

# ROBILANT + VOENA

## *Female Beauty through the Ages*

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From Pericles' ancient Greece, when beauty first began to be synonymous with harmony and mathematical proportion, to the present day when the quest for physical perfection has become almost an obsession, art has never ceased to investigate the aesthetic appeal of Woman. The artist has long been the eye of the beholder, capturing, depicting and enhancing Female Beauty for posterity. This exhibition is a journey through the beauty of Woman, as represented by some of the most famous artists of all time, and shows that Beauty is more universal than we might believe: the beauty from the past could easily be admired today.

The exhibition begins in the Roman era with a **Roman statue of Lucilla**, reflecting the classical heritage of aesthetics which has pervaded Western perception of Beauty for centuries. It moves through the Middle Ages when a woman was tame and demure, delicate but resplendent, a desired but unattainable lady between the spirit and the Earth; moving through the Renaissance, towards the sacred Seventeenth century of **Sassoferrato's Madonna** and the more profane *Three Graces* of **Giovanni Martinelli's**. It reaches the Belle Epoque with **Giovanni Boldini**, and the more melancholic Secessionist **Gustav Klimt**, both masters in portraying women who are supple and uninhibited by nature, ladies who show no reluctance for a more flirtatious model of beauty. Directly holding the viewer's gaze, they affirm their self-determination as mature and emancipated individuals, fully aware of their femininity.

The journey draws closer to the present day with the seminal icon of Hollywood beauty – Marilyn. Portrayed by **Andy Warhol**, who revolutionized the very concept of beauty by placing all women both famous and unknown on the same level – the Reversal series Marilyn exhibited questions the classical notion of Beauty, digging for a deeper understanding. The contemporary interrogation of the subject is continued by **Jeff Koons**, who reinterprets feminine vanity, ironically stylizing the figure of another icon – the cartoon star Popeye's girlfriend Olive Oyl on a mirrored surface, exploring the links between our contemporary fascination with Beauty and consumerist popular culture, banality and childhood. Lastly, the Italian artist **Francesco Vezzoli** uses yet another American pop icon - Dolly Parton - to give us his concept of beauty after Palma il Vecchio and Ambrosius Bosschaert – fusing the banal with the historical, thus achieving an almost perfect approximation of the state of Female Beauty NOW.

Through its breadth of references the exhibition places the delicacy, candour, vulnerability, but also the power of feminine charm as the focus of a considered reflection on the nature of aesthetics through the ages, giving each of us an opportunity to draw our own conclusions.

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