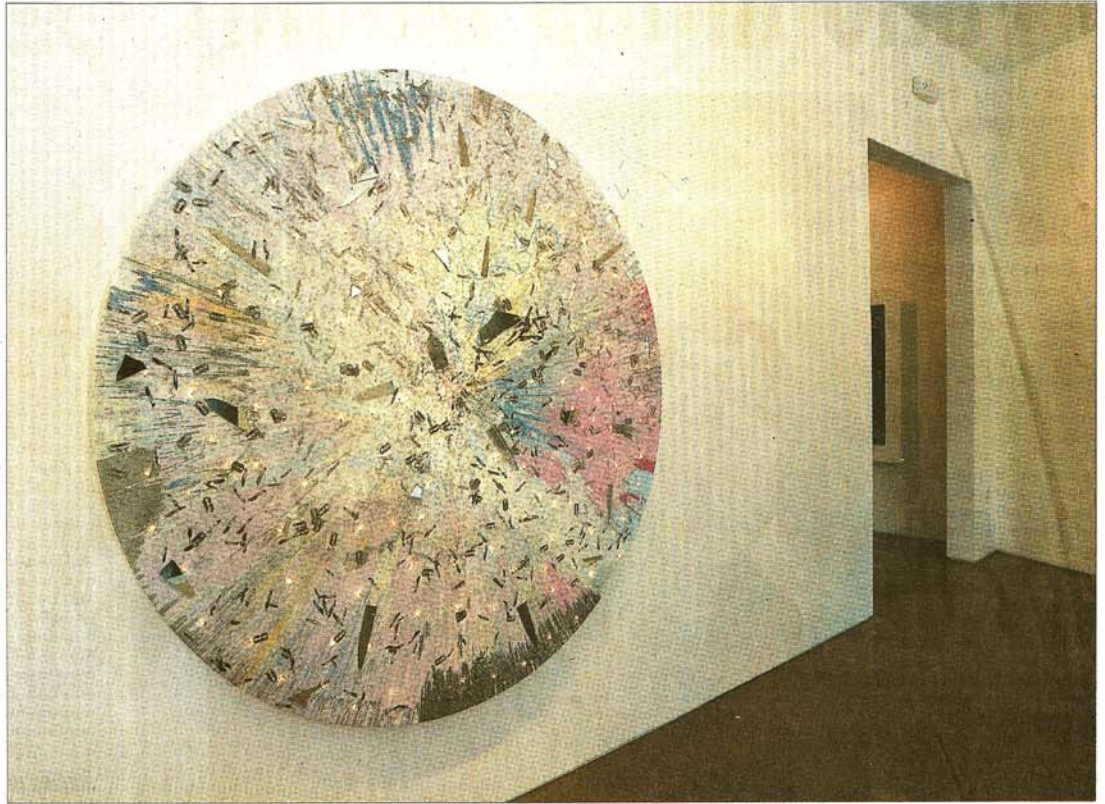


Shock and awe



REX C. CURRY/Special Contributor

Knives, broken mirrors and razor blades jut from the surface of *Beautiful Big, Beyond Belief Tasteful Party Painting XIV* (2007).

ART REVIEW: Goss-Michael showcases Damien Hirst's exciting, dangerous and expensive works

By **CHARISSA N. TERRANOVA**
Special Contributor

Britain's bad boy Damien Hirst is an artist of the superlative. The sale of his *Lullaby Spring* pill cabinet at a London Sotheby's auction in June for \$19.1 million made him the most expensive artist living.

Mr. Hirst then honed the superlative by outdoing himself with the Aug. 30 sale of *For the Love of God*, a cast of a human skull encrusted with 8,601 diamonds, for \$100 million to an undisclosed investment group. (Silk-screened images of *For the Love of God*, speckled with diamond dust, can be seen at "Damien Hirst," now showing at the Goss-Michael Foundation.)

As a tiny footnote to these mosts, add "most dangerous art" to arrive at the Uptown gallery.

A team of builders had to remove the wall of the Goss-Michael

Foundation building abutting Fairmount Street to install *Saint Sebastian, Exquisite Pain* (2007), a 10-foot-tall glass and steel case containing a black furry calf, stabbed with arrows, hanging from a white steel I-beam, floating in formaldehyde and water. Installers wore hazmat suits. But donned in body cover with his head slightly exposed, one gallerist reported his eyes burning and that he almost vomited.

Viewers, beware while scrutinizing *Beautiful Big, Beyond Belief Tasteful Party Painting XIV* (2007), a round spin painting with pastel-colored striations of paint. Knives, broken mirrors and razor blades jut from the surface of the canvas. Mr. Hirst makes painting

armed and dangerous, adding sharp edges to his technique of spinning canvases as a means of harnessing centrifugal force in the spread of paint.

Beyond the spectacle of hazard and provocation, Mr. Hirst's art is beautiful. Based on the third-century saint who miraculously recovered from a sally of arrows, *Saint Sebastian, Exquisite Pain* bears a sad, eerie magnificence. The calf's head lolls to the side, its teeth showing and tongue drooping. The foundation's Kenny Goss and George Michael reportedly paid \$7 million for it.

Mr. Hirst, 42, has investigated life, death, generation and decay over the past two decades, appropriating display and contents from

museums in allied fields such as natural history and science. More interested in fauna than flora, Mr. Hirst uses the bodies of animals to distill the folly of the great chain of being — the hierarchy that places mankind above all else.

The painting *Bitterness* (2006) is a dark abyss. Upon close viewing, its rolling, molten black surfaces show that Mr. Hirst is painting with flies. Get too close and you smell the mustiness of the thick "paint," or heaps of flies, decaying. He has honed his technique. Earlier iterations of the piece resulted in maggots hatching into flies in a collector's house.

In this exhibition, the former Goss Gallery hews to a new high standard of work and intellectually nuanced exhibitions. At the same time, the show perpetuates the fascination with shock-and-awe celebrity culture so central to its old order.

Charissa N. Terranova is a Dallas freelance writer.

Plan your life

"Damien Hirst" continues through March at the Goss-Michael Foundation, 2500 Cedar Springs Road at Fairmount. Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. Free. 214-696-0555, gossmichaelfoundation.org.