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THE YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

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As a whirlwind in the world of art, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Great Britain witnessed the emergence of a new era. It was a time when postmodernism not only came into fashion but exploded onto the scene thanks to an ambitious and talented generation of artists who later became known as the Young British Artists (YBAs). These creators did not recognize boundaries, did not adhere to established canons; they were painters, sculptors, masters of video and installations, photographers – united only by the desire for novelty, youth, and British origin.

Their artistic output, dubbed Brit-art, soared on the wings of three key exhibitions: "Freeze" (1988) and "Modern Medicine" (1990), organized by then-unknown Goldsmiths college student Damien Hirst, and "Sensation" (1997), which took place at the Royal Academy [1]. Since 1988, millionaire-collector Charles Saatchi became the main sponsor of the YBAs; his patronage turned London into a magnet for postmodernist art. The name "Young British Artists" arose from a series of six exhibitions held at the Saatchi Gallery in London from 1992 to 1996.

Today, the YBAs are already a part of the British cultural pantheon. They regularly receive the Turner Prize, become members of the Royal Academy in London, and adorn the walls of the most prestigious contemporary art galleries across Europe with their works. Among the stars of this movement are Tracy Emin, the Chapman brothers, Douglas Gordon, Marcus Harvey, Gary Hume, Rachel Whiteread, Gillian Wearing, Mark Wallinger, Mark Quinn, Steve McQueen, Chris Ofili, Jenny Saville, and many others [2, c. 103].

Comparing with the avant-garde art of the past, such as Contemporary British Sculpture (1930–1970) and Contemporary British Painting (1960–2000), one can see how far the YBAs have gone in their pursuit of innovation. The term "Young British Artists" was, in reality, a marketing ploy aimed at drawing attention to British contemporary art of the 1990s. Strictly speaking, it only encompasses those who participated in the "Freeze", "Sensation" or "Progress by Degree" exhibitions [3, c. 13]. However, it is also applied more broadly, including all progressive British artists who made their mark in the late 1980s and 1990s. The emergence of a new generation of artists in the 2000s gave rise to the term Post-YBAs, which includes Darren Almond, Mike Nelson, Tim Noble, Oliver Payne, Nick Relph, Eva Rothschild, Simon Starling, David Thorp, Sue Webster, Kerry Young, and others.

In the art world, where every stroke and form carry significance, the Young British Artists made their unique contribution, creating works that encompass the entire spectrum of creative expression. From painting to sculpture, from video art to installations, their works form a kaleidoscope of contemporary art. Their approach to

materials and the process of creation can be described as eclectic and boundless, where every object, texture, and color have a right to exist in art.

Among the most memorable and discussed works of the YBAs are undoubtedly Damien Hirst's "The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living," his "dead animals" preserved in formaldehyde [1]. Rachel Whiteread's "House," casting entire buildings in concrete, Tracy Emin's "My Bed," surrounded by personal items and memories, Cornelia Parker's "Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View," turning everyday objects into flat images, Chris Ofili's "The Holy Virgin Mary," adding texture and context to his canvases, and Mark Quinn's "Self," a self-portrait cast in his own frozen blood, prompting questions about life, death, and preservation [2, c. 105].

The YBAs were not afraid to provoke discussion and shock the audience. Examples of this include Jenny Saville's "raw forms" of nude women, the Chapman brothers' "disfigured mannequins," which challenged our notions of beauty and norm. But the YBAs also explored the boundaries of conceptual art: Mark Wallinger's "Sleeper," a two-hour film where a person in a bear suit wanders through a gallery, Gillian Wearing's "60 Minutes Silence," featuring actors in police uniforms standing silently, and Martin Creed's "The Lights Going On and Off," an installation with a light bulb that turns on and off, prompting the viewer to contemplate the meaning of art and its perception.

The Young British Artists stirred up a storm of emotions in the art world, becoming the subject of both sharp criticism and enthusiastic acclaim. Some critics, including prominent cultural figures, claimed that the YBAs overlooked traditional craftsmanship and artistic values. However, many, including the British public and authoritative circles of the visual arts, embraced Brit-art with open arms, appreciating its freshness and innovative approach.

«"Young British Artists" is just a geographical coincidence. It so happened that all these artists appeared in London at the same period, and their works were bought by Charles Saatchi. But these are very different artists. Maybe the only thing that connects us is that we tried to bring reality into art, and did not just make art about art» [4, c. 114].

The YBAs made a significant contribution to the revival of interest in contemporary art, breathing new life into its various forms and attracting new crowds to museums. Their influence extended far beyond the canvas and marble, inspiring a new generation of galleries, such as Jay Jopling's White Cube, Victoria Miro Gallery, Karsten Schubert, Sadie Coles, Moro Gallery, and Anthony Wilkinson Gallery. They also contributed to the growing popularity of magazines on contemporary British art, such as Frieze, Art Monthly, Art Review, Modern Painters, and Contemporary Art, expanding the horizons of art and its perception.

The opening of Tate Modern in 2000, this iconic museum of contemporary art, did not bring the expected explosion to the world of the Young British Artists, but their presence in its halls served as a solid confirmation of their significance in the art scene. In 2003, the Saatchi Gallery moved to the historic County Hall building on the banks of the Thames, opening a new chapter in the history of Brit-art with a retrospective of Damien Hirst. However, in May 2004, a fire at the gallery's warehouse destroyed many valuable works, including Tracey Emin's famous piece "Everyone I Have Ever Slept

With 1963–1995" [2, c. 106] In the same year, Charles Saatchi made a provocative statement, predicting that most YBAs would remain footnotes in the history of art despite continuing to sell their works, often with significant profits.

The YBAs were very good at marketing themselves. They used their critical success and the "Young British Artists" name to create an instantly recognizable brand image. They also favored creative marketing tactics. Damien Hirst opened an art themed restaurant, Pharmacy, in Notting Hill, and Tracy Emin and Sarah Lucas set up The Shop, an art-themed corner shop, to promote their works.

The Young British Artists are no strangers to controversy, and have received a lot of negative attention for their work. Most notably Hirst's use of dead animals causes continual uproar from animal rights groups. Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin's provocative work has also raised a few eyebrows among the more conservative critics.

Ironically, many of the YBAs are now figureheads of an institution from which they wanted to detach themselves. Tracey Emin, Gary Hulme and Micheal Landy have all been elected as Royal Academicians; members of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Chris Ofili, Rachel Whiteread and Damien Hirst have all been awarded the Turner Prize, the UK's most prestigious art award.

In summary, the emergence of the Young British Artists in the late 1980s and 1990s marked a pivotal moment in the contemporary art world. Through groundbreaking exhibitions like "Freeze" and "Sensation," the YBAs challenged traditional artistic norms and boundaries, embracing a diverse range of mediums and pushing the limits of conceptual art. While initially regarded as a marketing strategy, the term "Young British Artists" came to encompass a generation of innovative British artists who reshaped the art landscape.

The impact of the YBAs extended beyond the confines of galleries, influencing new generations of artists, galleries, and art publications. The Young British Artists changed the dynamics of the British art scene and beyond. Despite criticism from some quarters, their fresh approach and provocative works captured the imagination of audiences worldwide, revitalizing interest in contemporary art. Their legacy lives on in the continued exploration of new artistic frontiers and the ongoing dialogue surrounding the role of art in society.

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