

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Tue – Sat 10:00am – 6:00pm



GAGOSIAN INAUGURATES HONG KONG GALLERY WITH AN EXHIBITION BY DAMIEN HIRST

DAMIEN HIRST: *Forgotten Promises*

Tuesday, 18 January – Saturday, March 19, 2011

Diamonds are about perfection and clarity and wealth and sex and death and immortality. They are a symbol of everything that's eternal, but then they have a dark side as well.

--Damien Hirst

To inaugurate the Hong Kong exhibition space, Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present "Forgotten Promises," an exhibition of new paintings and sculptures by Damien Hirst.

In recent years, Hirst has developed his familiar iconography – the skull, the diamond and the butterfly – to explore fundamental ideas about existence. His work highlights the duality that lies at the heart of human experience, from our inexorable struggles between life and death, beauty and decay, desire and fear, love and loss.

While Hirst's earlier "fact paintings" focused on the brutality and violence of life, using documentary images found in newspapers and magazines; or the beauty and agony of childbirth, taken from photographs of the birth of his own son; or the light-refracted brilliance of the world's most famous diamonds, the new *Butterfly Fact Paintings* capture dramatic moments in the fleeting lives of different species of butterflies. For Hirst, the butterfly is a symbol of the beauty and fragility of life. Close-up images of butterflies, sourced from science libraries, are painted in oil with painstaking attention to realistic detail. "Why else would you do it, when you could just get a photograph that looks identical?" Hirst has said. "But it's not the same thing, is it? A photograph is from a moment, a split second. Painting is about stopping to look at the world, considering it, and giving it more and more importance."

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The exhibition also includes a series of brilliant diamond cabinets. *Forgotten Sorrows*, *Lost Friends*, and *Tears of Joy* (all 2010) seem optimistic, yet their titles suggest more contemplative notions of memory, melancholy, and loss. A group of paintings (2008-2009) including *Age of Magnificence* and *Fading Magnificence* have real butterflies entombed in layers of shiny metallic paint.

For Heaven's Sake (2008) is a life-size human baby skull cast in platinum and covered in 8,128 pavé-set perfect diamonds: 7,105 natural fancy pink diamonds and, on the fontanel, 1,023 white diamonds. This spectacular *memento mori* was cast from an original skull that formed part of a nineteenth-century pathology collection that Hirst acquired some years ago. *For the Love of God* (2007), a life-size cast of a mature human skull in platinum covered in diamonds, is currently on display at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by curator Francesco Bonami, as well as an interview with Hirst conducted by art critic Karen Smith.

Damien Hirst was born in 1965 in Bristol, England. Solo exhibitions include "The Agony and the Ecstasy," Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Naples (2004); "A Selection of Works by Damien Hirst from Various Collections," Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2005); Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo (2005); "For the Love of God," Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2008); "No Love Lost," The Wallace Collection, London (2009); "Requiem," Pinchuk Art Center, Kiev (2009); and "Cornucopia," the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco (2010). He received the Turner Prize in 1995. His work is included in important public and private collections throughout the world.

Hirst lives and works in London and Devon, United Kingdom.

For further information please contact the gallery at hongkong@gagosian.com or at +852.2151.0555.