

1. Tell us more about *Michelangelo 2020*, and what it represents about your views on the future of gender.

Michelangelo 2020 is my tribute to women, particularly to their role in history as the "under-dog".

In the broadest sense of the word I LOVE women.

I see the future of gender as well sorted out : a future where men and women are more socially balanced without women losing too much of their apparent vulnerability and their femininity, this will allow men to exercise a little of their ridiculous macho plumage.

There have always been a minority of fringe individuals that hover over the defined boundaries of genders as we know them, but all that is sorting itself out : same sex marriages, sex changes etc etc..

2. *No Tax on Dreams and Unavailable But For Sale* seem to reference Hirst's spot paintings, and *Can You Recycle Us?* is reminiscent of his *For the Love of God*. Also, as Sue Hubbard notes, your *Art Market* almost recasts his *Physical Impossibility...* as *Manzoni's Artist's Shit*. How do you feel about the artist and the way his work is viewed and sold?

In my *Signs* I use dots not as a reference to Hirst, but because I wanted to stay away from more commonly used mediums such as neon or graffiti.

The dots resemble an electronic sign board with LEDs and the resin is my signature.

I don't judge my colleagues, there are enough art critics, but Damien is a superstar whose fame has reached the public, even people who have nothing to do with art : this is rare.

We can say he is a POP cultural figure and a perfect reference for me to deliver my comment on the art market.

I think that as he is so widely known, it is good that he... makes some of his art approachable at entry level.

Hirst is sometimes criticized for being too commercial, what does it mean?

Is Damien making too much money ?

Isn't making money one of the goals commonly shared by most people in the art world: dealer, curator, critic, artist they are all jobs.

I think Hirst has mastered the arts and the art of manipulating the art world, it is refreshing to see this role being played by an artist, for a change.

I think there is a lot of jealousy on outright success.

3. As a follow up, I noticed that most of your previous work, though complex, was produced in series. Your latest works all seem to be one-offs however. And when I type your name into Google, the third auto-complete suggestion is for "*Mauro Perucchetti prices*". How do you see the value of your own work?

I have never seen anything about Mauro Perucchetti prices. I didn't think my prices were quoted on the internet. Please let me know more about it.

Quite honestly I am in a difficult place in the market when it comes to prices.

Sometimes potential buyers who like my art comment on the fact that my prices are quite high (from £ 35000 to 500000) for an emerging artist (about 11 years "in business" now).

It is a delicate subject as only I and my galleries are aware of the enormous financial undertaking I have taken on.

This is partly why I only came out of the woods so late, after selling my business and my house at age 50 to finance my art.

I have been an artist all my life, but I couldn't afford to do the things I wanted to do before.

This is probably why I am so prolific, as I have a long and, trust me, very intense and unorthodox past, full of experiences.

I definitely would not have the knowledge to produce what I do, constantly pushing the technical envelope, if I was in my twenties and coming out of art school.

All my work involves different trades and serious initial investment.

All I know is that, when I see my work next to the work of more illustrious colleagues, I never have to worry about BELLA FIGURA.

I believe artists should be highly skilled people and do not believe in some of the contemporary art which is all concept and no art.

I have always seen the business side of my art as " long term investment " , my prices are constantly going up and I am sure that soon I'll be able to see some return on it.

4. In your Feeding the 5000 piece, you depict Obama as a Pez dispenser. How do you think the President's done so far, and why did you choose to represent him in such a candied way (sorry, bad pun)?

I always liked Obama, he is young capable and fair and he has the most difficult job on earth at a particularly difficult time.

Also, as I was very directly exposed to the human rights movements in the sixties and seventies, I was obviously delighted when he made it to office.

I think that so many saw it as something short of a miracle and expected the President to perform some , hence the title Feeding The 5000.

I think it will help your question to know that I have sent a letter to the President asking him to accept my piece on him as a present.

I hope that one day he will look back and my Pez piece might help to put a smile on his face (very pompous of me)

5. What do you think will be the most important issues of 2011, both in art and the public conscience?

I hope the art market keeps on growing and attracting new buyers.

I see art like sports and music as having the potential of bringing people together irrespectively of race, religion or nationality

6. You use Swarovski crystals quite often in your recent Modern Day Heroes, Hip Hop Art and Daily News series. What attracts you to this material? Have you heard about the recent Vajazzling trend using Swarovski crystals - what do you think about that?

I think that we definitely need to investigate in depth the phenomenon of vajazzling and log as many examples as possible.(sorry I couldn't resist the joke!)

Jokes apart, I think it was only a matter of time before bling-bling reached new heights, it carries such a "look at me" power in a more playful way than sporting real gems.

In some of my work it is the perfect medium to deliver certain messages about today's society.

7. Finally, if your work was destroyed (god forbid) in a fire at Saatchi's warehouse and you could only save a single piece, which would it be, and why?

Quite honestly I could not make that decision, but I definitely would love to save the video of all my work going up on fire, even better with me in it.

Would that make me a video artist ?

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