

AUSTRIAN PAINTER HELMUT KOLLER EXHIBITS IN MOSCOW



MOSCOW, May 20— The work of internationally renowned painter Helmut Koller is being doubly fêted in Moscow this spring: first with a solo exhibition at prestigious luxury automobile dealership Bentley from May 24 to 29, then a private viewing and reception at the Residence of the Ambassador of Austria, housed in the circa 1906 neoclassical revival Nikolay Mindovsky House, June 20th (they will remain on exhibit indefinitely, but viewing requires access to the Embassy). Koller is best known for his vibrant large-scale canvases depicting various species of the animal kingdom, which are rendered in a “New Pop” style that employs fantastical colors and graphic detail. “These paintings are iconic portraits of sentient beings,” says the artist, “supreme beauties without a reference of time and space, esoteric manipulations of nature.”

A native of Hartberg in the Austrian province of Styria, Koller was born in 1954. The son of a member of Parliament, he took up photography at a young age, landing a job as the official photographer of the Vienna State Opera. His work depicting legendary figures such as Rudolf Nureyev and Herbert von Karajan, as well as fashion photography, was frequently featured in glossy magazines such as *Bunte*, *TV Guide*, *Fortune* and *Men’s Style*. “But in the back of my mind,” he recalls, “I believed that painters are greater artists and I was ‘just’ a photographer.” An Egon Schiele exhibition proved revelatory, leading Koller to create “Homage to Egon Schiele,” a

series of nude photographs, in 1981. The following year he created mixed media works on paper that combined photography and painting. By 1988, Koller had abandoned photography completely and devoted himself to the medium of acrylic paint, first with varied thematic material, then to portraits of American Indians, which, he says, was “where I seriously learned how to paint.”

Returning briefly to nudes, Koller further refined what became a signature rigorous three-color discipline. “I was fascinated to discover that the more you limit yourself to a pictorial language and style with very close parameters, the more exciting the creative process becomes,” says Koller, who splits his time between Vienna and Palm Beach.

Since beginning this series of animal portraits in 1997, the self-taught artist has become a darling of a jet-setting clientele that frequents glamour capitals of the world, from Palm Beach, Monaco and Gstaad to New York, Paris and Singapore. His works hang in chic residences around the globe, including Kensington Palace, the top of The Peak in Hong Kong, dachas, grand estates and many of the venerable prewar buildings of Park Avenue.

For more information on the artist and the upcoming exhibitions, contact Franck Laverdin at fl@francklaverdin.com.