

GAGOSIAN

Third Phase of Damien Hirst's Yearlong Takeover of Gagosian Britannia Street to Feature

Emergency Paintings, Danger Paintings, Hazard Pictures and Seizures

Opening in London on October 5, 2021



Damien Hirst, *Safety*, 2015, acrylic and acrylic lacquer on canvas, 94 × 84 inches (243.8 × 213.4 cm) © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2021

It's about violence and danger and escapism and death and warning signs and being safe or getting caught.
—Damien Hirst

LONDON, October 5, 2021—Gagosian is pleased to present *Emergency Paintings, Danger Paintings, Hazard Pictures and Seizures*, the third phase of Damien Hirst's yearlong takeover of the Britannia Street gallery. The exhibition features paintings, photographs, and sculptures that address the experience and emotions of warning, danger, crime, rescue, and death. The works take their inspiration from a variety of sources, including the bold designs on emergency vehicles, the skins of dangerous animals, and media images of police activity. The exhibition follows the inaugural installment in the takeover sequence, *Fact Paintings and Fact Sculptures*, and the second, *Relics and Fly Paintings*.

The *Emergency Paintings* series (2014–16) was born from long car journeys during which Hirst was struck by the graphics emblazoned on emergency vehicles and their use of color as a warning. He took photos of these disturbing and beautiful designs with his phone and incorporated their high-visibility stripes and chevrons into his paintings. Powerfully conveying a sense of real-world crisis, these works also evoke the hard-edge abstractions of such painters as Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella. Featured alongside the paintings is a framed selection of Hirst's original

source photos, which the artist values for their raw documentary quality: “They aren’t careful or considered. . . . They are quick and easy snaps taken as the world was flying by,” he remarks, “and all the better for it.”

Also on view at Britannia Street are several smaller oil-on-canvas compositions from the related series *Danger Paintings* (2016). These show close-up views of the skin of dangerous animals including poisonous frogs, snakes, insects, and sea creatures—living things that employ color and pattern to signal their danger to potential predators. As Hirst notes, this coloration represents “a thing that nature does that’s similar to what we do on emergency vehicles. We stole the idea from nature, of course, and hid it in geometry.”

Finally, the exhibition includes several sculptures based on media photographs of police drug seizures, in which large quantities of illegal substances are displayed to promote the authorities’ success. The *Seizures* series (2021) represents a continuation of Hirst’s long-standing fascination with drugs and medicine—which has also resulted in such iconic series as *Instrument Cabinets*, *Medicine Cabinets*, and *Pill Cabinets*—and reflects his interest in and use of systems of taxonomy and display.

Damien Hirst was born in 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.

#HirstTakeover

DAMIEN HIRST

Emergency Paintings, Danger Paintings, Hazard Pictures and Seizures

Open from October 5, 2021

6–24 Britannia Street, London

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