

# JUTTA KOETHER

# SEASONS AND

# SACRAMENTS

Sat 9 February - Sun 21 April 2013  
Dundee Contemporary Arts

**DCA**

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152 Nethergate  
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[www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)  
Reg Charity No. SC026631

**Exhibition open:**  
Tue - Sat 11:00 - 18:00  
Sun 12:00 - 18:00  
Open late Thu until 20:00  
**Admission free**

## Introduction

Dundee Contemporary Arts is proud to present *Seasons and Sacraments* by the influential German artist Jutta Koether. Featuring a selection of new and recent works, *Seasons and Sacraments* is Koether's response to two important series of paintings by the French artist Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and is the largest exhibition of the artist's work in the UK to date. The exhibition is supported by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen and will travel to Arnolfini, Bristol. A publication is in preparation.

*Seasons and Sacraments* is an exhibition of contemporary paintings by an artist who is remembering, repeating and working within the tradition of historical painting, while at the same time deviating from and radicalising the conceivably conservative position of being a painter. The idea of "Network Painting" is central to Koether's work. It is a term coined by the art historian David Joselit in his essay *Painting Beside Itself* from the journal *October*, 2009. It references a statement by Martin Kippenberger (1953-1997), a contemporary of Koether's, in which he states that: "Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it's art is dreadful. The whole network is important!". Koether acknowledges and emphasises the act of reading and re-interpreting paintings within her own work. This process will be expanded in a performative event by the artist which will take place in the galleries on Thu 7 March at 19:00 (please see page 8 for details).

Jutta Koether was born in 1958 in Cologne, Germany and works as a painter, performance artist, musician, critic and theoretician. Based in Berlin and New York, Koether is also a professor at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg. As a musician, she has worked with artists such as Tony Conrad, John Miller, Tom Verlaine, Kim Gordon and the late Steven Parrino. Recent exhibitions include the Whitney and Sao Paulo Biennials; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm and the VanAbbe Museum, Eindhoven. Her work was first shown at DCA in 2008 as part of the group exhibition *Altered States of Paint*. *Seasons and Sacraments* coincides with her inclusion in the Tate Modern exhibition *A Bigger Splash: Painting after Performance* which runs until 1 April.

DCA and the artist would like to thank:

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen; Gallery Buchholz, Berlin and Cologne; Campoli Presti, London and Paris; Arnolfini, Bristol - Tom Trevor and Axel Wieder; Jay Sanders; Philip Hunt, National Galleries of Scotland; Loretta Fahrenholt.

## Gallery 1: Seasons

“Benign in Spring, rich in Summer,  
sombre yet fruitful in Autumn  
and cruel in Winter”

Anthony Blunt, *Nicholas Poussin*, 1967, p.352

*Seasons* were first shown at the 2012 Whitney Biennial in New York, and are now shown in Europe for the first time at DCA. The paintings are presented floating on large sheets of toughened glass. This alluded to the trapezoid window at the Whitney, designed by Marcel Breuer and now stands alongside the L-shaped window traversing two walls in Richard Murphy’s DCA building looking out on our city rebuilding itself and our ever-changing weather systems.

Poussin’s *Seasons* (1660-1664) were the last works that he would complete. There is a sense of an artist in old age looking back through life and whilst recognising his own mortality, he is looking at the renewing aspects of the seasons. They are part of the historic collection of The Louvre in Paris.

Jay Sanders, co-curator of the 2012 Whitney Biennial, wrote four short texts about each of the *Seasons*, which are incorporated into the work on the reverse of the paintings *Spring* and *Summer*. Sanders observes that in these paintings, “Koether re-insists on the seasons as still-relevant demarcations to contemporary life - aesthetic, fashion, economic and otherwise.”

In Koether’s installation the first painting that is encountered is Winter and a counter-clockwise orientation would be the only way to read the paintings in their perceived order.

## The Human Seasons

Four Seasons fill the measure of the year;  
    There are four seasons in the mind of man:  
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear  
    Takes in all beauty with an easy span:  
He has his Summer, when luxuriously  
    Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he loves  
To ruminatè, and by such dreaming high  
    Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves  
His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings  
    He furlèth close; contented so to look  
On mists in idleness—to let fair things  
    Pass by unheedèd as a threshold brook.  
He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,  
    Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

John Keats, 1818

We have included this Keats poem as it nimbly conveys time's passage from the perspective of a young man. Keats would of course only live three more years, aged just 25 when he died.

## Gallery 2: The Seven Sacraments

Poussin painted two versions of the *The Seven Sacraments*. The second version, to which Koether has responded, was painted in Rome between 1644 and 1648 for his friend Paul Freart de Chantelou. Considered “richer, grander and more complex than the first” (Blunt, *Poussin: The Seven Sacraments*, 1968) they represent Poussin at the height of his career.

The original paintings depict the sacraments of the Catholic Church: *Baptism*, *Eucharist*, *Confirmation*, *Marriage*, *Penance*, *Ordination* and *Extreme Unction*. Koether reinterprets *The Seven Sacraments* as a series of dynamic installations. These seven new works propose seven different approaches to contemporary painting. Visitors can compare Koether’s work with the second and only complete set of Poussin’s *Seven Sacraments* which is on display at the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh.

“Having completed the second series of *The Seven Sacraments*, Poussin wrote the following remarkable sentence expressing a dialectic that calls for a reversal of method, for the antidote to order and the rule of chance: ‘If it were possible, I wish that these *Seven Sacraments* were converted into seven other stories that vividly represent the strangest tricks that fortune has ever played on men, and particularly on those who mocked her efforts.’”

Oskar Bätschmann, *Nicolas Poussin: Dialectics of Painting*, 1990, p.90

Koether’s response to the *The Seven Sacraments* is less traditional than her *Seasons*. Her restless, iconoclastic and interdisciplinary approach to painting includes sculptural elements. This is particularly striking in her innovative use of clear liquid acrylic to incorporate objects into the work, capturing the present in a frozen moment like the natural world in amber. Several of these works have been completed on site at DCA.

*Extreme Unction* is visible in the internal corridor between the galleries but situated in such a way as to deny the visitor access through. The work comprises planks of wood from the DCA workshop alongside pieces prepared in Koether’s studio and completed during the installation period. The artist has previously utilised planks as elements in performances, most recently in a series of events organised by the collaborative group *Grand Openings* (of which she is member) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2011. *Extreme Unction* is laid out in the form of a number seven and Koether relates it to a tradition of “eccentric” readings of art and literature, citing Quentin Meillassoux’s *The Number and the Siren* (2012), T.J. Clark’s *The Sight of Death* (2006) and Scott Walker’s album *Bish Bosch* (2012) as key examples.

*Baptism* is represented by a painted canvas featuring German Formula One

racetrack driver Sebastian Vettel rather than a scene from classical antiquity. The painting is hung on the gallery door, with a painted copper pole ceremonially placed below it each day. Vettel (the current world champion) appears throughout the exhibition, providing a contemporary form of idolatry in today's more secular time, festooned with the corporate identities of his sponsors.

*Ordination* is a span of what Koether calls "Mad Garlands", displayed along the length of Gallery 2 and continuing into the ancillary gallery. The pieces are hung at the mid-point of the gallery wall at door height, alluding to decorative architectural lintels. They are painted in red tones as checkerboard stripes, some inscribed with messages derived from the Occupy Movement in New York. In the ancillary gallery there are two Origin *POP* chairs. The *POP* chair is a contemporary all polymer air moulded chair, designed for contract, educational and residential environments in contrast to the delicate Essey table used in *Penance*. A 50 metre stretch of LED rope lights is bundled on top of the chairs, perhaps referencing the light in the middle of Poussin's *Eucharist* painting and certainly the light that is suspended in the octagonal room where the paintings are displayed in Edinburgh.

*Marriage* is a pair of paintings spotlighted with a theatre light to reveal the metallic paint within the composition. Koether's treatment of the material is more bacchanalian than Poussin's formal approach. The act of doubling (by repetition and in terms of height) and the use of red in the work make Koether's paintings emphatic and animated. The top panel is tipped forward to allude to a traditional salon-style hang. In this piece Koether alludes to Jacques Derrida's *The Double Session* in which he refers to the idea of the mime: "mime does not imitate or copy some prior phenomena, idea, or figure, but constitutes - some might say performatively - the phantasm of the original in and through the mime." (Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", *Dissemination*, 1981)

*Penance* utilises a *Grand Illusion* table designed by Essey - a contemporary Danish design in clear perspex that resembles Koether's liquid acrylic material and Poussin's drapery; in particular the mysteriously veiled female on the extreme left of Poussin's *Marriage*. The objects included in the work encapsulate details from the artist's practice and elements from Poussin's paintings. They also serve as a votive for the whole project - more or less unrecoverable offerings - including a marriage certificate holder, a Swarovski "Dundee" paperweight and an inscribed racing car money box.

*Confirmation* presents more objects encased in clear liquid acrylic, attached to vast sheets of glass identical in size and shape to those used in Gallery 1, which serve as a double-sided screen. Attached to the glass are strips of canvas which echo aspects of the original Poussin painting - for instance the blue and yellow in

the central panel signify the robes of Jesus and St. Peter. The artist has incorporated feathers into each panel to indicate perspective foregrounding. Each composition contains entry passes - symbolising keys - used by Koether in the art world.

*Eucharist*, also known as *Holy Communion* or *Sacrament of the Altar*, sees Koether exhibit photographs of the Poussin paintings. These looped images on a display monitor reveal the source of the artist's paintings. The widescreen monitor mirrors the format of the second set of Poussin paintings. A neat anomaly between the sets Poussin made is the transition from 95.5cm x 121cm to the more expansive 117cm x 178cm ratio. Not unlike contemporary monitors shifting from 4:3 to 16:9 ratios and photography shifting from medium format to 35mm film. Three cushioned Ikea seats are butted up together to make a daybed in front of the monitor referencing the octagonal seating in Edinburgh.

The Seven Sacraments by Nicolas Poussin:

*The Sacrament of Baptism*

*The Sacrament of Confirmation*

*The Sacrament of Marriage*

*The Sacrament of Penance*

*The Sacrament of Ordination*

*The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist*

*The Sacrament of Extreme Unction*

Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery (Bridgewater Loan, 1945). We are grateful to His Grace, The Duke of Sutherland for permission to present these representations of the paintings.

Jutta Koether has also developed two new works in DCA Print Studio. The first is a unique work which incorporates both digital and analogue techniques. A 1971 portrait of the Queen on a horse pointing to Balmoral by Lord Lichfield from a contemporary magazine advertisement is superimposed with a line drawing from a newspaper photograph of Sebastian Vettel celebrating a third World Championship. Embossed into these images are a letter E (the unexplained letter in *Ordination* which may stand for Ecclesia, Emmanuel or Epsilon or in this case Elizabeth) and the number four turned on its side to resemble a set square, providing a sense of perspective. An old branded identity of *Dundee: City of Discovery* also appears in the landscape and within Vettel's clothing. The second work, *Double Sessions*, is an etching from two drawings on tracing paper by the artist, based on a photograph of a tableau vivant of Jacques Derrida recreating Poussin's *Massacre of the Innocents* (c.1630). The number seven is embossed into the ceiling. The appearance of the four and the seven reiterate the *Seasons* and the *Sacraments*.

## Talks and Events

Book your place on 01382 909 900. For more information please visit [www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)

### Jutta Koether: Artist Talk

Wed 6 February, 10:30

Cinema

Free, drop in.

Jutta Koether will deliver a specially devised presentation for students and the general public.

### Meet the Artist

Fri 8 February, 18:30

Gallery 1 & 2

Free, but please book in advance.

Join artist Jutta Koether and Graham Domke, Exhibitions Curator at DCA, for an introductory conversation and sneak preview of the exhibition before it officially opens.

### Senior Citizen Kane Club Exhibition Tours

Tue 26 February & Tue 26 March,  
10:30 - 11:30

Gallery 1 & 2

Free, but please book in advance. DCA would like to welcome anyone over the age of 60 to join us at Senior Citizen Kane Club for an informal tour of *Seasons and Sacraments*. The tour combines tea and chat with a focus on exploring the artworks at first hand and background information about the artist and her practice.

### Jutta Koether Performance

Thu 7 March, 19:00

Gallery 1 & 2

Free, but please book in advance.

Jutta Koether gives a special one-off performance to coincide with the exhibition.

### (((echo)))

Thu 21 March, 19:00

Gallery 1 & 2

Free, drop in.

Come along and contribute to this popular event designed to provoke discussions about the current exhibition through a series of presentations by local artists.

### Gallery Screening: Pola X

Tue 12 March, 18:00

Cinema

£6.50/£4.50 concessions.

Jutta Koether has selected this powerful contemporary re-interpretation of Herman Melville's *Pierre: Or, The Ambiguities* by the director of *Holy Motors* and *The Night is Young* to accompany her exhibition. The late Guillaume Depardieu plays the young author whose life unravels when he meets a woman who claims to be his sister.

Dir: Leos Carax

France 1999 / 2h14m / 35mm / 18

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