

ARTILLERY

JULY-AUGUST 2018 \$6



RY ROCKLEN CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS LAUREN HALSEY NARSISO MARTINEZ



LA TIMES
CRITIC
JONATHAN
GOLD
ART &
FOOD



Jeff Koons, *Play-Doh*, 1994–2014,
Polychromed aluminum,
collection of the artist, ©Jeff Koons.

GETTY GOES GREEK

ROMAN VILLA HOSTS CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS
BY CHARLES RAPPLEYE

The Getty Villa is reaching for relevance with “Plato in L.A.,” an exhibition that seeks to link the founder of classical Western philosophy to the fresh and vital productions of today’s art world.

Fear not: it’s a show, not a transformation, and the quiet dignity of the Getty Villa survives the discordant intrusion of some of today’s most notorious art rebels.

The exhibition—some dozen works of varying scope and elaboration—occupies several second-story galleries: it’s there, but it’s easy to overlook. That’s especially true of the smaller works, some hung in hallways, as you might find in a hotel. There’s the set of books, loosely collected around practical themes like gardening, or psychology, handsomely bound and set in a long mahogany shelf. Without an I.D. tag a visitor might not give the bookshelf a second thought; instead, we find that curator Donatien Grau, a French intellectual and a contributing editor at *Flash Art*, considers the assemblage to represent “universality,” which translates as “the Platonic notion of transcendence made immanent.”

Okay, I suppose, but I dare you to divine that insight without a finding guide.

Not to dismiss what is, to be fair, a most intriguing point posed by Grau and the Getty exhibition. That is, that Plato disdained the art of his time; that it was all about representation, which he considered at best a hollow appropriation of the ideal; and that it’s only been in the past couple of centuries,

as Grau argues in the catalog, that “we have witnessed... an evolution of the figure of the artist into one who performs the role of Socrates, asking questions and posing paradoxes we never would have considered.”

On that score, and in the Getty show, I will have to acknowledge Jeff Koons and his oversize *Play-Doh*—the pun in the title is intentional—as the work that best succeeds in capturing a Platonic ideal within the context of a fully modern expression. At 11-feet high and 10 across, *Play-Doh* is big enough, and its Day-Glo colors garish enough, to command the room and announce its identity as very much a product of today’s high-sheen culture. And yet it’s a fully-realized expression of the Platonic ideal that art strives to reveal, not a shadow of reality, but, to quote Grau again, of “the ideal forms that stand behind the appearance of reality.”

It’s an object grown into an idea, which in its size and its method forces an encounter with the silenced child, the buried impulse to create, to fashion, to play. Koons himself suggests, “The most powerful experience that you can have is a confrontation with an idea.”

It’s a lot to ask from a trip to the beach. But perhaps you like to dig deeper.*

*Located on the Pacific Coast just six miles along the coast from the Getty Villa, Hotel Casa del Mar is the perfect launch pad for exploring “Plato in L.A.” and the rest of the Getty’s treasures. They offer a “Plato on the Beach” package which includes: • Two complimentary “Artist-Inspired Libations” • Complimentary parking at the Getty Villa. • Complimentary valet parking for one car during stay at the hotel. • One copy of the exhibition catalog, by Donatien Grau. Available for stays from April 18, 2018 – Sept. 3, 2018. For more info: www.hotelcasadelmar.com/ and www.getty.edu/visit/villa/.

ART [ASPEN

JULY 26–29, 2018

Aspen Ice Garden

art-aspen.com

Udo Nöger, Timothy Yarger Fine Art