

Media information: 08 October 2009

BALTIC

DAMIEN HIRST

Pharmacy

Saturday 24 October 2009 – Sunday 7 February 2010

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in collaboration with Tate Connects and sponsored by Newcastle University's Medical School presents an exhibition by one of the UK's most high profile contemporary artists **Damien Hirst. Pharmacy (1992)** will be exhibited within BALTIC's Level 2 gallery from **Saturday 24 October 2009** until **Sunday 7 February 2010**.

Damien Hirst's wide-ranging practice has sought to challenge the boundaries between art, science and popular culture. His visceral, often challenging work explores human experience, posing fundamental questions about the meaning of life and the fragility of existence. **Pharmacy** was originally shown at the **Cohen Gallery, New York in 1992** and was acquired by **Tate in 1996. Pharmacy** travels to BALTIC thanks to the **Tate Connects** programme, an initiative established in **2008** giving access to **Tate's** extensive collection.

The installation is an apparently functioning pharmacy, complete with counter and floor to ceiling cabinets holding preparations and drugs. Entering the space from behind the counter, we discover the pharmacy as if stumbling in from the storage room. The uneasy clinical and authoritative atmosphere that is created is heightened by the absence of the pharmacist.

Pharmacy could be seen as a representation of the multiple range of philosophies, theories and belief systems available as a means of structuring and redeeming a life. It explores the unquestioning confidence that society places in modern medicine offering a critique on our reliance on medicine as a belief system that is fundamentally centered on death.

The exhibition is sponsored by Newcastle University's Medical School which is celebrating 175 years of medical excellence. Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Newcastle University says, *"By bringing art and medicine together, visitors are made to think about medical treatments and what they mean to their own healthcare. A lot of the work we're doing is about helping people make healthier life choices and exploring preventative medicine rather than relying on drug-related treatment and this exhibition we hope, will stimulate that debate in the North East."*

Over the years, Newcastle Medical School has challenged and pushed the boundaries of medical science through our teaching and research and this exhibition continues that tradition. Supporting Pharmacy, by one of the UK's foremost contemporary artists is an exciting step and a fitting celebration of 175 years of medical excellence."

END

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NOTES TO EDITORS

DAMIEN HIRST BIOGRAPHY

Damien Hirst was born in Bristol in 1965 and now lives and works in London and Devon. He studied at Goldsmiths College, London (1986–9), and in 1988 while still a student he co-curated the widely acclaimed independent exhibition *Freeze*. During the late 1980s and 1990s he was a leading figure in the group of 'Young British Artists'.

In 1992 with the support of Charles Saatchi, Hirst exhibited at the first Young British Artists exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery, London. It was at this exhibition where Hirst presented *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, the first of the 'Natural History' works of animals suspended in formaldehyde in vitrines. This was followed in 1993 with *Mother and Child Divided* at the Venice Biennale.

In 1994 he received the DAAD fellowship in Berlin and in the UK he won the Turner Prize in 1995.

Hirst has participated in numerous group exhibitions including *Into Me / Out of Me*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2006), *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida*, Tate Britain, the 50th Venice Biennale (2003) and *Century City*, Tate Modern (2001). UK Solo exhibitions have been held at Institute of Contemporary Art, The Serpentine Gallery, White Cube and a controversial retrospective at the Saatchi Gallery. Internationally he has presented solo shows at The Gagosian Gallery New York (2005), Hilario Galguera Gallery, Mexico (2006), Astrup Fearnley Museet fur Moderne Kunst, Oslo (2005), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2005) and Archaeological Museum, Naples (2004).

Beyond Belief, an exhibition of Hirst's new work opened at the White Cube gallery London in 2007, it included For the Love of God, a human skull recreated in platinum and adorned with 8,601 diamonds weighing a total of 1,106.18 carats and using approximately £15,000,000 worth of diamonds. The work was exhibited in 2008 at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

In September 2008, he took an unprecedented move for a living artist to by-pass galleries and auction a complete show, Beautiful Inside My Head Forever, at Sotheby's. The auction raised £111 million breaking the record for a one-artist auction as well as Hirst's own record with £10.3 million for The Golden Calf, an animal with 18-carat gold horns and hooves, preserved in formaldehyde

GALLERY INFORMATION:

BALTIC is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. BALTIC presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. BALTIC has welcomed over 3 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

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ADMISSION FREE

Opening hours:

Monday - Sunday 10.00 - 18.00 (excluding Tuesday)
Tuesday 10.30 - 18.00



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