

Sensation

Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection

cur.: Norman Rosenthal

London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1997

Berlin, Kunsthalle, 1998-1999

New York, Brooklyn Museum of Arts, 1999-2000



Marcus Harvey







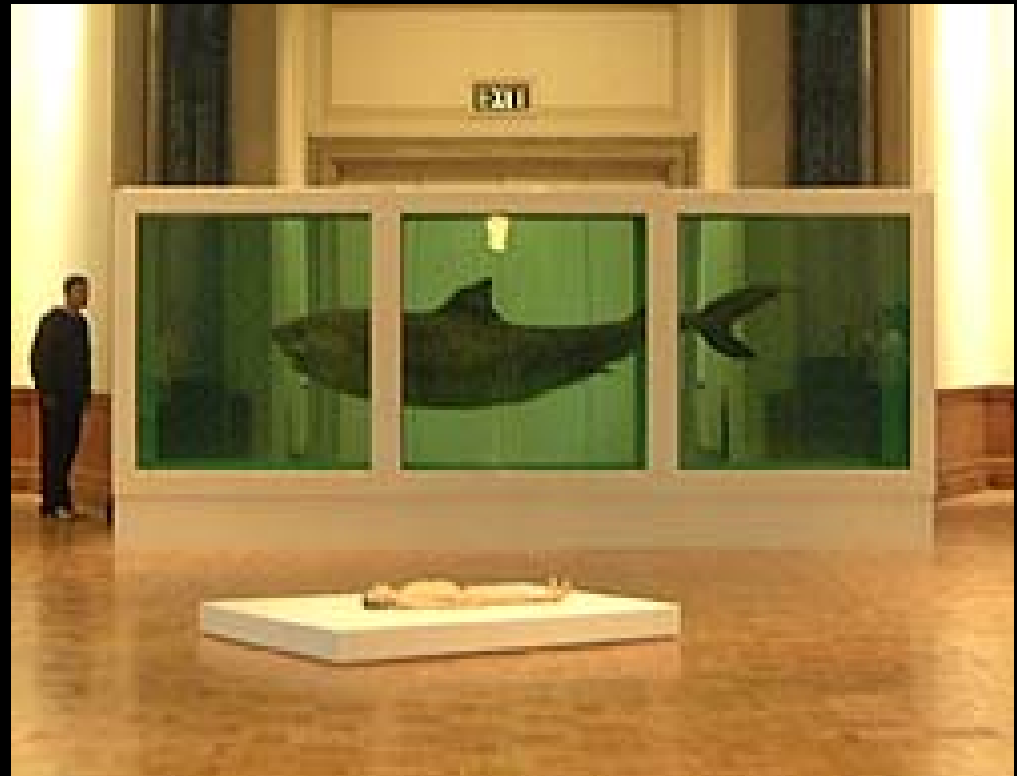
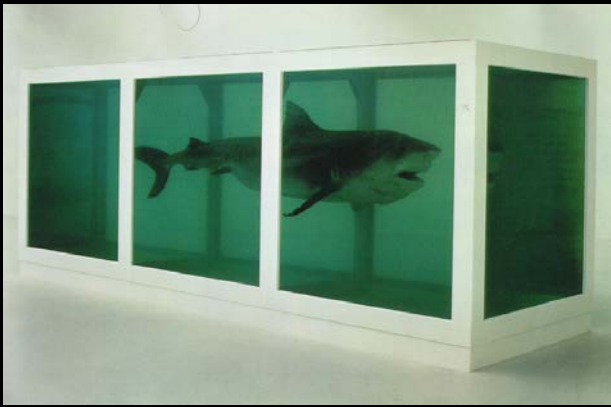


Damien Hirst
Bristol, 7.06.1965



Un millar de años
1990







PROFILE
AFTER SHOCK

What has Damien Hirst done in British art?

BY CALVIN TOMLIN

It took Damien Hirst less than five years to become the most famous living British artist. As early as 1992, *The Independent* ran a cartoon of Prime Minister John Major submerged horizontally in a glass tank, with no color other than "Oh, God! It's disgusting!"—the reference, as the paper's readers were expected to know, was to the twenty-seven-year-old Hirst's tiger shark in formaldehyde, a real-life art work acquired by the private art collector Charles Saatchi. The London papers regularly report on Hirst's louche doings at the Groucho Club or the Colony Room, and they take note of the celebration when *Rolling Stone* named him the year's best musician, in November 1998, whose concept and cover art by Hirst, and whose profits he shares. In London, Hirst is as well known as the rock stars he hangs out with, but there has not yet emerged him with his drug-dealer, now thirty-five, he is an open, friendly, humorous, quick-witted, dandy, smooth, hard-drinking, immensely likable York-dweller whose tough, working-class features look as though they could turn belittlement at some point but never do.

Previous few British artists make it big in New York, and Hirst, so far, is no exception. Neither he nor the other young British artists of what is known as the Young British Art movement—what the 1998 exhibition, "Exhibition," which was organized largely by Hirst when he was still a second-year art student—have been taken as seriously here as they have been in Europe, partly because their work seems to echo the work of certain young and not so young American postmodernists (Bruce Nauman, Jeff Koons, and Ashley Bickerton, among others) who got them several jumps ahead of them. This situation may change. "Sensation," a large group show of recent British art from the collection of Charles Saatchi, who has been a prime factor in the group's success, will

open at the Brooklyn Museum of Art on October 2nd, and, to judge from its previous appearances at the Royal Academy in London and Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, it should draw huge crowds and fiercely contrasting reviews. "Sensation" will give New York its first look at Hirst's shock piece (whose formal title is "The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living") and at several other early works, including his creepy but stirring "A Thousand Years," a glass vitrine containing a nursing cow's head, five maggots that hatch into flies, and an insect-O-Cone device to zap the flies. Also in the exhibition are Marcus Harvey's notorious portrait of Myra Hindley, the convicted child murderer, painted with what look like the tiny imprints of children's hands; Marc Quinn's self-portrait head cast in right piece of his own frozen blood; John and Cheri Cheema's adolescent female masturbators, which spread once perianth and gaping anus when one normally finds none or none at all; and other thought-provoking works, some sensational, some less so. Several of the "Sensation" artists are also having solo shows in New York this season—hardly and Hirst at the high-profile Gagosian Gallery. Larry Gagosian, who recently sold one of Hirst's blood cow's heads in formaldehyde for five hundred thousand dollars, has a bad-boy image comparable in its way to Hirst's. He informed me with some pride that Damien had said to him, "Larry, everyone tells me you're a terrible person, but there's nowhere else in New York I want to show."

Unlike most of the other young British artists (or Y.B.A.s, as the tabloids call them), Hirst has produced a surprisingly diverse body of work. In addition to dead animals or marine specimens in formaldehyde (which he has stopped doing for the time being), he makes several different kinds of paintings on canvas: spot paintings, in which all the spots on the same



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE PINE

What the hell's wrong with sensation? Hirst shows his work in New York next month.

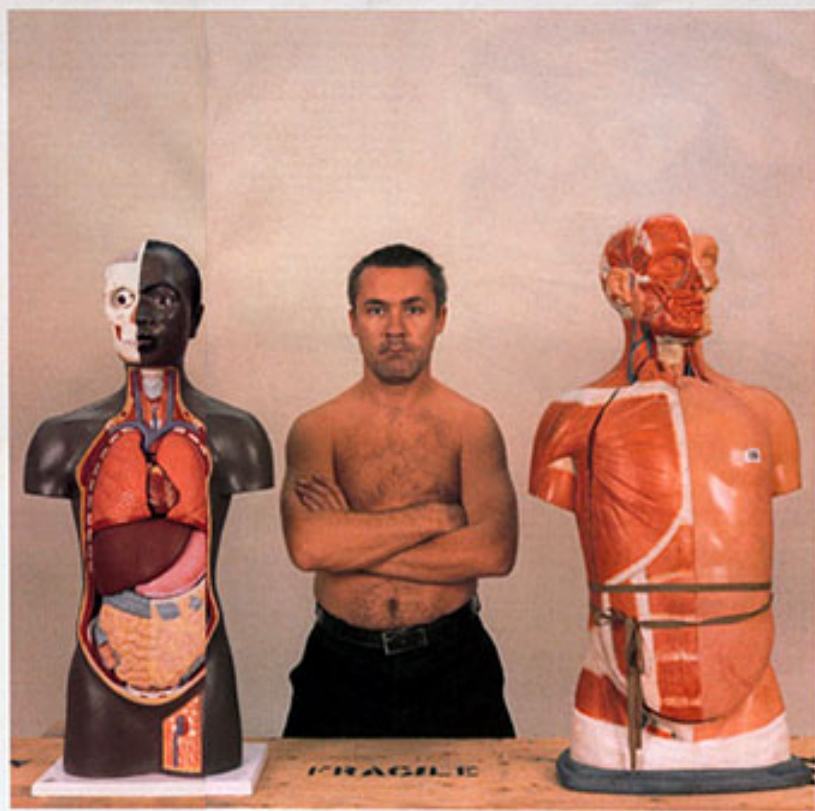
color before he moved to London and became a jewelry designer. Things went a little tense after Damien moved in with Maia, but then Jay married Sam Taylor-Wood, a photographer and filmmaker who was one of the rising Y.B.A.s, and everyone stayed friends. Maia and Damien went a real match, two strong and independent personalities with no need to control or compete with each other. Maia "is like an alien to me," Damien told me. "She inhabits a world I don't know existed."

The Y.B.A.s were a competition but remarkably cohesive group. They drank together, slept together, promoted one another's work, and welcomed talented newcomers. "Friendship" group shows, organized by artists, proliferated in temporary spaces around London. Damien counted several of them. "People in the art world got after me and said you've got to decide whether you're an artist or a curator," he said me, "and I kept saying 'Who? If you go out and buy objects and arrange them in a sculpture, why

for artists under fifty. He didn't win it that year, but three years later he did.

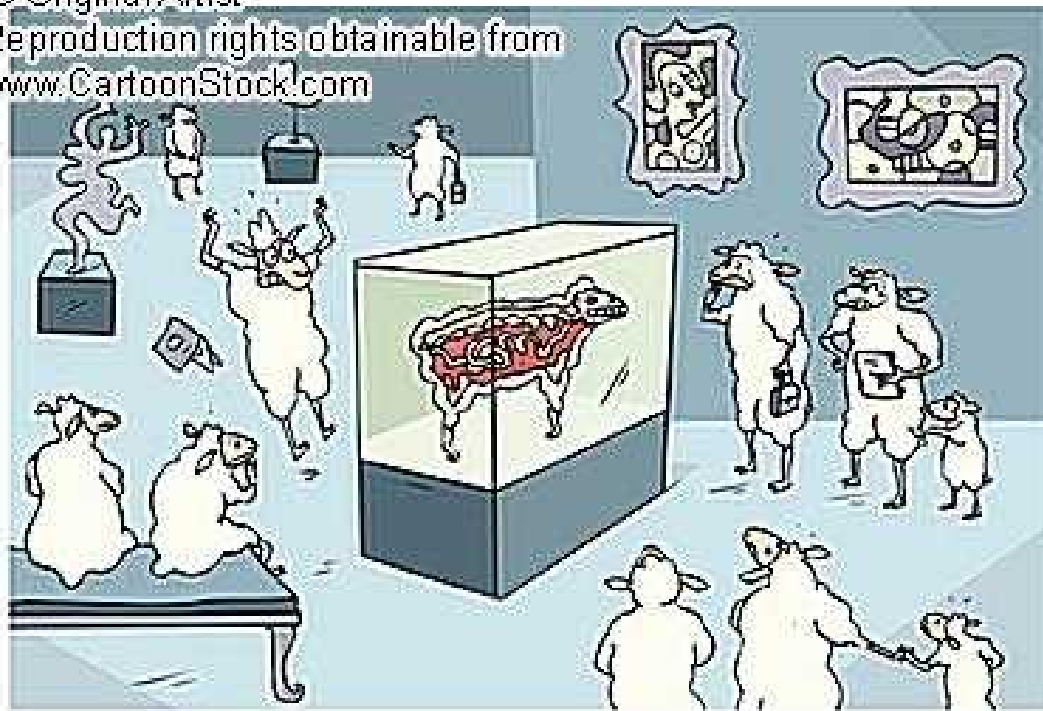
That British seem to tolerate innovation in film, fashion, and music, but in this century they have consistently resisted and ridiculed it in the visual arts. Now, however, for the first time that anybody can remember, more than young British artists began turning up on page 1 or even page 1 of the London newspapers. When a self-ordained artist poured black ink into Hirst's hands in formaldehyde ("Away from the Flock"), at the Serpentine Gallery in 1994, the papers all played it big; they reacted even more gleefully in 1995, when Hirst's first solo show at the Gagosian Gallery in New York was cancelled because the New York City Department of Health took issue with the sanitary arrangements for the main art work, a glass case in which some were supposed to simulate reproduction by means of a hydraulic apparatus.

Hirst's Gagosian show took place in the spring of 1996. Instead of



"Mother" (1994), left. "If you don't think about death, then it's going to get the better of you," Hirst says. "I'm just trying to say, 'Look, here about that'."

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...squali e li metteva
 in formalina

STORIA GORDON BURN

Esce da Postmedia (www.postmediabooks.it) *Manuale per giovani artisti - L'arte raccontata da Damien Hirst*, un libro composto da 12 colloqui tra lo scrittore Gordon Burn e l'artista Damien Hirst.

Burn: Ma è vero che Francis Bacon andò a vedere il tuo lavoro delle mosche?

Hirst: «Sì, lo dice in una lettera. Dice: "Ciao, bla bla, non mi sento molto bene, bla bla. [...] Sono andato da Saatchi e ho visto questa mostra di giovani artisti inglesi. Faceva rabbrivire, bla bla. C'è un pezzo di questo nuovo artista", non cita il mio nome, "con la testa di una mucca, una macchina che uccide gli insetti e un sacco di mosche che volano. Non male". Non



Damien Hirst

«L'arte, quella grande, tocca chiunque. Ti blocca sui binari»

A fianco: Damien Hirst. Sotto: a sinistra, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991); a destra, *God* (1989).

più bravo di me perché sono privi e pieni di significato al tempo stesso e sono maledettamente naturali».

Allora un quadro puntinato fatto da te è meglio, o almeno costa di più, di uno fatto dai tuoi assistenti? Ha un'aura particolare?

«Senti un po', chi ha progettato il Guggenheim?».

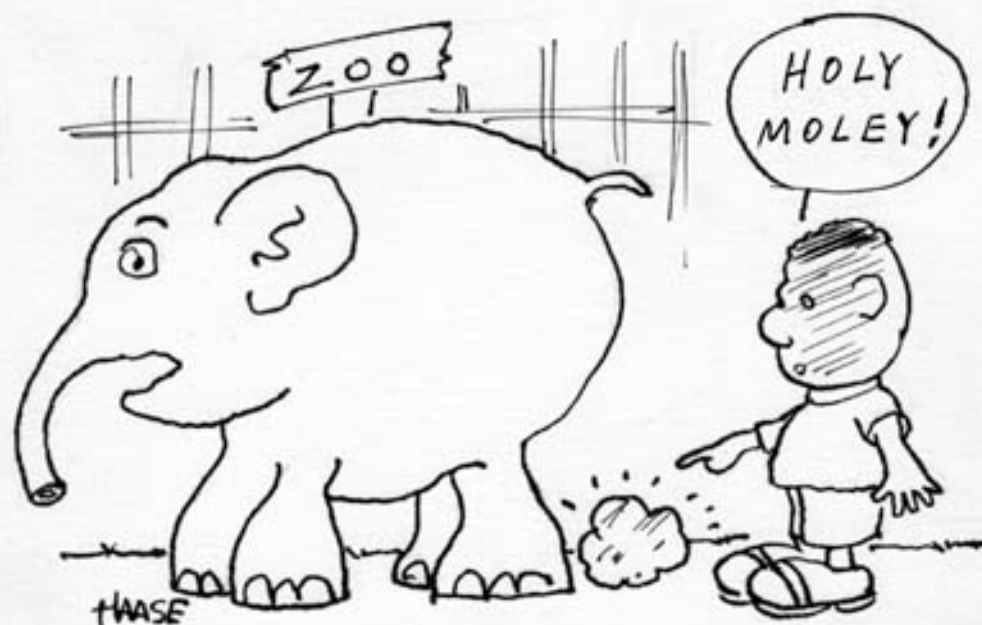
Frank Lloyd Wright.

«Esatto. Però non è un muratore, è un architetto del cazzo, non sa costruire un muro. Allora, è meglio vivere in una casa progettata da Frank Lloyd Wright e costruita da lui, sapendo che non sa tirare su un muro, o in una casa progettata da lui e costruita da altre persone?».

Non è la stessa cosa.

«È esattamente la stessa cosa, cazzo. Ho fatto solo cinque quadri puntinati. Sono capace di farli, ma quando ho iniziato sapevo dove stavo arrivando, sapevo esattamente cosa sarebbe successo e non potevo perdere tempo a farli. I miei puntinati fanno cagare, li ho fatti col supposto egualismo, cioè

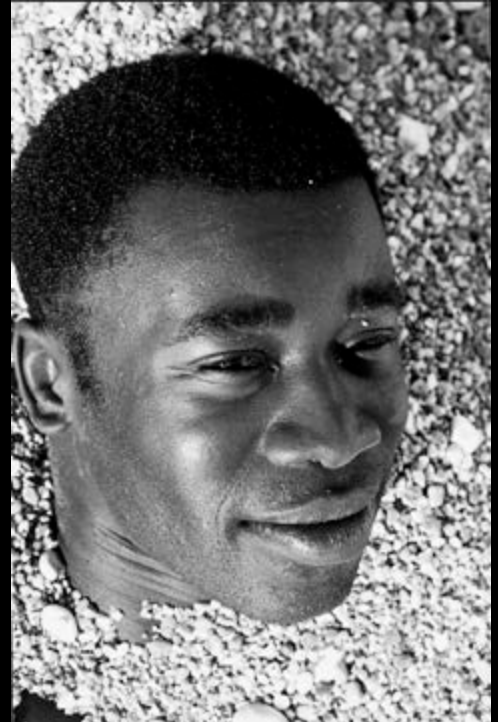
At a Very Early Age



Chris Ofili



Chris Ofili







Jake & Dinos
Chapman



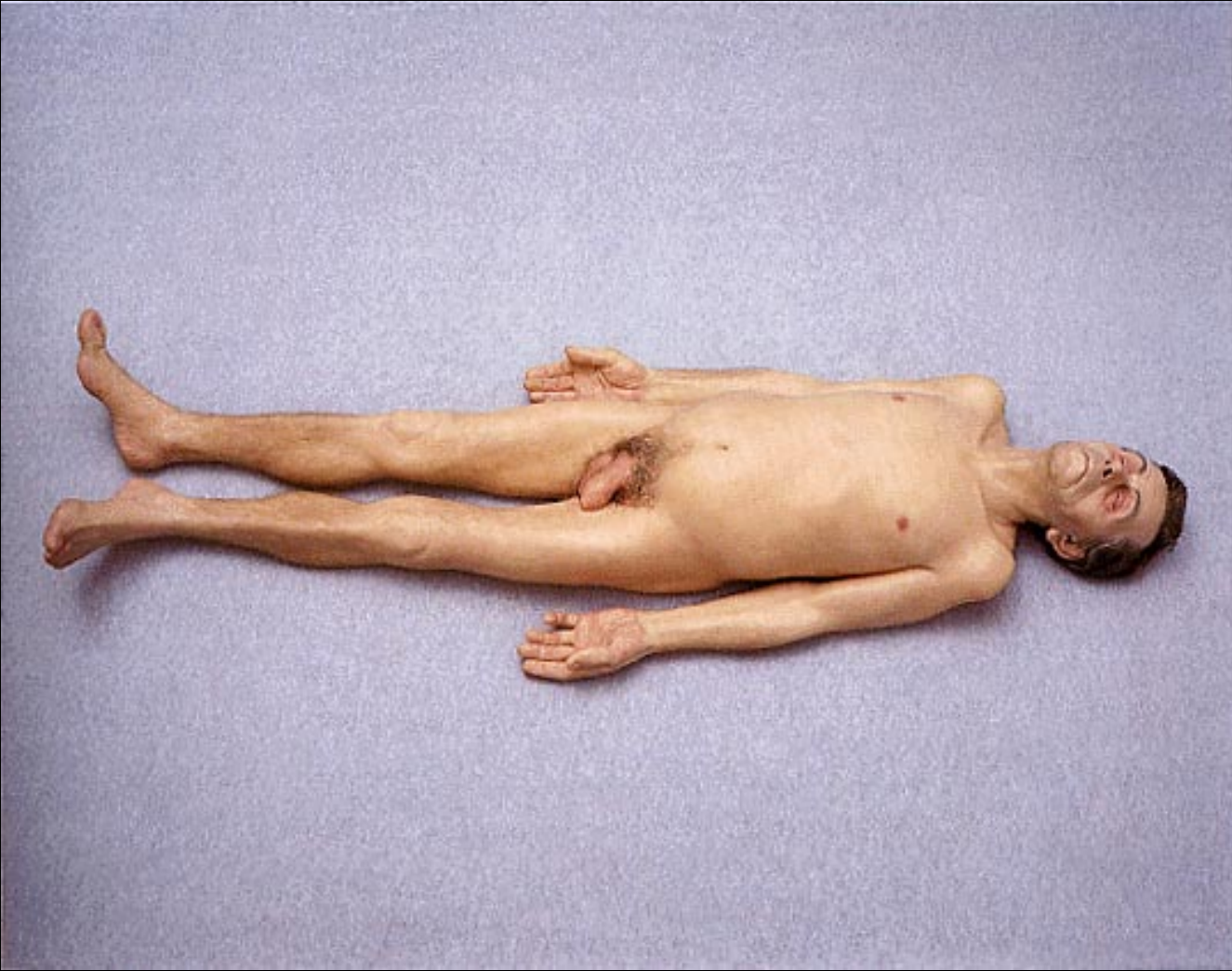








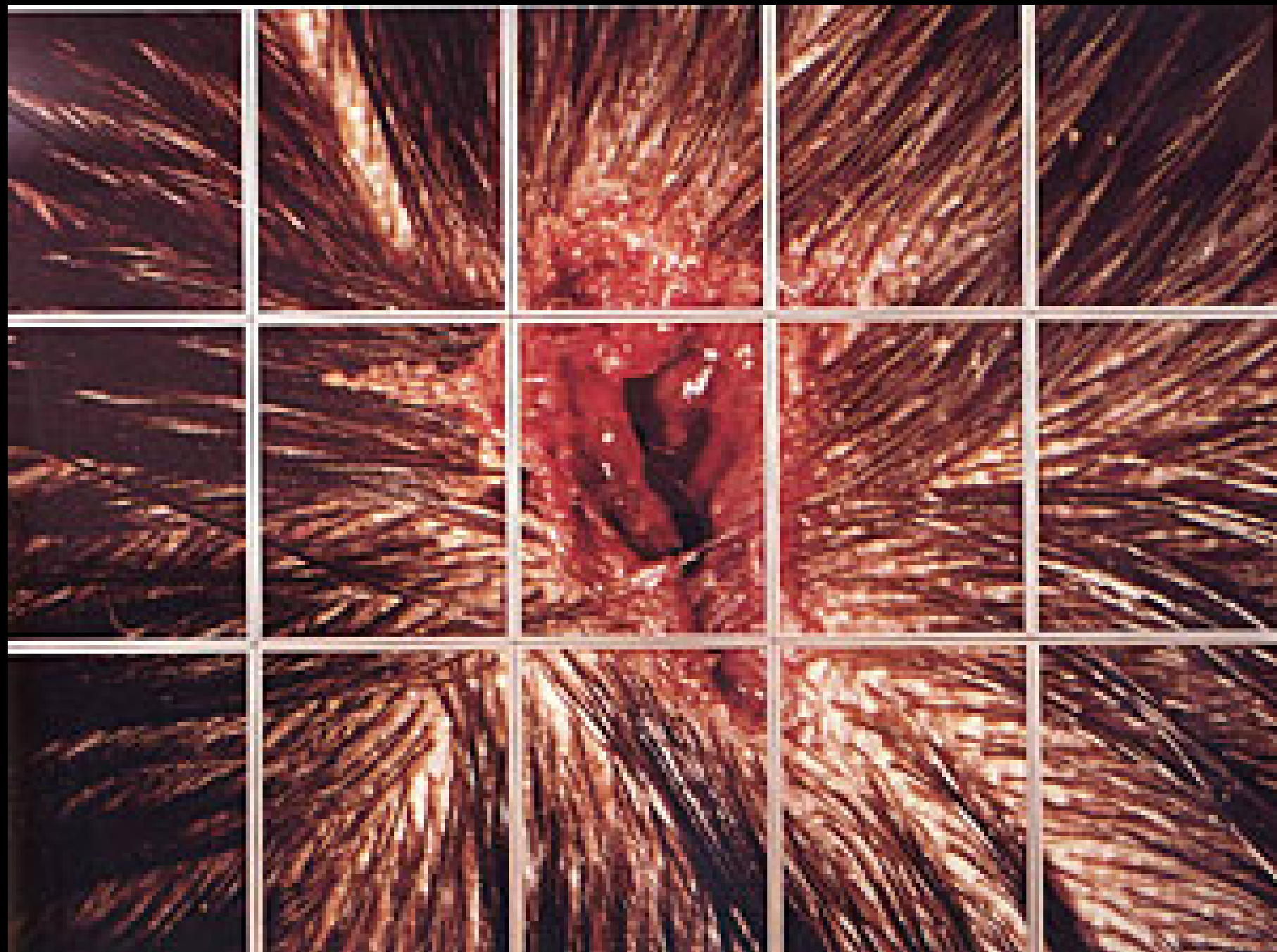
Ron Mueck





Mat Collishaw





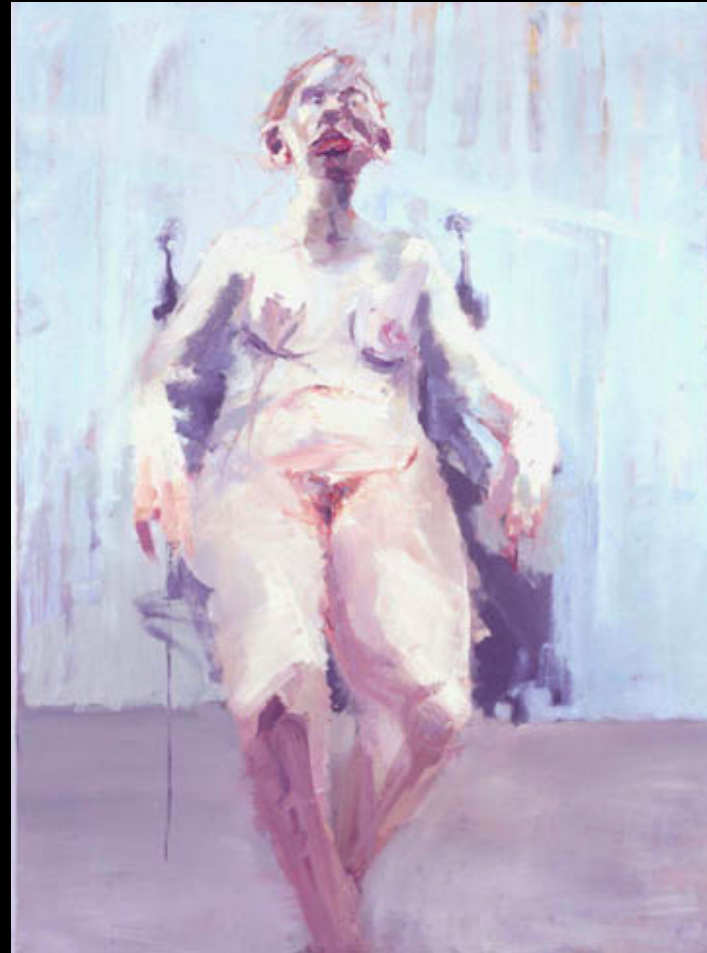
Marc Quinn





Jenny Saville









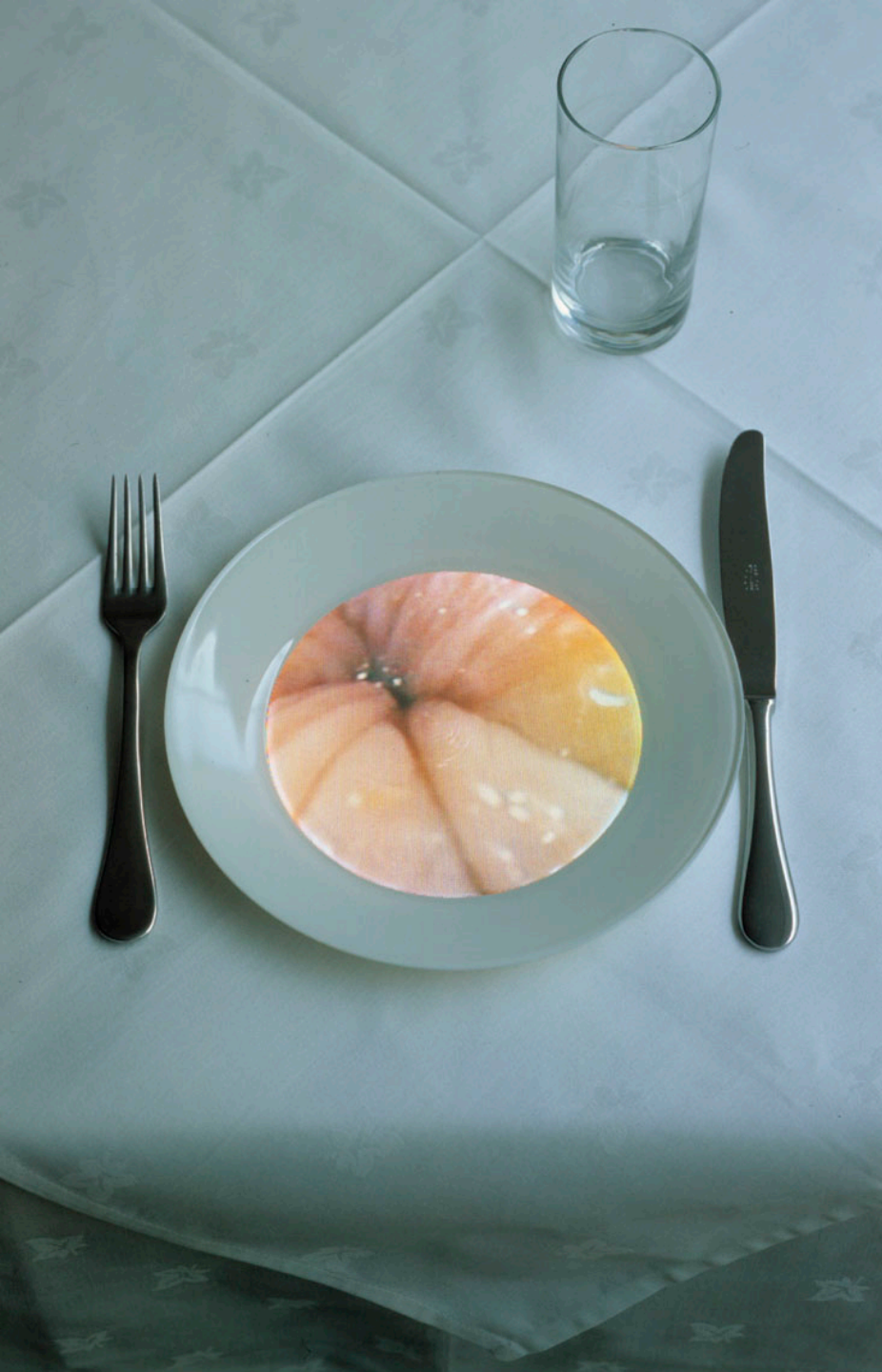


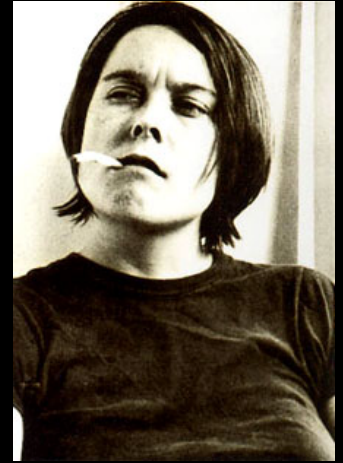




Mona Hatoum





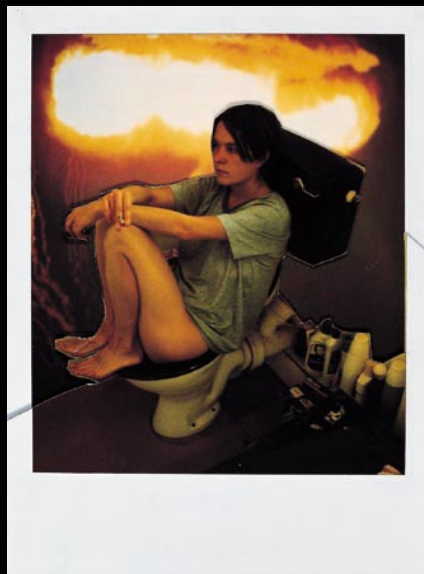


Sarah Lucas









Tracey Emin





Rachel Whiteread





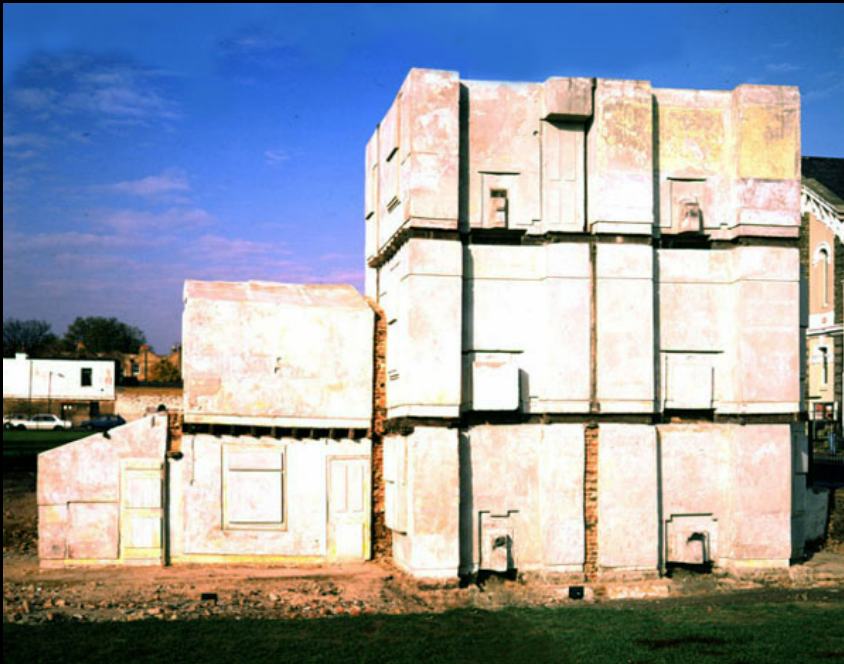


photo (c) John Davies



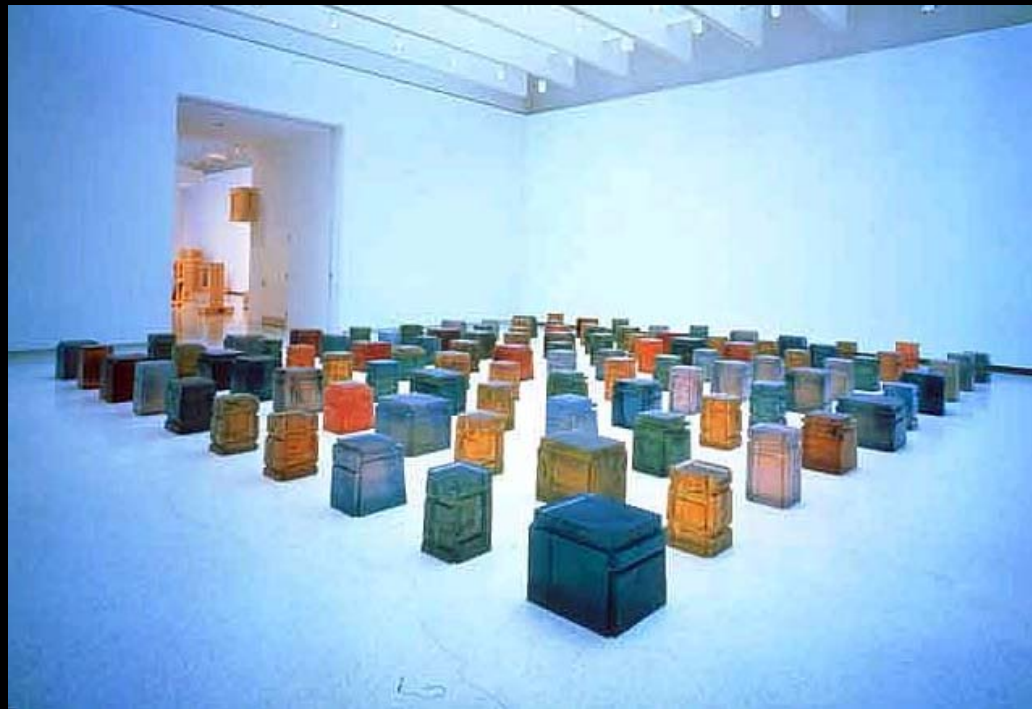
photo (c) John Davies 1993











Richard Billingham







