

The debate on the art merit and value of damien hirst

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There are infinite definitions for the term, 'successful artist'. Maybe it's one that sells their artworks for millions of dollars, or one that evokes an emotional response from their viewers. All are worthy of the label.

But what makes an artist successful? And more importantly, what determines the value of an artist's work?

I introduce to you, Damien Hirst. An artist who's is often in the centre of debate being described as 'disastrous', a 'disgrace', and a 'con-artist', as his most recent exhibition has sent the art world into a frenzy.

Though, the phrase 'con artist' is not to be used lightly. How would you feel if you followed your passion and were constantly told you have the wrong intentions?

Hirst strives to expose ideas currently relevant to contemporary art, while being aware of the demand for his work. He stands as an inspiring role model to people of all ages and continues to break the cycle of traditionalism in the art world. This is why Damien Hirst is worthy of artistic merit.

This is an artwork named "The Physical impossibility of death in the mind of something living", sold for approximately \$12 million dollars. Suspended in a tank of formaldehyde, it looks as if the shark is swimming towards you, its intent to bite your head off. Staring death in the face makes you aware that, to a predator, you are nothing but food. However, this initial reaction is what allows viewers to understand the work. The work builds on the tradition of conceptual art whilst focusing on ideas in sync with contemporary art today, such as life and mortality. The work is not about expression, decoration, or

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style. It's about an audacious idea brought to life. Dan Redding, A graphic designer explains; " If the purpose of art is to provoke an emotional response in the viewer, this piece is successful as soon as you enter the room."

Staring death in the face is not something we are familiar with, this experience resonating with the audience's fear of death. Hirst's shark is a perfect example of conceptual art: the simple idea of the piece is the focal point of the work.

Additionally, Hirst challenges the thoughts of his audience with his use of shocking materials in his works, his financial success reflecting the demand for his practice. His work, " For the Love of God", selling for a staggering \$100 million dollars, consists of 8, 601 of the finest diamonds in the world. As a viewer, you will remember his works; and this is because of their extravagance and high price. If an artwork didn't make an impact on you, what was the point of viewing it? Julia Steinmetz, a contemporary art writer explains; " the expense could be the work's rationale: Hirst explained " it would be good to make something that laughed in the face of death." Hirst has been the centre of the media as he continues to bring ideas to life that nobody has ever thought of creating before. His financial success stands as a reminder that his works are loved by many, this demand for shocking, new and exciting works making him the world's most expensive living artist today.

The rising popularity of Hirst's work also exposes the public to conceptual art and inspires young artists to break the cycle of traditionalism. Hirst is providing new ideas to the art industry and inspiring upcoming artists to

explore self-expression as an important factor for creating artworks. You all probably recognise the names 'Pablo Picasso' and 'Vincent Van Gogh', the most famous traditional artists. They were inspiring and made a lasting impact on art, just as Hirst does. Julian Bell, painter and writer explains; "The conjunction of a media-savvy, image-grabbing sensibility has delivered pieces that set thoughts jangling concerning our value systems." In doing so, Hirst has become one of the most successful postmodernist artists, his dominance within the art world enabling him to release works that require collaboration and money in their creation.

However, Hirst has also received criticism in relation to his works, some critics suggesting that he doesn't display any skill in the tradition of artmaking, rather, that he panders to the art market for publicity. His latest exhibition, "Veil Paintings", consists of works strikingly similar to works by Aboriginal artists such as Kathy Maringka and many others. He is accused of conforming to the art market for financial success as this style of painting is popular in modern times. Though, controversy over the similarity of the work to others enables the work to have a higher significance, representing the idea of emotions in a glorified manner as he explained; "I need to go back to my original feelings about color". Hirst shows us that art can be what you make of it. The concept and background of the works allow them to become artworks in their selfs. The works rely on marketing to make them worthwhile. It is marketing which take them from being museum curiosities to poignant statements on our culture, which allows Hirst to stand out.

Success as an artist lies in the tension between the original artworks they create and the intention of their composition. That tension will always be there, but so long as their desire to explore is greater than their desire to conform to what people want, they're on the right track, and this is what Damien Hirst does.

Do you believe he is worthy of artistic merit?