

Damien Hirst

Damien Hirst was born in Bristol (birth place of Cary Grant) in 1965 and is currently cited as being the richest living artist in the world. Hirst took a foundation course at Leeds School of Art before applying for college. He was rejected by St Martin's but moved to London in 1986 when he was accepted onto the BA Fine Art course at Goldsmiths College, graduating in 1989. Whilst still a student in 1988, Hirst conceived, organized and promoted an exhibition held in a Docklands warehouse. The show featured several of Hirst's pieces along with work by 16 of his fellow Goldsmiths' students.

Many believe this exhibition to be the launching point of the "Young British Artists" movement. After seeing Hirst's work at the show, Charles Saatchi, began to collect his work and exhibited it in the first "Charles Saatchi's Young British Artists" show. In 1990, Saatchi bought Hirst's "A Thousand Years". Since that point Hirst has consistently produced work that has been provocative and ground breaking.

Since 1992 Hirst has organized a succession of exhibitions that have helped define a generation, one completely different from previous generations of artists. The Young British Artists are characterized by their independence, entrepreneurial spirit and media acumen. Most promote their own shows and tend to draw in private patrons such as Charles Saatchi.

The central, though not exclusive, theme of Hirst's work has been an exploration of mortality. Hirst is best known for a series of works (The Natural History Series) in which dead animals, preserved in formaldehyde in a glass tank, are presented with the artwork having a strong visual power that is unmatched by almost any description of it. It truly needs to be seen and many people attribute this body of work for Hirst's short listing for the 1992 Turner Prize which he later won in 1995.

Hirst's work is so provocative that even his own supporters go through stages of acclaim and disdain! He blames the negative reactions upon the press saying that the media corrupts the public's view and that the public never goes to see the artwork in person, to judge for themselves.

Hirst's work includes his controversial animals exhibits, sculptures, spot and spin paintings. Hirst's work has some recurring themes such as cigarettes, something he considers to be "theoretical suicide" and medical paraphernalia.

Hirst's work has been displayed all around the world including the UK, Korea, USA, Australia, and countries all over Europe and resides both in private collections, museums and was recently honoured with a retrospect at the TATE Modern in London which coincided with the 2012 London Olympics.