



Damien Hirst
Spots, Butterflies and Cabinets

8 June to 29 July 2006

In the summer of 2006, Robert Sandelson presented its first exhibition of one of the most famous artist in the world, Damien Hirst. The exhibition surveyed some of Hirst's most celebrated works, focusing on spot paintings, medicine cabinets and butterfly paintings, all executed between 1997 and 2003.

Until a few years ago Hirst and Cork Street would have made strange bedfellows but now with the reassertion of central London as a major locus for contemporary art, the match is secure - an artist showing where the giants of contemporary art have always shown for the last ninety years.

Hirst has continually challenged the boundaries between art, science and popular culture. His art is direct but never empty – it conveys a fascination with the processes of life and death. His works are meditations on the fragility of life and the inevitability of death and ensuing decay. They are also about love, and his approach is as poetic as it is analytic.

His spot paintings, the titles of which refer to pharmaceutical chemicals, are meticulously painted circles organised into neat rows. Their visual impact is immediate with their straightforward appeal of colour and form. Hirst understands art at its most simple and its most complex. He reduces painting to its basic elements, thereby eliminating the mystery attached to abstraction.

Hirst's butterfly paintings have actual butterflies seemingly trapped on a background of monochrome gloss paint. The butterflies poignantly communicate the artist's unflinching view of the ambiguity at the heart of human experience.

In his medicine cabinet pieces, Hirst displays various drugs and surgical tools on highly ordered shelves. Their shape, colour and form convey a sense of elegance and luxury. Drugs and medicine are recurring themes in Hirst's work as a means of altering perception and, like art, providing a belief system which is both seductive and illusory.

Hirst's art is instantly identifiable as the work of a unique and provocative imagination that continues to draw in and captivate the viewer.

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