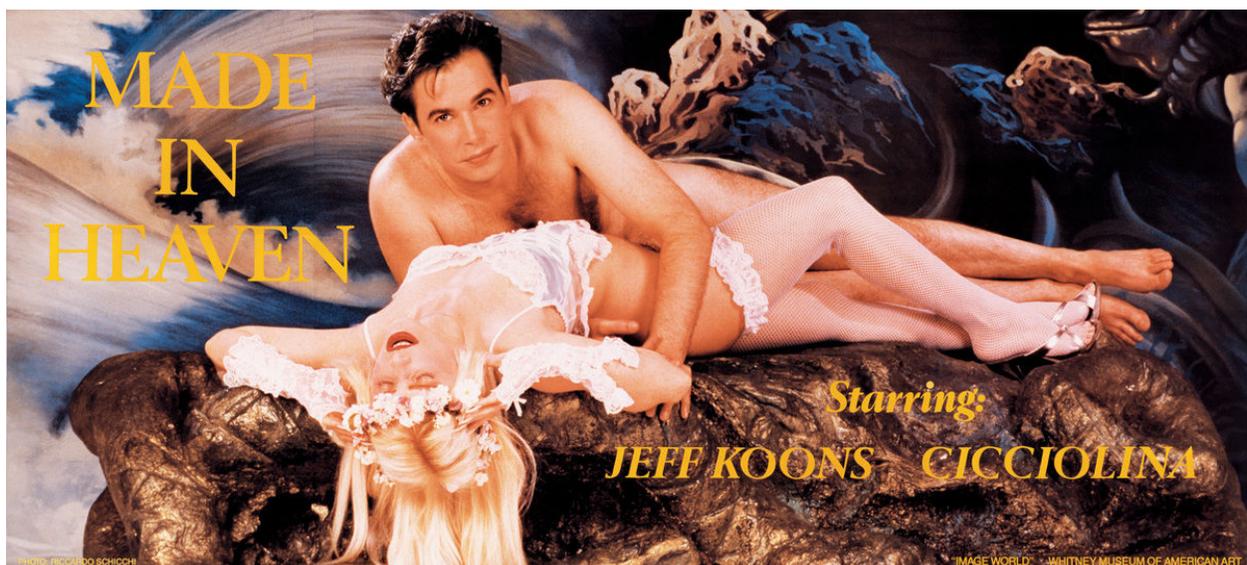


Figure: Jeff Koons, *Made in Heaven*, 1989, lithograph billboard on canvas, 125 x 272 inches