



## DAMIEN HIRST

### Cathedrals Built on Sand

Opening reception: Tuesday, June 8, 4:30–7:30pm

June 8–September 22, 2021

4 rue de Ponthieu, Paris

Damien Hirst, *When the Heart Speaks*, 2005, glass, stainless steel, steel, aluminum, nickel, bismuth and cast resin, colored plaster, and painted pills with dry transfers, 52 1/8 × 78 1/8 × 4 inches (132.3 × 198.3 × 10.2 cm) © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2021. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates

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May 25, 2021

*I can't understand why most people believe in medicine and don't believe in art, without questioning either.*  
–Damien Hirst

Gagosian is pleased to present *Cathedrals Built on Sand*, the largest exhibition of Damien Hirst's *Pill Cabinets* to date. The presentation is realized in conjunction with *Cherry Blossoms*, on view from July 6, 2021, to January 2, 2022, at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris, marking Hirst's first solo museum exhibition in France.

For this landmark sculptural series, Hirst filled wall-mounted cabinets with arrangements of pills—some real, some fabricated from resin, metal, or plaster. Intermingling art and science, the *Pill Cabinets* examine the limits of human belief and confront society's faith in drugs as a panacea. The works have taken on new significance during the COVID-19 pandemic, a testament to the enduring and prescient nature of Hirst's creations.

On view is *Prototype for Lies* (1998), the first work created in the series. Featuring open fiberboard shelves, the sculpture imbues the sterile grid of pills with a certain warmth. The *Pill Cabinets* as a whole evolved from Hirst's earlier *Medicine Cabinets*, in which empty pharmaceutical packages are arranged on shelves, emulating the displays one might see at a drugstore. Clinical and pragmatic, yet inextricably linked to the human body, the *Medicine Cabinets* unite Hirst's interest in post-Minimalist forms with Pop art-inspired commentary on commercial goods.

Unlike the preceding body of work, however, the *Pill Cabinets* revel in playful chromatic variations that are made all the more striking by the simple shapes and rounded edges of the capsules at the heart of each work. Infusing these pared-down sculptural forms with what Hirst calls "minimalist delicious color," the installations evoke the industrial origins of Gerhard Richter's color charts, as well as the intimacy and seriality of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's candy arrangements. Pills have been a part of Hirst's artistic vocabulary for years; he is drawn to their power to convince, their symbolic combination of remedy and risk making them an ideal subject for his dichotomous focus.

While the sheer number of pills in each cabinet is designed to elicit a sense of wonder, it also raises moral questions about the commodification of healthcare. The *Pill Cabinets* present the pharmaceutical drug as a sort of fetish object; removed from its packaging and laid out for individual consumption, each unassuming tablet becomes a loaded promise—a seductive token of trust between the patient and the faceless medical institutions that dictate his or her well-being.

**Damien Hirst** was born in 1965 in Bristol, England, and lives and works in London and Devon, England. Collections include the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples, Italy; Museum Brandhorst, Munich; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid; Tate, London; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, Scotland; National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Moscow; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Art Institute of Chicago; The Broad, Los Angeles; Museo Jumex, Mexico City; and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan. Exhibitions include *Cornucopia*, Oceanographic Museum of Monaco (2010); Tate Modern, London (2012); *Relics*, Qatar Museums Authority, Al Riwaq (2013); *Signification (Hope, Immortality and Death in Paris, Now and Then)*, Deyrolle, Paris (2014); Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2015); *The Last Supper*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2016); *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, Venice (2017); *Damien Hirst at Houghton Hall: Colour Space Paintings and Outdoor Sculptures*, Houghton Hall, Norfolk, England (2019); and *Mental Escapology*, St. Moritz, Switzerland (2021). Hirst received the Turner Prize in 1995.

#DamienHirst

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