

The Pharmacist's Creed, 1997-8
Lightbox with two sheets of laminated glass in painted metal frame



Two of Hirst's central concerns –faith and science –are brought together here in a single work. A pharmaceutical company logo is shown inside the Pharmacy green cross –the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's registered service mark and a recognisable symbol of modern medicine. The panel was designed originally for a wall in Hirst's Notting Hill Pharmacy restaurant, before a lightbox was fabricated in 2008.

The Pharmacy cross takes on almost religious significance here, as a powerful symbol of the faith we place in science in the 21st century to cure our ills. Whereas centuries ago we would have looked to a benevolent god or the church for help, we now place absolute faith in modern medicine to combat illness, decay and death.

Hirst prompts us to question how far modern medicine has supplanted religion as the dominant belief system. His use of the lightbox format also recalls illuminated chemist shop signs –a chilling reminder of the commercial and often exploitative nature of the pharmaceutical industry as well as the value of our belief in drugs to the global economy.

Pharmacy Wallpaper, 2004
Five colour print with metallic silver



This wallpaper was designed originally for Pharmacy –the artist's restaurant in Notting Hill, London, which opened in 1997 and closed in 2003. Images of pills and pharmaceutical products are paired with a biblical reference. Hirst is alluding to the idea that pharmaceutical products are a replacement for God in modern mythology: 'People have a lot of confidence in medicine. I noticed they were looking at shiny colours and bright shapes and nice white coats and they were going, right –this is going to be my saviour, except they weren't reading the side effects.'

The placing of Hirst's wallpaper alongside historical works dealing with religious worship and biblical stories raises the question of what religion means today. Hirst's union of pills and religion implies parallels between the church and the pharmaceutical industry as systems of control: both are employed to combat, and come to terms with, death. Hirst also suggests the comfort provided by belief (whether religious or secular) with the silver ground, a colour symbolising security and reliability.

Love will tear us apart, 1995
Acrylic syringe dispenser, needles, syringes and packaging



Hirst swallowed some pills as a child, mistaking them for sweets, and had to have his stomach pumped. This childhood incident triggered his fascination with modern medicine and our confidence that drugs will cure everything.

Hirst's misinterpretation of the pills as sugary treats reminds us of the innocence of childhood. The colours of the syringes on the bottom row of the cabinet are simultaneously attractive and threatening, pastel-coloured and pleasingly packaged like sweets in a vending machine, yet potentially lethal. Hirst enjoys this contradictory relationship between appearance and reality.

The title is taken from a 1980 song by the British post-punk band Joy Division. The band's lead singer, Ian Curtis, suffered from depression and epilepsy and took his own life in the same year, thereafter becoming an icon for Hirst's generation.

Forms without Life, 1991
Glass, painted MDF, pine, ramin, steel and shells



Hirst has spoken of his love of curiosity museums, which have their origin in the sixteenth century when 'cabinets of wonder' or rooms of disparate objects were brought together and categorised according to type. Here the artist has arranged his collection of shells in rows, as if classified for a natural history display. The title reminds us that we are looking at part of the body of a sea creature that was once alive. It also alludes to the dilemma of collection and display: one kind of death is necessary for another new form of life or knowledge to be gained.

Hirst bought the shells in Thailand. By presenting them as an artwork he draws attention to the almost alien exoticism of shells, forms which are typically sold in holiday resorts but which have been admired, studied and used by humans throughout history.

Home Sweet Home, 1996
Screenprint on ceramic



Cigarettes are a frequent motif in Hirst's work. Cigarette stubs continued to appear in his artworks even after he quit the habit in 2006. The artist has compared the act of smoking to a mini life cycle: the pack as birth, the match as God lighting up as the spark of life, the ashtray as death.

For this multiple, Hirst screenprinted a plate to look like an ashtray, its circular form symbolising the continuous circle of the world. Each cigarette butt represents a human life which has now expired. The extinguished cigarettes –so swiftly smoked and decayed–express the fragility of human existence and the speed at which each of us move through our lives. The title alludes to the homely comfort a social smoker might gain from a leisurely smoke.

Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree, 2002
Colour etching on paper



This etching derives from Hirst's large and on-going series of spin paintings, an example of which can be seen above the doorway in the main hall downstairs. It is one of 23 etchings from the portfolio *In a Spin, the Action of the World on Things I*.

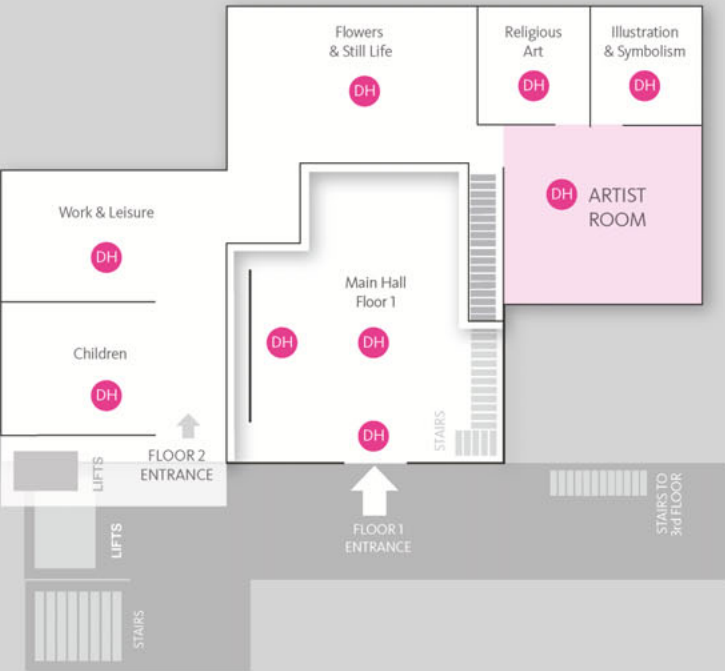
To make the etchings Hirst attached etching copperplates to his spin machine and drew on them as they rotated using a range of sharp tools, including needles and screwdrivers. The artist's work on the plates can be likened to a DJ turning and scratching records. The finished print, with its repeated rings and occasional spirals, recalls the grooves on a vinyl record and the effects of a child's 'Spirograph' drawing toy.

The title refers to popular music and also to the practice of tying yellow ribbons to denote devotion to a sweetheart.



Damien Hirst is one of the most challenging and influential artists to have emerged from the British art scene in the 1990s. Some of the artist's most iconic and controversial works are shown here in the context of the Garman Ryan Galleries as part of an exciting new year-long display.

Hirst's work asks viewers to question the main dilemmas of human existence: life, death, religion and belief. These ideas are explored in the form of 'artist rooms' and through a series of interventions into the themed Garman Ryan rooms.



Exhibition guide

FREE

beautiful c painting, 1996

Household gloss on canvas



In 1994 Hirst embarked on a series of spin paintings, placing large circular canvases on a rotating turntable and pouring or flinging household gloss paint over the surface. He was inspired by a Blue Peter motorised cardboard spinning machine feature he watched on television as a nine-year-old boy.

Every painting in the spin series is unique but, unlike traditional or historic works, the end result of Hirst's machine-made painting does not depend on his hand. By exploring mechanical production techniques, Hirst is challenging the idea of the handmade aesthetic in the creation of 'high art'. For this reason, critics have described the spin paintings as 'childish', 'tasteless', 'not art', 'over simplistic' and 'throwaway' –words that Hirst playfully incorporates into the titling of other paintings from his 1996 series. By leaving the end result of the painting to chance Hirst highlights the equalising potential of art, where both a child and a famous artist can make similarly beautiful pictures.

Away from the Flock, 1994

Glass, painted steel, silicone, acrylic, plastic, lamb and formaldehyde solution



Away from the Flock is one of Hirst's most famous 'Natural History' works. In this series dead animals (cows, sheep, sharks, pigs, zebras) are preserved in formaldehyde-filled, minimalist-style containers, creating a clinical display of dead matter and the illusion of animals floating in space.

Hirst here references religious iconography – the theme of the lamb of God –but his lamb is sacrificed for the sake of art. The title alludes to Christian literature, where to leave the flock is to leave behind the protection of the church.

Through his animal works, Hirst challenges what he perceives to be the 'sweeping of death under the carpet' today, tapping into our most private fears. By creating the conditions for an encounter with death in the gallery, the artist forces us to 'face up to death on some level'.

Trinity – Pharmacology, Physiology, Pathology, 2000

Glass, faced particleboard, wood, steel and anatomical models



Trinity draws parallels between science and religion as different systems of belief. In Hirst's trio of cabinets, plastic demonstration objects and teaching aids sourced from medical supply catalogues are neatly arranged on shelves. These focus on the three types of scientific study into the human body: pharmacology (the preparation, uses and effects of drugs); physiology (the branch of biology dealing with the functions and activities of living organisms, including all physical and chemical processes); and pathology (the study of the origin, nature and development of diseases). For Hirst, these branches of science have come to govern our everyday lives: science is perceived to offer the same protection from death as eternal life in Christianity and is now a surrogate religion for many.

Hirst's use of the triptych form is akin to religious altar paintings where the largest middle panel is usually flanked by two smaller works. The name 'trinity' itself also holds significant meaning in Christian doctrine, referencing the union of three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in one Godhead; three becoming one.

With Dead Head, 1991

Photographic print on aluminium



Hirst was just sixteen when this picture was taken –ten years before he enlarged the image and made it into an artwork. He is shown literally face to face with death, posing next to one of the specimens in the anatomy department at Leeds University where he often went to make anatomical drawings as a student. Hirst was already amassing a collection of books on pathology (the scientific study of diseases) and beginning to think about the relationship between life and death –a theme that would become central to his work.

With Dead Head is an important precursor to Hirst's tiger shark in formaldehyde (*The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1991), the work that made the artist a household name. By addressing death, Hirst intended to 'make art that was more real'.

Controlled Substances Key Painting, 1994

Household gloss on canvas



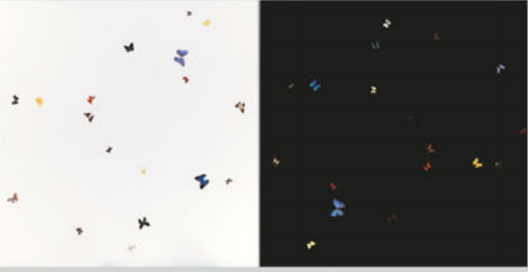
Hirst created his first spot painting by hand but he soon took up a more methodical approach to painting, making each spot a uniform size and arranging them within a precise grid structure.

Here the spots are accompanied by letters and numbers, which seem to dissect the painting into cells. The alphabet ascends vertically, an organising format used in the periodic table where chemical elements with a related atomic structure appear in vertical columns. Hirst's labelling of the spots also recalls the system used by laboratory scientists to organise specimens.

All of the paintings in the 'spot' series are titled after the names of drugs. Hirst selected them from a book listing pharmaceuticals, which he read from cover to cover.

Monument to the Living and the Dead, 2006

Butterflies and household gloss on canvas



Butterflies are a recurring motif in Hirst's work, as a metaphor for our own fragile existence and as a symbol of the life cycle. In this diptych the butterflies are seemingly alive, fluttering across the picture. The insects are adhered to the canvas using modern household gloss –a delicate combination of natural beauty and artifice. Hirst

deliberately painted the edges of the wings to suggest the idea of the butterflies wrestling with the wet surface of the paint before finally becoming trapped within it.

Butterflies are traditional symbols of the soul. Hirst has created a kind of memorial to the living and the dead, so that prayers can be said for their souls. The fleeting lifespan of the butterfly reminds us of the fragility of life, while the day-time (white canvas) and night-time (black canvas) pairing of the pictures emphasises the inescapable closeness of life to death.

Credits

All artworks by Damien Hirst

beautiful c painting, 1996
Household gloss on canvas. 72 in (1828.8 mm) diameter
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Purchased 2002
Photographed by Stephen White © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

Away from the Flock, 1994
Glass, painted steel, silicone, acrylic, plastic, lamb and formaldehyde solution
37.75 x 58.625 x 20.125 in (960 x 1490 x 510 mm). Edition 3 of 3. ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008. Photographed by Prudence Cumming Associates © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

Trinity – Pharmacology, Physiology, Pathology, 2000
Glass, faced particleboard, wood, steel and anatomical models
84.06 x 60.24 x 18.58 in (2135 x 1530 x 472 mm) . (Left and Right); Centre 27.45 x 18.35 x 4.72 mm. ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008. Photographed by Prudence Cumming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

With Dead Head, 1991
Photographic print on aluminium. 22.5 x 30 in (571.5 x 762 mm). Edition of 15
ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008. Photographed by André Morin-Le-Jeune © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

Controlled Substances Key Painting, 1994
Household gloss on canvas. 48 x 48 in (1219.2 x 1219.2 mm). (4 inch spot)
ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008. Photograph © Tate, London 2012 © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

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Monument to the Living and the Dead, 2006
Butterflies and household gloss on canvas. Diptych, each: 84 x 84 in (2133.6 x 2133.6 mm). ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008. Photographed by Prudence Cumming Associates © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

The Pharmacist's Creed, 1997-8
Lightbox with two sheets of laminated glass in painted metal frame
2700 x 1613 x 100 mm. ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Lent by Anthony d'Offay 2010. Photographed by Prudence Cumming Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

Pharmacy Wallpaper, 2004
Five colour print with metallic silver. Limited edition of 1000

Love Will Tear Us Apart, 1995
Acrylic syringe dispenser, needles, syringes and packaging, 14 x 20 x 8.75 in (355.6 x 508 x 222.25 mm) edition of 30. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Purchased 1998. Photograph courtesy Phillips de Pury © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012.

Home Sweet Home, 1996
Screenprint on ceramic. 8.25 x 8.25 x 1 in. (209.55 x 209.55 x 25.4 mm)
Edition of 1500. The British Council Collection. Photograph courtesy Gagosian © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2011.

Forms without Life, 1991
Glass, painted MDF, pine, ramin, steel and shells. 72 x 108 x 12 in (1828.8 x 2743.2 x 304.8 mm). Tate: Presented by the Contemporary Arts Society 1992 Photograph © Tate, London 2012 © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree, 2002
Colour etching on paper. 910 x 710 mm. Tate: Presented by Penny Govett 2007. Photograph © Tate, London 2012 © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012

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