

DAMIEN HIRST AND MICHAEL JOO

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Damien Hirst and Michael Joo talk about their first collaborative exhibition



Left: Michael Joo, *Imperfected (Imago #1)*, 2010, stainless steel, 60 x 55 x 60". Right: View of "Have You Ever Really Looked at the Sun?," 2010. From left: Damien Hirst, *Invasion*, 2009; Damien Hirst, *The Black Sheep with Golden Horns*, 2009; Michael Joo, *Doppelgänger (Pink Rocinante)*, 2009; Michael Joo, *Herkimer Diamond (Manheim)*, 2010; Michael Joo, *Acropora*, 2010; Damien Hirst, *The Incredible Journey*, 2008. (Photos: Peter Mallet)

Damien Hirst and Michael Joo have organized an exhibition of their works at Haunch of Venison's cavernous Berlin branch, and have titled it "Have You Ever Really Looked at the Sun?" Here, both artists discuss the show, which is on view until August 14, as well as their long friendship.

"HAVE YOU EVER REALLY LOOKED AT THE SUN?" is derived from a joke about snowmen. One asks another: "Can you smell carrots?" Of course, snowmen can't smell carrots, not only because they can't smell but also because it's the very material their noses are made of. So in response to that, we're asking this question because you can't really look at the sun—if you did, you'd be blind. Nevertheless, looking at the sun is something that both of us have always wanted to do since we were kids. Originally, the idea was to call the show "Life," because literally everything is in it. And it really is about everything: crystals, science, landscape, and so on.

Despite the fact that we've been friends for nearly twenty years, this exhibition is the first time the two of us are working together. We met in 1992 at the Unfair in Cologne. The official Cologne Art Fair was the epicenter of the art world back then. And the galleries that weren't allowed in formed the Unfair. In that instance, we literally shared both sides of a wall.

For this show, we thought about which of our pieces would work well together. Both of us are interested in science, nature, Minimalism, love, and Jesus. Science is potentially very violent. Looking inside of things gives you answers, and cutting something in half is a very scientific thing to do. There are some of Damien's formaldehyde pieces, such as *The Incredible Journey*, which features a zebra, and then there's Michael's *Improved Rack (Elk #18)*, a wall-mounted sculpture of elk antlers. Antlers are a symbol of who is the boss in the forest. They appear to be symmetrical, but nothing in nature is perfectly symmetrical. They are both trophies and not-trophies. They're some sort of natural readymade, kind of like the zebra. In the end, we want to look at the core of nature, but as the title of the show suggests, you can't really do that.