



# The Currency

D A M I E N   H I R S T

IEI  
HENI





A decorative border composed of numerous overlapping circles in various colors (blue, green, red, yellow, purple, etc.) surrounds the central text area.

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# The Currency

*The Currency*, the first NFT series by Damien Hirst, is open for application until 3pm BST 21 July 2021 on [heni.com](https://heni.com).

*The Currency* is a collection of 10,000 NFTs which correspond to 10,000 unique physical artworks by Damien Hirst, with the NFTs containing high resolution images of the front and back of each of the 10,000 artworks. The physical works, which are stored in a secure vault in the UK, are now brought to life through their launch on **Palm, a new and more sustainable NFT ecosystem connected to Ethereum. Palm is 99% more energy efficient than Ethereum or Bitcoin.**

The physical artworks were created by hand in 2016 using enamel paint on handmade paper. Each artwork is numbered, titled, stamped, and signed by the artist on the back. Additional authenticity features on the artwork paper include a watermark, a microdot and a hologram containing a portrait of the artist. On each artwork, no colour is repeated twice. The colour of some spots on a particular artwork may appear to be similar, but they will actually be different shades. The titles are generated from machine learning being applied to some of the artist's favourite song lyrics.

The application period opened on 14th July at 3pm BST and will close at 3pm BST 21 July 2021. Successful applicants will be notified in the week after the application period closes. Each NFT is \$2,000 and payment can be made using credit or debit cards as well as the following cryptocurrencies: Bitcoin (BTC), Ethereum (ETH), USD Coin (USDC) and Dai (DAI).

The NFTs will be distributed from July 29 2021. Nobody will receive a physical artwork at the outset. Two months after the NFTs are allocated, collectors will be presented with a choice: to keep the NFT or exchange it for the physical artwork. They will have one year, until 3pm BST on 27 July 2022 to decide to keep either the digital NFT or the physical artwork. If they have not exchanged their NFT in that period, the physical artwork will be destroyed. Similarly if they have exchanged it in that period, the NFT will be destroyed. There will be an exhibition of the 'burned' artworks (i.e. those relating to NFTs that have not been redeemed) before they are ultimately destroyed.

When Damien Hirst heard about NFTs three years ago, he decided to bridge the gap between the physical art world and the world of NFTs. Damien Hirst views *The Currency* as not just constituting individual works of art on paper and as NFTs but also the whole project as a work of art in which people participate by buying, holding and selling the artworks. *The Currency* challenges the concept of value through money and art. An experiment in belief, every participant is confronted with their perception of value, and how it influences their decision. *The Currency* tests the boundaries of the digital and physical world and our role in both. Ultimately, the collector decides how to use their art/currency. The limited time of the exchange period ensures that even doing nothing is doing something.

Link to resources:

1. Low Resolution Download (<https://we.tl/t-h8T7CbtgG2>)
2. List of 10,000 artwork titles (<https://we.tl/t-MfNo2I0xOI>)





# The Currency Timeline

## JULY 14 - 21 ● Application period

The application period lasts one week and opened at 3pm BST on July 14.

## ● Join Community

The HENI Discord channel (<https://discord.gg/98SrzyMmbZ>) has been launched, a dedicated platform where you can discuss the artworks, stay updated on news, or ask questions to the community.

## JULY 21 - 28 ● Allocation & Claim

From July 21-28, the successful applicants will be able to proceed with the payment flow which includes connecting a MetaMask wallet. Some applicants may be asked to verify their identity.

## FROM JULY 29 ● Receive NFT

When the application process is complete, NFTs will be sent out from July 29. Collectors will receive the NFT in their connected MetaMask wallet.

## ● Use the currency

When a user has received their NFT, they have a number of options. The dedicated HENI gallery ([nft.heni.com](https://nft.heni.com)) allows anyone to explore the collection, list your NFT for sale, or buy more. NFT holders can download extremely high resolution images 10x the resolution of the images stored on IPFS, the decentralised storage protocol) of their NFTs from the HENI gallery. The Currency NFTs can also be traded on Nifty's marketplace ([niftys.com](https://niftys.com)).

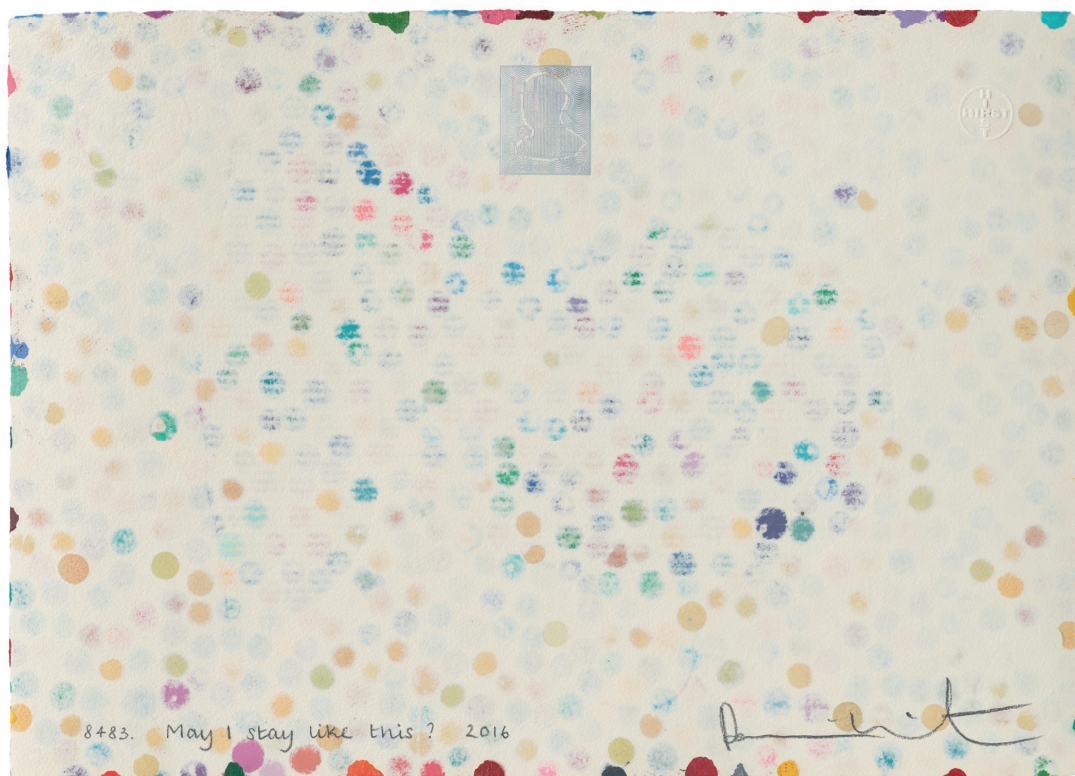
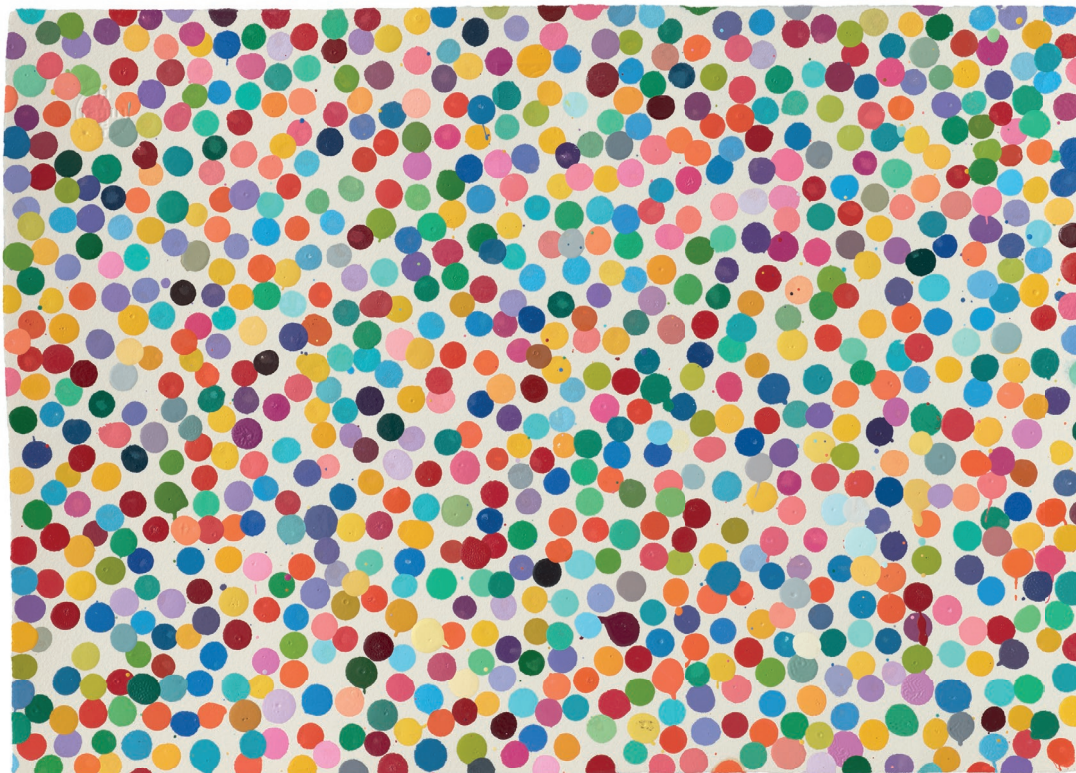
## ● Exchange period

Around two months after the NFTs are first distributed to successful applicants, collectors will get the opportunity to exchange the NFT for the physical artwork. Collectors have until 3pm BST, 27 July 2022 to decide to keep either the digital NFT or the physical artwork. Whichever they choose, the other gets burned.



# One of the 10,000 artworks

8483. MAY I STAY LIKE THIS?



PRICE	2,000 USD
PHYSICAL MEDIUM	ONE SHOT ENAMEL PAINT ON HANDMADE PAPER
PHYSICAL SIZE	20 CM x 30 CM
YEAR OF CREATION	2016
BLOCKCHAIN	PALM



“

The whole project is an artwork, and anyone who buys *The Currency* will participate in this work, it's not just about owning it. It is the most exciting project I have ever worked on by far.

”



# Damien Hirst



The British artist Damien Hirst is internationally recognised for his irreverent approach to artmaking, exploring themes central to our existence through his iconic motifs and innovative engagement with various media.

Following a foundation year at Jacob Kramer College in Leeds, Hirst studied at Goldsmiths College in London from 1986 to 1989. There he explored Minimalism and Conceptual Art which he applied to his perennial interest in colour and subjects such as medicine. This work soon established him as the face of the Young British Artists, the dominating group in the British art scene in the 1990s which was known for their experimentation and production of provocative artworks.

Hirst's name soon became synonymous with contemporary art, in part due to the emergence of his *Natural History* series in which animals are immortalised in formaldehyde-filled tanks. Whilst his *Natural History* and vitrine sculptures were quickly becoming emblematic of his work, painting remained essential to his practice: "I've had a romance with painting all my life, even if I avoided it. As a young artist, you react to the context, your situation. In the 1980s, painting wasn't really the way to go."

The impact of the contemporary practices taught at Goldsmiths on Hirst's work can be seen in the transformation from his early Abstract Expressionism-inspired canvases to his *Spot Paintings* series. Begun in 1986, this series is composed of coloured dots which look like they were "painted by a human trying to paint like a machine." Though initially conceived as an infinite series, today the *Spot Paintings* series includes over one thousand paintings of various sizes, shapes, colours and titles.

The systematic precision and organisation of the *Spot Paintings* works contrast to Hirst's *Visual Candy* paintings from 1993 to 1995, a series modelled after a heart-wrenching comment by his tutor from Jacob Kramer College who said the paintings looked like curtains. These works are characterised by thick paint and encroaching fields of exuberant colour.

More recently, the *Colour Space* series (2016), inspired by the infinite possibility of colour explored in the first work from *Spot Paintings*, and *Veil Paintings* (2018), dreamlike environments on canvas of Pointillist-like dabs of shimmering paint, celebrate the surface, depth and colour of painting.

After ten years in the making, in 2017 Hirst presented *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* at Punta della Dogana and Palazzo Grassi in Venice. Rooted in a fabricated legend of an ancient shipwreck, these sculptures and drawings weave fact and fiction to establish a labyrinthine narrative. These supposed archaeological relics range from coins and plates to marble and bronze sculptures, many of which are encrusted with coral and marine life. Accompanied by documentary photography and video, the project engages with the power of myth, exposing ideas of value and the mutability of history, belief and art itself.





## Presented by HENI

HENI is an international art services business working with leading artists and estates across printmaking, marketplaces for physical artworks, NFTs, publishing, digital, film production, art research and analysis. HENI is at the cutting edge of art and tech using the latest and best technologies in order to bring art to life.

In 2020 HENI launched HENI Leviathan, an online marketplace which recently released Damien Hirst's *The Virtues*. This series of eight Cherry Blossoms prints was the first instance in which HENI and the artist accepted cryptocurrency as payment. The *Virtues* print drop is considered to be the most commercially successful print drop in history where 7481 prints were sold over a 6 day period for \$3,000 each, raising \$22.4 million in total.

HENI focuses on the individual artist and their work, offering innovative NFT projects, art services including printing and reproduction, digital management, events, mounting, logistics and fine art photography. HENI publishes skilfully made art books in collaboration with world leading writers and artists and creates short films on HENI Talks where leading artists, curators and academics share insights about art history. HENI supports and works with select institutions, including the Serpentine Galleries, the National Gallery and Tate in London, as well as the Foundation Beyeler in Switzerland.

### Powered by Palm

*The Currency* by Damien Hirst will be minted on the Palm blockchain. The Palm blockchain is a new token-powered ecosystem for NFTs, which is connected to Ethereum. Palm is 99% more energy efficient than proof of work systems such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, vastly reducing the environmental impact. Palm also features low gas costs and near instant transaction finality.

Palm is a joint venture between HENI, ConsenSys and Heyday Films. Palm NFT Studio is an innovation lab set up to collaborate with artists, marketplaces and rights holders to bring projects and platforms into the Palm ecosystem.











# 10,000 Unique Works

## *A project Years in the making*

The spots that characterise Damien Hirst's *Spot Paintings* remain one of the most recognizable motifs in contemporary art. They are known for their perfectly symmetrical coloured forms arranged in a grid format. Since its first iteration in 1986 the series has seen many variations, but it wasn't until 2016 that Hirst dispensed with these rules for his *Colour Space* paintings. Organically shaped and intuitively organised, the forms and compositions of the *Colour Space* series evolved into those of *The Currency*, with the spots appearing like particles or atoms.

*The Currency* marries one of Hirst's most generative bodies of work to his lifelong fascination for technology and materiality. From the creation of his minimalist, formaldehyde-filled vitrines to his experimentations with cutting edge print methods to create sensuous two-dimensional works, the digital realm of NFTs emerges as Hirst's next logical venue for his artistic exploration.

Ever disrupting art world conventions, the artist's use of NFTs is also an important development in his ongoing interest in notions of value, ownership and collecting. *The Currency* continues the work Hirst began on these issues in *For the Love of God* (2007), the *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever* performative artwork-like auction at Sotheby's in 2008 and *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* (2008-2016).







# Anti Counterfeiting

Similar to other forms of currency, anti-counterfeiting measures are employed to ensure authenticity. Each work of *The Currency* has several measures that safeguard the authenticity, both of the physical artwork and the digital NFT.

Many of the anti-counterfeiting measures are visible on the back of each artwork. The top right corner shows a stamp of the Hirst logo. The artwork contains two watermarks. One watermark is of the Hirst logo in the top left corner. The other watermark contains a portrait of the artist spread over the entirety of the page. Each artwork contains a microdot, which contains a miniscule portrait of the artist only viewable under a magnifying glass or microscope.

A custom made hologram showing a portrait of the artist, his signature, and several other features, has been applied to the top of the back of each artwork.

Damien Hirst has signed the back of each artwork. Each artwork is numbered and titled by hand.

The NFTs are minted on the Palm blockchain which tracks the authenticity and movements of each NFT. NFT stands for non-fungible token. It is a unit of data stored on a digital ledger, called a blockchain, that certifies a digital asset to be unique. *The Currency* NFTs contain images of the front and the back of the artwork.

The careful documentation of all features on the physical artworks combined with the traceability of blockchain technology ensure that all of the artworks of *The Currency* can be authenticated and validated, irrespective of current owner or timeframe.



















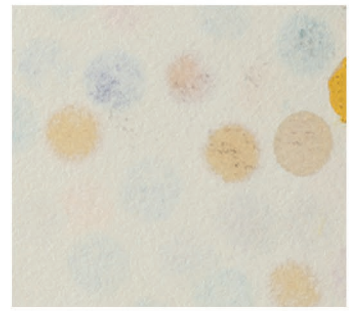
1



2



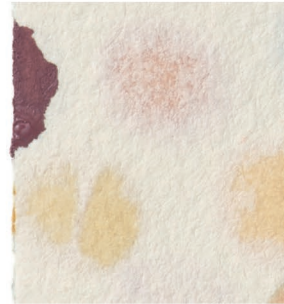
3



4



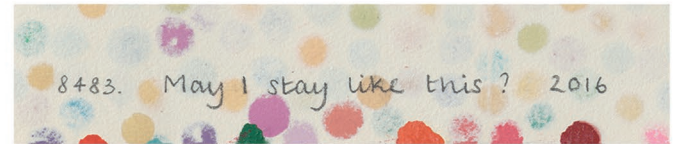
9



5



6



7



8

1. **Watermark**  
A watermark featuring the Hirst logo.
2. **Hologram**  
A hologram featuring a portrait of the artist.
3. **Stamp**  
An embossed stamp featuring the Hirst logo.
4. **Bleed through pattern**  
The spots seep through the paper in unique patterns.
5. **Hand cut edges**  
Manually cut paper producing unique edges and fraying.
6. **Microdot**  
A microdot containing a portrait of the artist.
7. **Title**  
A unique handwritten title and date.
8. **Signature**  
Handwritten signature by the artist.
9. **Watermark**  
A watermark featuring a portrait of the artist on the hand made paper, before the paint has been applied.





# Rarities

Each of the 10,000 artworks are unique and have different identifying features also known as rarities. Various techniques, including machine learning and computer vision, have been used to analyse key characteristics of all 10,000 artworks.

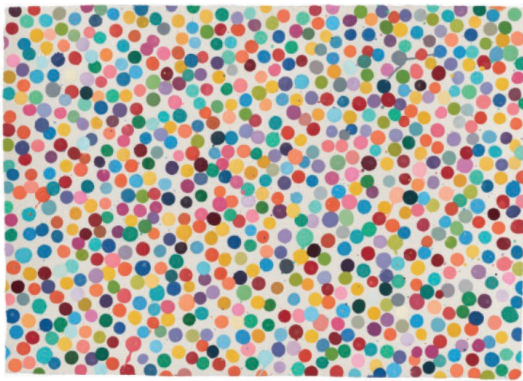
From the amount of drips and overlaps, to the texture of the paint, each artwork has a unique combination of ranked features. The features are scored, showing the amount of that specific feature within the artwork. These scores have been compared throughout the entire collection, to produce a relative rank out of 10,000.

The scores of these rarity features are included in the NFT metadata of each artwork. The following features have been identified: overlaps, drips, texture, density, colours, words, characters, title themes, and weight.





It is possible to compare and filter these rarities across the entire collection of The Currency, using our dedicated HENI gallery. ([nft.heni.com](https://nft.heni.com))

For example, the artwork 7333. *"I Will Not Forget"* has an overlap score of 0.28 which ranks it 157 out of 10,000. This means that 156 artworks have less overlaps and 9843 have more.

7333. I WILL NOT FORGET







## ARTWORK CHARACTERISTICS

DETAIL	RANK
 OVERLAPS	157
 DRIPS	2,643
 TEXTURE	87
 DENSITY	227

5489. I TELL YOU



## ARTWORK CHARACTERISTICS

DETAIL	RANK
 OVERLAPS	3,818
 DRIPS	9,800
 TEXTURE	6,402
 DENSITY	2,806





is the tale of the shore. 2016

think someone laid down. 2016

on in black. 2016

To find myself empty. 2016

head off with love. 2016

None of this mattered. 2016

Laugh in our faces. 2016

her. 2016

Only 697 of the 10,000 artwork titles have been categorised into a theme. The 14 identified title themes are: art, crypto, dreams, drink, friendship, hiding, knowledge and empathy, loneliness, money, peace and harmony, pride, profanity, questions, secrets.

These rarities can be easily tracked through the high resolution photographs of the fronts and backs of the 10,000 artworks. These detailed images enabled the analysis of the surfaces of the handmade paper and the texture of the paint. For example, some spots are very clean and flat, while the paint on others has more texture and is thicker.

The HENI gallery allows users to explore the listed rarities. Although the gallery shows an extensive list of rarities, it is not intended to be exhaustive. For example, there are a small number of NFTs with particularly long streaks of paint running across them.

The community may want to create their own rarities and analyse the artworks. For this purpose, all the images are publicly available to download through our gallery.











## Choose your currency

### *Decide Between The Digital NFT And The Physical Artwork*

All successful applicants will initially receive a randomly allocated NFT.

Each of the 10,000 unique NFTs corresponds to an original work on paper by Damien Hirst. The collector has to decide between the digital NFT or the physical artwork, but cannot keep both. The exchange is a one-way irreversible process.

Two months after the NFTs are sent out, collectors will get the opportunity to exchange the NFT for the physical artwork. Collectors have until 3pm British Summer Time, 27 July 2022 to decide to keep either the digital NFT or the physical artwork. If the NFT has not been exchanged in that period, then the physical artwork will be destroyed. Similarly, if it has been exchanged in that period, the NFT will be destroyed.

This process is at the heart of the experiment that Hirst is pursuing through *The Currency*. With the final form of the series relying on the action or inaction of collectors, the collecting process emerges as part of the artwork. Pitting the contemporary medium of the NFT against the traditional one of painting, *The Currency* asks collectors to put faith in where they find value. Hirst describes *The Currency* as "an experiment in belief".

There will be an exhibition of the 'burned' artworks (i.e. those relating to NFTs that have not been redeemed) before they are ultimately destroyed.





“

**This artwork sent shivers  
through my spine. I've got  
these simple ingredients,  
because it's just paint and  
pieces of paper but when  
I let go, you know, it will  
have a life of its own.  
What will happen now?**

”

# Explore The Currency on HENI

HENI offers several exciting ways in which collectors, or future collectors, can explore The Currency and more.

## **HENI Gallery**

([nft.heni.com](https://nft.heni.com))

HENI's dedicated gallery allows you to view your own NFT, explore the entire The Currency collection, and filter through all the rarities.

## **Trade**

The HENI gallery ([nft.heni.com](https://nft.heni.com)) also allows users to list their NFT for sale, or buy more. It will also be possible to trade The Currency NFT's on Nifty's ([niftys.com](https://niftys.com))

## **Download high res images**

NFT holders can download extremely high resolution images (10x the resolution of the images stored on IPFS) of their NFTs from the HENI gallery by connecting their MetaMask wallet to prove ownership.

## **Exchange NFT for the physical artwork**

During the exchange period, which begins two months after the NFTs are sent out, NFT holders will be able exchange the NFT for the physical artwork. The physical works are currently in a secure vault in the UK.

## **Join the HENI community**

The project will coincide with the launch of the HENI Discord channel: a dedicated platform where you can discuss the artworks, stay updated on news, or ask questions to the community.

## **Trade physical artwork on HENI Leviathan**

HENI Leviathan is the drop site and secondary marketplace for physical artworks. Once NFTs have been redeemed, the physical works can be traded on HENI Leviathan.





# DAMIEN HIRST

## THE CURRENCY

[Home](#) / [The Currency](#)

Sort by : Series Number ▾

10,000 results

Filters 



1. Totally gonna sell you

[More Details](#)



2. Only we have time

[More Details](#)



3. You could get your  
life together

[More Details](#)



4. Wet moving mirror

[More Details](#)



5. It takes a village

[More Details](#)



6. Right hand on the  
other sleeve

[More Details](#)



7. Walk down the street

[More Details](#)



8. The sky looked tender

[More Details](#)



9. We call you our lovers

[More Details](#)



10. Longtime enemy

[More Details](#)



11. Two blows out

[More Details](#)



12. Ours is the tale of  
the Shire

[More Details](#)

[Load More](#)

12 / 10,000 results

# Damien Hirst Quotes about The Currency

'This project is firstly about art and people but it explores belief and value generally, and in particular value in art. It also touches on the idea of art as a currency and a store of wealth. Conceptual artists in the 1960s and 1970s said art doesn't exist in the art object, it exists in the mind of the viewer, and this project isn't any different. Art doesn't have to just exist in the physical world, it can also exist in the digital world too and now because of the blockchain so can the ownership of that art.'

**'Ever since I made the diamond skull I've been thinking about wealth and value. I have been working on this artwork for the last 5 years. It's been blowing my mind. It explores and challenges the concept of value through money and art. For the past 3 years the project has been expanding into the blockchain and NFTs. I have been working on this project closely with HENI, who have partnered with the leading tech company in the crypto world. It involves 10,000 original works of art on paper, which I call "The Currency". I made them all 5 years ago, and they are in a vault but about to come to life through their launch on the blockchain. The whole project is an artwork, and anyone who buys "The Currency" will participate in this work, it's not just about owning it. It is the most exciting project I have ever worked on by far.'**

***'This project explores the boundaries of art and currency—when art changes and becomes a currency, and when currency becomes art. It's not a coincidence that governments use art on coins and notes. They do this to help us believe in money. Without art, it's hard for us to believe in anything.'***







# Damien Hirst Historic Quotes

***'Art is a very, very powerful thing. At the moment, I believe that art is the most powerful currency in the world by a long way. People's desire to have art is a lot stronger than people's desire to have money. In a way, you can take art with you. It might look good on the wall, it inhabits the wall, but it can also inhabit your soul in some way, which money can't. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. Have the dollar signs gone from my eyes now?'***

(Obrist, Hans Ulrich. 'Interview with Damien Hirst', In the darkest hour there may be light: Works from Damien Hirst's Murderme Collection (London: Serpentine Gallery and Other Criteria, 2006).)

**'I think I have always had a fear that at the end of the day that maybe art can go up in a puff of smoke, and a fear that I'll find out money's more important or more aggressive or more powerful. I do pit art against money; I can't help it. These were the sorts of things I'd go through in my mind. I'd pit art against money in a sort of bet. And I'd just hope that money comes out second and art first, you know, it's like a fact. And it's like if it turns out that money is more important and more powerful, then the art's got to go. So it's a bit of a stupid bet for an artist to be making, in some ways. And I think that's why I sort of have an overwhelming urge to run away from it if it gets scary. And if I bottle out, then that's almost like admitting money's more important.'** ('Gordon Burn in Conversation with Damien Hirst', Damien Hirst: Beautiful Inside My Head Forever. Vol. 1 (London: Sotheby's, 2008), 19.)

**'I think art's more popular now than it ever was. I don't think I created that, but I definitely cashed in on it. Art is probably the most valuable currency in the world, and painting is the best level of art. I always say that if you leave a painting out on the street, and it's still there in the morning, it's shit. There are art stores you can go in, and if it was all in a dumpster, you wouldn't nick anything.'** (Welsh, Irvine. 'A Conversation', Blackbook Magazine, 2004.)

**'Money's a complicated element in any composition. It's a difficult thing in the world. I mean, in a way it's like the biggest scam there is, to convince people that are working in a field fifteen hours a day that they're given these bits of metal or paper at the end of the day, and to get everybody buying into it. I mean, people work all their lives, don't they, to get very little money, so that rich people can get richer? You know, money always seems fragile to me, and untrustworthy. And then art seems to me to be something you can believe in.'** ('Gordon Burn in Conversation with Damien Hirst', Damien Hirst: Beautiful Inside My Head Forever. Vol. 1 (London: Sotheby's, 2008), 18.)

## **'Money is a really good way to get people's attention.'**

(Colman, David, 'Damien Hirst Will Take the Hate With the Love in Venice', Vulture, 1 Dec 2017.)



# Photos and Titles

1. Low Resolution Download (<https://we.tl/t-h8T7CbtgG2>)

2. List of 10,000 artwork titles (<https://we.tl/t-MfNo2l0xOl>)

1. Damien Hirst with *The Currency* artworks, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

2. Damien Hirst, 8483. *May I stay like this?*, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2021

3. Damien Hirst, 8483. *May I stay like this?*, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2021

4. Detail of *The Currency* artworks, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

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19. Detail of *The Currency* artwork showing a stamp, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

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25. Damien Hirst with *The Currency* artworks, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

26. Detail of *The Currency* artworks, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

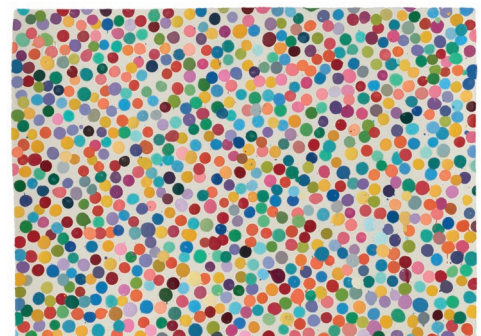
27. Detail of *The Currency* artworks, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

28. Detail of *The Currency* artwork showing a hologram, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.

29. Detail of *The Currency* artwork showing a stamp, 2021. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd, DACS 2021.



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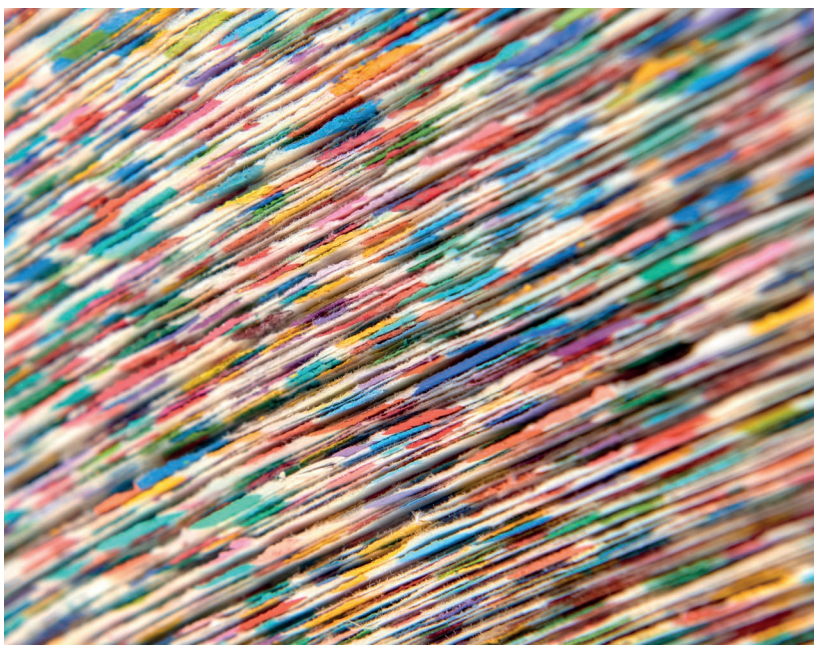


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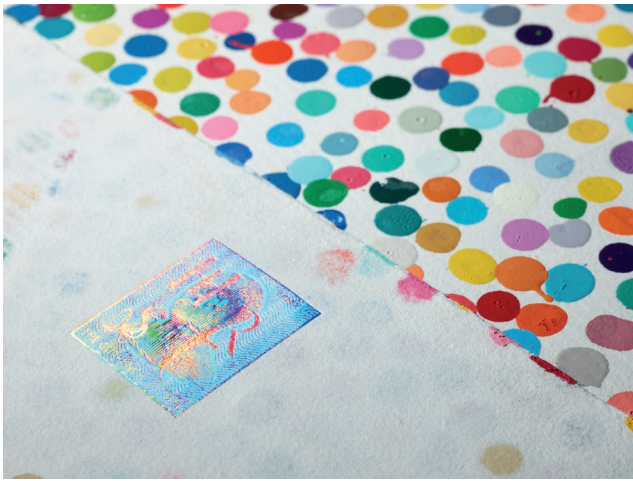


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# From The Spot Paintings To The Currency

1965

Damien Hirst was born in Bristol in 1965 and grew up in Leeds. In 1983 he began a foundation course at Jacob Kramer College of Art where he explored his interest in *Abstract Expressionism*. At this time he regularly visited the anatomy department of the Leeds Medical School to make life drawings of cadavers.

1984

Hirst went interrailing around Europe and began to discover its museums. While in the Netherlands he saw Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh, in Paris he visited exhibitions devoted to Pierre Bonnard and Willem de Kooning at the Centre Pompidou. Each encounter was a decisive artistic discovery for his career as a painter.

1986–89

During this period he studied at Goldsmiths College of Art in London. As a second-year student he organised *Freeze*, showing works by sixteen of his classmates in a landmark exhibition at an old firestation.

Whilst at Goldsmiths, Hirst engaged in numerous colour experimentations, including with pots and plates, which culminated in the founding of his emblematic *Spot Paintings* series. This series soon acquired strict governing principles: uniformly sized and perfectly shaped coloured spots are arranged into a grid formation, with no two colours repeated within a single work. Following *Freeze*, which included two *Spot* wall paintings, Hirst refined his creative process, gradually removing every trace of human intervention.

"When I first made paintings at art school I was totally overcome by colour. I used to get a bit lost in it and tried to solve all my painterly problems with it. I came up with the *Spot Paintings* as a way to control the wayward colour arranging I had going on and that really worked for me for 20 years."

Hirst conceived of the *Medicine Cabinets* series in 1988. While the medicine containers were initially arranged as though the cabinet itself were a body, Hirst soon rearranged them by size and colour in an exploration of formal associations that he would pursue throughout his practice.

"All art is about death, even with Matisse when it's about life."

1990

Hirst created the harrowing living sculpture *A Thousand Years*. Within a two-part rectangular glass vitrine maggots transform into flies which feed on a cow's head before they are killed by the insect-ocutator, depicting a life cycle. The work's form recalls the "space frames" present in the work of Francis Bacon, a major influence of Hirst's. The installation also uses the geometric vocabulary of *Minimalism*, a prelude to the *Natural History* series.

1991

*The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* was completed, generatively reconstructing the dialogue around the readymade object in contemporary art. This work from the *Natural History* series reflects Hirst's desire to detach himself from the perceived artificiality of painting by producing a work which creates an illusion of life. The sculpture led to Hirst's nomination for the celebrated Turner Prize in 1992. In 1995 he was finally awarded the prize for *Mother and Child (Divided)*, which was shown at the 1993 Venice Biennale.

1992

This year marked the start of a series of exhibitions at Charles Saatchi's London gallery which focused on the Young British Artists, a group which dominated the British art scene in the 1990s.

At this time Hirst began the energetic *Spin Paintings* series in which centripetal force is employed to spread paint over canvases. These works combine human intervention with machinery, creating compositions which are shaped by the speed, rotation, duration, fluidity of the paint and choice of colours. The childlike joy that they exude is reflected in their extremely long and playful titles, almost always beginning with "Beautiful" and ending with "Painting."

"I really like making them. And I really like the machine, and I really like the movement. Every time they're finished, I'm desperate to do another one. [They are] childish...in the positive sense of the word."

1993

Hirst returned to some of his earliest artistic explorations with his *Visual Candy* series, completed in 1995. While the title responds to an art critic who called the *Spot Paintings* "just visual candy," the series is inspired by a critique from a tutor at Jacob Kramer College that his paintings were like curtains. Breaking from his new minimalist tendencies and precision of form, in *Visual Candy* Hirst returns to his unrestrained manipulation of colour, applying saturated hues in thick impasto onto the canvases and allowing the passages of colour to interact. Like those of *Spin Paintings*, the titles (such as *Super Silly Fun*, 1993) reflect Hirst's delight in his unhinged play with colour.

"The *Visual Candy* paintings felt like they should come before the Spots, but here I was, doing them after."

2006

Hirst's *After Beautiful Paintings* divert from his prior painting practice in their utter darkness, applying his joyful colour sparsely if at all. Depicting floating skulls, trees and shadowy forms, these works recall the memento mori paintings of the seventeenth century.



2007

Hirst's first major interaction with the value of art emerged with *For the Love of God*. The sculpture is composed of a platinum cast of a human skull which is set with 8,601 diamonds, including a 52-carat diamond on its forehead. Through this work the artist continues his explorations of death and the fragility of human life in this memento mori sculpture.

2008

Generatively skipping galleries and the traditional primary art market, on the day Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy Hirst auctioned off 223 lots of brand new artworks at the Sotheby's solo auction *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever*. The project emerged from his belief that the art market is undemocratic and criticism of the coldness of galleries.

"I think it will just bring loads more people in and will just make it, you know, much more dynamic and exciting... I think it will be good for the market. I think it will expand the market. Everything. There will be more people buying, there will be more great things to buy. Everybody's looking at the market and thinking it's much smaller. But I think this will blow it wide open and benefit everyone."

2010

In the summer of 2010 Hirst produced the *Two Weeks One Summer* paintings alone at his home in Devon. A very personal series, these paintings focus on nature and include the traditional practice of still life painting. Notably, in the *Two Weeks One Summer* paintings are the first instances in which cherry blossoms appear in Hirst's work.

2016

Born out of *Spot Paintings*, Hirst began and completed his *Colour Space* series. While these paintings respect some of the formal rules of the *Spot Paintings* he broke with principles such as the grid organisation and the perfectly symmetrical circle. The *Colour Space* spots exhibit freedom, spontaneity and movement in their loose spots, drips of paint and overlapping forms.

"I originally wanted the *Spots* to look like they were painted by a human trying to paint like a machine. *Colour Space* is going back to the human element, so instead you have the fallibility of the human hand in the drips and inconsistencies. There are still no two exact colours that repeat in each painting, which is really important to me. I think of them as cells under a microscope."

2017

The major exhibition *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* was held at Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana in Venice. The project recounts the history of an ancient shipwreck and the discovery of its astonishing cargo through sculpture, drawing, documentary photography and video.

These works, a number of them encrusted with remnants of the ocean floor, combine influences from the ancient world with contemporary iconography and practices.

Following the intensity and laboriousness of the *Treasures* series, Hirst began his intimate *Veil Paintings*. Revisiting the *Visual Candy* series, in *Veil Paintings* Hirst applied bright colours, overlapping thick brushstrokes and scattered dots to large-format canvases to create exceptionally meditative and peaceful works. Inspired by Pierre Bonnard's Post-Impressionist paintings and Abstract Expressionism, the *Veil Paintings* are environmental and enveloping works which give free rein to colour and gesture.

"For me, the *Veil Paintings* are about now, about something energetic forming, like planets or ideas, they are about growth. I want them to feel like you're looking through a sheer curtain at something patterned in a colourful complicated garden beyond, and both the curtain and the garden are moving and work with each other and against each other."

2018

Begun in 2018 and completed in 2020, the *Cherry Blossoms* series comprises 107 large-format artworks, which reinterpret the traditional and popular subject of floral depiction with joyful irony.

On the canvas Hirst combines thick brushstrokes and elements of gestural painting, referencing both Impressionism and Pointillism as well as Action Painting. Blurring the lines between figuration and abstraction, decorative and natural, these works address issues of beauty, desire and transience.

2021

Damien Hirst, *Archaeology Now* opens at the Galleria Borghese in Rome. The exhibition displays a selection of Hirst's sculptures from the *Treasures* series and paintings from *Colour Space* throughout the permanent displays in the historic galleries.

The Fondation Cartier, in Paris, exhibits a selection from Hirst's series *Cherry Blossoms*. This is Hirst's first institutional show in France.

*The Currency*, a series of 10,000 NFTs which correspond to 10,000 unique physical artworks that are stored in a secure vault in the UK, is launched. The works are now brought to life through their launch on the blockchain.



# Current Museum Exhibitions

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Damien Hirst, *Archaeology Now*  
Galleria Borghese, Rome

May 8, 2021 — November 7, 2021

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On Tuesday 8 June, Galleria Borghese opens a new exhibition by Damien Hirst, curated by Anna Coliva and Mario Codognato.

Over 80 works from Hirst's *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* series are displayed throughout the museum alongside ancient masterpieces.

The exhibition features both monumental and small scale sculptures made from materials such as bronze, Carrara marble and malachite. Hirst's *Colour Space paintings*, exhibited for the first time in Italy, are also be presented together with the permanent collection, while his colossal sculpture, *Hydra* and *Kali*, is displayed outdoors in the Giardino Segreto of the Uccelliera.

The project was made possible thanks to the generous support of Prada, which investigates areas of research such as art, architecture, philosophy and literature with the aim of developing innovative languages and projects, in a continuous dialogue with the broader scenarios of contemporaneity.

Hirst's works are displayed throughout Galleria Borghese, a museum with a superb collection of masterpieces of classical Roman sculpture, Italian paintings of the Renaissance and the 17th century, and the most important works of Bernini and Canova. At the same time – and this is its uniqueness – it is a place with rich, ornate interiors of marble, stuccos and mosaics. The works by Hirst complements the range of inventions and techniques seen in the museum's collection, showcasing the artist's incredible ability to combine concepts and narratives with the exceptional skills needed to create these complex works, which has been a constant of this institution.





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**Damien Hirst, *Cherry Blossoms***  
**Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art,**  
**Paris, France**  
**July 6, 2021 — January 2, 2022**

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The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is proud to unveil *Cherry Blossoms*, Damien Hirst's remarkable new series of paintings. *Cherry Blossoms* is Damien Hirst's first museum exhibition in France.

***A celebration of colour within chaos***

The *Cherry Blossoms* series reinterprets, with playful irony, the traditional subject of landscape painting. Hirst combines thick brushstrokes and elements of gestural painting, referencing both Impressionism and Pointillism, as well as Action Painting. The monumental canvases, which are entirely covered in dense bright colours, envelope the viewer in a vast floral landscape moving between figuration and abstraction.

The *Cherry Blossoms* are at once a subversion and homage to the great artistic movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They are integral to the pictorial exploration long carried out by Hirst.

In his London studio, the artist describes "diving into the paintings and completely blitzing them from one end to the other." He also talks about working on several canvases at the same time and constantly returning to these, which he kept close by, months after their completion.

After devoting three full years to the series, Damien Hirst finished the *Cherry Blossoms* series in November 2020: "[The pandemic] has given me a lot more time to live with the paintings, and look at them, and make absolutely certain that everything's finished." The complete series comprises 107 canvases (all reproduced in the exhibition catalogue), divided into single panels, diptychs, triptychs, quadriptychs, and even a hexptych, all large-format.

The exhibition, a response to an invitation by Hervé Chandès, General Director of the Fondation Cartier, to Damien Hirst during a meeting in London in 2019, presents thirty paintings selected by Hervé Chandès and the artist. Taking over the space designed by Jean Nouvel, the canvases, covered in thick, vibrant paint, absorb the spectator into the paintings.





# Current Gallery Exhibitions

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**Damien Hirst, *Cathedrals Built on Sand***  
Gagosian Paris  
June 8 - September 22, 2021

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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.



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**Damien Hirst, *Relics and Fly Paintings***  
Gagosian London  
Open from June 5, 2021

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Gagosian is pleased to present *Relics and Fly Paintings* by Damien Hirst, the second phase of the artist's yearlong takeover of the Britannia Street gallery, following the inaugural exhibition of *Fact Paintings and Fact Sculptures*.

For this new iteration, the artist has clad the interior of the gallery in black butterfly-patterned wallpaper that reproduces the kaleidoscopic surface of his painting *Valley of Death* (2010). With its uniquely immersive atmosphere, the exhibition brings together a number of Hirst's bodies of work, prompting reflections on themes of darkness and death, the past and the future.





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Damien Hirst, *Forgiving and Forgetting*  
Gagosian Rome  
July 6 - October 23, 2021

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Gagosian is pleased to present *Forgiving and Forgetting*, an exhibition of sculptures and new paintings by Damien Hirst. The presentation coincides with *Archaeology Now*, on view from June 8 to November 7, 2021 which intersperses more than eighty paintings and sculptures by Hirst among the historical collections of the Galleria Borghese in Rome.

*Forgiving and Forgetting* includes works from Hirst's *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, a project that presented sculptural relics from a fictional shipwreck off the coast of East Africa, playing fast and loose with linear time, cultural origin, and perceptions of relative status and value.

Foregrounding these sculptures against an intricately woven tale of seafaring exploits, marine excavation, and laborious research, Hirst aimed to invoke feelings of wonder at their meticulous physical and conceptual fabrication.

