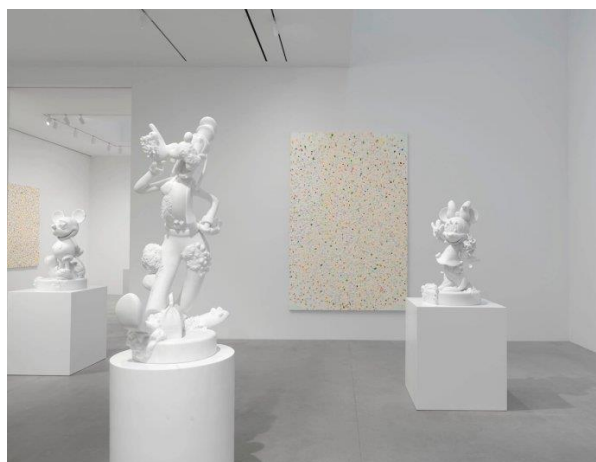


GAGOSIAN

BlackBook

Opening: Mickey, Goofy Star in Damien Hirst's 'Forgiving and Forgetting' at Gagosian NYC

Ken Scrudato



Above image: DAMIEN HIRST Forgiven and Forgetting, 2022, installation view© Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2022, Photo: Rob McKeever, Courtesy Gagosian

When Damien Hirst premiered his monumental Treasures From the Wreck of the Unbelievable during the Venice Biennale in 2017, there were those who (rightly) expressed awe at the sheer physical and intellectual scope of the multi-faceted, faux historical piece...and those who scoffed at it as just a more sophisticated sort of pranksterism from the provocative British contemporary artist (Hyperallergic called it “the most expensive artistic flop in living memory. A showroom for oligarchs”). Hirst, for his part, probably embraced both viewpoints.

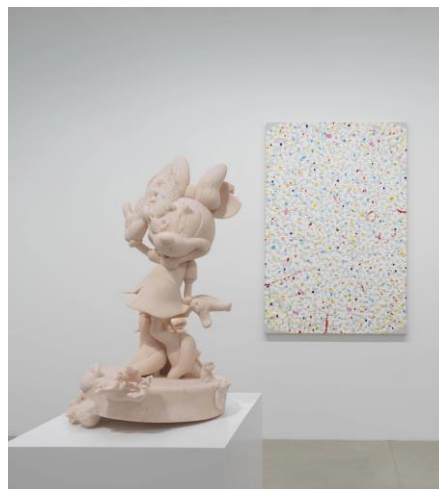
Gagosian New York is now allowing for a partial reassessment, currently showing the exhibition Forgiven and Forgetting, which incorporates individual pieces from that controversial work. It makes for an interesting follow up to his 2021 show Archaeology Now, which placed his works amongst the historical treasures of Rome’s exalted Galleria Borghese.



DAMIEN HIRST
Forgiving and Forgetting, 2022, installation view
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 Photo: Rob McKeever, Courtesy Gagosian

With Treasures..., what Hirst had arguably achieved was the bending of past and present, fact and fiction to the will of his restless, irrepressible imagination. The work created its own mythology of sorts, and like any fictional television epic that truly and viscerally captures our collective imagination (yes, we're obviously talking about Game of Thrones), the myth can start to seem very real. As Hirst himself puts it, "It's all about what you want to believe."

And indeed, the story behind it was that of Cif Amotan II, an emancipated slave from Antioch who lived during the First Century CE (Common Era). Staged video footage even shows divers convincingly recovering the lost artifacts of his shipwreck.



DAMIEN HIRST
Forgiving and Forgetting, 2022, installation view
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 Photo: Rob McKeever, Courtesy Gagosian

But then one recognizes the familiar forms of Mickey, Minnie and Goofy, and the realization surfaces that this is actually a staggeringly elaborate commentary on the ephemeral, disposable nature of modern world life, with a healthy dose of Ozymandias thrown in – perhaps Hirst even

winkingly prophesying his own eventual(?) downfall. The Gagosian exhibit gathers these Disneyfied statues – carved from pink Portuguese marble and white Carrara marble – along with a Hylonome, and a Tadakheba (both from Greek mythology), letting each stand as their own poignant fraction of the greater socio-cultural critique.

For reasons that probably have to do more with timing, the Treasures... artifacts are complemented at Gagosian by Hirst's new series Reverence Paintings, a less heady, more purely aesthetically driven extension of his spot (dot) paintings continuum. Taken together, though, they will surely make for a fascinating current survey of one of the few greatest living artists as he moves into his fourth decade of making electrifyingly opinion-dividing work.

Damien Hirst's Forgiving and Forgetting will be on exhibit through February 26 at Gagosian New York, 541 W. 24th Street.



DAMIEN HIRST
Altar, 2020, detail
Oil and gold leaf on canvas
108 x 72 in
274.3 x 182.9 cm

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