



## Press Release

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### EXHIBITION OF NEW WORKS BY DAMIEN HIRST OPENS AT HOUGHTON

A series of new paintings by Damien Hirst, which have never been shown in public before, will go on display in the State Rooms at Houghton Hall for the exhibition ***Damien Hirst at Houghton Hall: Colour Space Paintings and Outdoor Sculptures*** opening on **25 March 2018**.

The 46 new paintings, from a series entitled Colour Space, are a development of the iconic Spot Paintings, which are among the artist's most recognised works. The Colour Space series sees a return to his first Spot Painting made in 1986. The new paintings are much looser in form than the minimal grid style with which he is now synonymous.

As Hirst has explained: *"My first ever Spot Painting [1986] was loose and painted with drippy paint, not minimal at all. In that first painting, I was wrestling with what I originally thought of as the coldness of Minimalism and the more emotional, abstract expressionist painting style I'd grown up with. At the time I painted it, it felt uncool and I abandoned it immediately for the rigidity of the grid, removing the mess, but after doing the Spot catalogue raisonné I've felt really drawn to that first painting and knew I'd revisit it eventually – maybe it's because I'm getting older. I realised I was wrong about Minimalism – the simplest, cleanest thing can provoke an emotional response – but the Spot Paintings still play with that idea; despite the grid they always look happy, although there's an unease there too because the colours don't repeat when you expect them to. 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. It felt right to show them somewhere historic rather than in a conventional gallery space and Houghton's perfect. It feels totally right."*

The exhibition also includes 15 sculptures, amongst these are some of the artist's most iconic large-scale bronze works, which are displayed in Houghton's grounds. A number of sculptures are also shown inside the house, including two kinetic ball works from Hirst's Mental Escapology series (both 2000). *Dog with Bone* (2017) is from a new series of scaled-up pipe cleaner animals and is displayed alongside two rotating Spin Paintings.

To coincide with the exhibition, Hirst's 20ft bronze sculpture, *Hymn* (1999–2005) will be shown at Norwich University of the Arts (NUA) from 26 March to 29 July. The sculpture will be in place through the Norfolk and Norwich Festival in May.

The exhibition is curated by Mario Codognato, who had worked on several of the artist's previous projects including his first retrospective in Naples, *The Agony and the Ecstasy: Selected Works from 1989–2004*, Museo Archeologico Nazionale de Napoli 2004-5 and *Candy: Damien Hirst & Felix Gonzales-Torres*, Blain|Southern, London, 2013.

Lord Cholmondeley, owner of Houghton, said: "We are delighted to have this opportunity to show Damien Hirst's new paintings in the State Rooms at Houghton, together with some of his best-known sculptures in the grounds. It is the first time that Hirst has shown a significant body of work in a classical country house setting."

Houghton Hall was built by Britain's first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole in around 1722. Designed by architects Colen Campell and James Gibbs and executed by Thomas Ripley, Surveyor of the King's Works, it is one of the country's finest examples of Palladian architecture. Later, Sir Robert engaged William Kent to decorate the grand rooms on the state floor.

Recently, many of the rooms have been restored to how they would have looked in Sir Robert's day, and formal planting on the garden front has been reinstated. Visitors will also find an award-winning walled garden, a museum of model soldiers, a restaurant and a shop. A number of contemporary art works, including pieces by Stephen Cox, Jeppe Hein, Anya Gallaccio, Zhan Wang, James Turrell and Turner Prize winners Rachel Whiteread and Sir Richard Long have been located in the landscape.

Viennese auction house, Dorotheum, the oldest in continental Europe, is a fitting partner for the exhibition which juxtaposes old and new. Established in 1707, the auction house continually belies its eighteenth century traditional heritage with innovative modern contemporary works including those by Damien Hirst.

Exhibition title: ***Damien Hirst at Houghton Hall: Colour Space Paintings and Outdoor Sculptures***

Dates: 25 March – 15 July 2018

Ticket information: <https://www.houghtonhall.com>

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Damien Hirst Biography**

Damien Hirst was born in 1965 in Bristol and grew up in Leeds. He studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths college from 1986 to 1989, and whilst in his second year, he conceived and curated the group exhibition, 'Freeze'. The show is commonly acknowledged to have been the launching point not only for Hirst, but for a generation of British artists.

Since the late 1980s, Hirst has used a varied practice of installation, sculpture, painting and drawing to explore the complex relationships between art, beauty, religion, science, life and death. Through work that includes the iconic shark in formaldehyde, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991) and *For the Love of God* (2007), a platinum cast of a skull set with 8,601 flawless pavé-set diamonds, he investigates and challenges contemporary belief systems, and dissects the

uncertainties at the heart of human experience. In April 2017, he presented his most complex project to date, 'Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable', across two museum spaces in Venice. Hirst lives and works in London and Gloucester.

Since 1987, over 90 solo Damien Hirst exhibitions have taken place worldwide, and he has been included in over 300 group shows. In 2012, Tate Modern, London presented a major retrospective survey of Hirst's work in conjunction with the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Hirst's other solo exhibitions include Qatar Museums Authority, ALRIWAQ Doha (2013-2014); Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (2010); Oceanographic Museum, Monaco (2010); Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2008); Astrup Fearnley Museet für Moderne Kunst, Oslo (2005); Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (2004); Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, Pinault Collection, Venice (2017), amongst others. His work features in major collections including Tate Collection; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Fondazione Prada; Astrup Fearnley Museum and the Broad Art Foundation. He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1995.

### **Mario Codognato, Curator**

Mario Codognato was since its foundation in 2005 the chief curator of MADRE, the new museum of contemporary art in Naples, where he has curated, among others, the retrospectives of the work of Jannis Kounellis (2006), Rachel Whiteread (2007), Thomas Struth (2008) and Franz West (2010). He has previously worked at the contemporary art project at the Archaeological Museum in Naples, where he curated exhibitions of Francesco Clemente (2002), Jeff Koons (2003), Anish Kapoor (2003), Richard Serra (2004), Anselm Kiefer (2004) and the first ever museum retrospective of Damien Hirst (2004). He has curated several thematic exhibitions, including *Barock* at MADRE in 2009 and *Fragile?* at the Cini Foundation in Venice in 2013. From 2014 to 2016 he was chief curator at the 21er Haus of the Belvedere in Vienna, where he has curated among others, the retrospective exhibitions of Olafur Eliasson, Tomas Saraceno and Sterling Ruby, and the exhibition "Sleepless" on the history and role of the bed in art. Since 2016 he is director of the Anish Kapoor Foundation.

### **Dorotheum**

Celebrating 311 years since its foundation in Vienna by Emperor Joseph I in 1707, Dorotheum is today the largest auction house in both Continental and German-speaking Europe, as well as one of the oldest auction houses in the world. The heritage brand still holds its headquarters within the longstanding Palais Dorotheum in Vienna on the Dorotheergasse. In recent years, Dorotheum has expanded internationally with representative offices in: Munich, Düsseldorf, Milan, Rome, London, Prague, and Brussels, all of which hold regular previews of major auction items. To date, Dorotheum has been heavily influential in supporting cultural institutions and charitable organisations across Austria, working very closely across the cultural fibres of Vienna, from supporting all the major Austrian museums to co-organising Vienna Art Week, so it seemed a natural progression to support likeminded international

initiatives such as this exhibition. Dorotheum will also continue to support BFAMI's Women In Art Lunch this June, honouring Marina Abramović in partnership with Lisson Gallery.

### **Mulberry**

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