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Damien Hirst's Cherry Blossom paintings to be exhibited in artist's first major Paris show

Works from the series, painted by the artist rather than assistants, go on display at the Fondation Cartier this month

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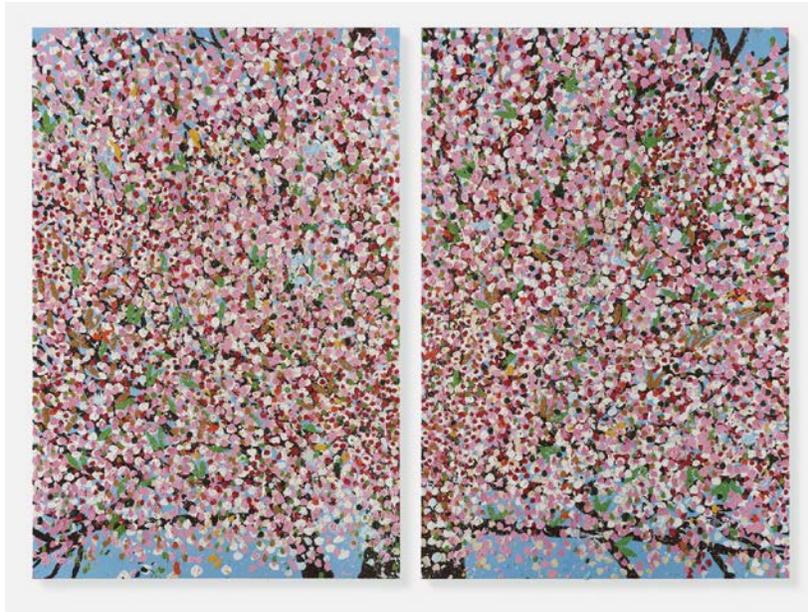


“Almost tacky”: Damien Hirst working on a Cherry Blossoms painting in 2019 © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd/DACS

Damien Hirst will finally have his first institutional show in Paris this summer, with an exhibition of his jubilant, large-scale *Cherry Blossoms* paintings at the Fondation Cartier.

The foundation’s director Hervé Chandès met Hirst in his London studio in 2018 to see the paintings and decided to offer him an exhibition on the spot. “I was dazzled at the excess beauty around me and thought that the architecture of the Fondation Cartier, which is surrounded by a garden, would be the perfect place to unveil the series,” Chandès says.

Thirty out of the 107 paintings in the series will be on view in the Jean Nouvel-designed building. Marking Hirst’s return to painting with his own hand, rather than that of his assistants, the exuberant works draw on the colours of Pierre Bonnard, the gestural style of Abstract Expressionism and pointillist techniques. Hirst has described them as being about “beauty and life and death” — the overarching preoccupation of Hirst’s practice — and having something “almost tacky”, “garish” and “decorative” about them.



Hirst's Renewal Blossom (2018) © Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates. Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2021

“When I saw the paintings, I felt an urgency to share my wonder at seeing them with the public,” Chandès says of the exhibition, which was postponed for a year due to the pandemic.

What is striking is that the Turner Prize-winning Hirst, who has been a major figure in the UK’s contemporary art scene since the 1990s, has never had a solo show in France before. “Damien Hirst is an artist as famous as he is unknown,” Chandès says. “Famous because everyone is talking about him and unknown because in France his works have hardly ever been seen.”