



● Artist Jim Starr with his painting of Medusa, which he believes inspired Damien Hirst's GQ cover featuring pop star Rihanna

Was Damien Hirst Rihanna cover 'inspired' by the Bristol Medusa?

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TOPLESS pictures of Rihanna rarely cause a stir these days. But a new Damien Hirst photo shoot has made one Bristol artist look twice.

The pictures, for GQ magazine's 25th anniversary edition, depict the raunchy pop star as Medusa. And they have drawn praise in art circles.

But Stokes Croft artist Jim Starr says the images have an uncanny resemblance to his own work – produced three years ago.

Mr Starr, who lives and works in Cheltenham Road, told the *Bristol Post* he believes the piece was inspired by his work which first appeared in an auction catalogue alongside some of Mr Hirst's.

Mr Starr has written to GQ about the cover but said expensive legal action has been ruled out.

He said: "When I saw the front cover I was very impressed but I could not help a wry smile coming across my face.

"I am aware that artists are all sort of drawing from the same well but I think I know when my work has inspired someone else's.

"There is so much sharing of ideas

A LIFE RICH IN CONTROVERSY

● DAMIEN Hirst was born in Bristol but was raised in Leeds before studying fine art at Goldsmiths, University of London.

● IN the 1990s he was part of an influential group called Young British Artists.

● HE is most famous for his animals preserved in formaldehyde, including a cow and calf, named *mother and child, divided*, which helped him win the 1995 Turner Prize.



● HIS other famous works include a preserved shark and a complete exhibition, *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever*, which was sold at Sotheby's for £111m.

● HE is Britain's richest artist with a wealth of around £215m, according to the 2010 *Sunday Times* Rich List.

● HE faced plagiarism claims in 2010 when he was accused of copying up to 15 pieces of art over his career.

in the contemporary-art market these days that it is always difficult to prove."

The photo shoot was directed by Mr Hirst and the pictures were taken by Mariano Vivanco for style magazine GQ's 25th anniversary of its British version.

The images show Rihanna topless with a crown of snakes, a python wrapped around her neck and

snake-like contact lenses.

Some images also include the River Island model with snake fangs.

Mr Starr's original Medusa artwork is a print of a woman in a bikini with wild, Medusa-like hair.

The piece was first produced in 2010 and appeared alongside Mr Hirst's artwork in a catalogue for a Dreweatts auction in London in the same year.

Mr Starr: "Damien has had a bit of flak in the past four or five years for allegedly pinching artwork.

"I quite enjoyed the front cover and still think it is pretty good. I have read Damien's book *On The Way To Work* and enjoyed it. I do admire his work and was mildly flattered and amused that this 'coincidence' took place."

The 2010 auction where Mr Starr claims his work made a big impression coincided with a stinging attack on Mr Hirst by critics who claimed he had plagiarised 15 pieces of work in his career.

In an edition of *Jackdaw* magazine, Charles Thomson – artist and co-founder of Stuckists, a group which campaigns for traditional art – listed the plagiarism claims relating to Mr Hirst's work.

A YouTube video – which can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Fq4CerVEgQ> – accompanied the article.

According to *The Guardian* newspaper, in 2000 it emerged that Mr Hirst paid an undisclosed sum in the face of legal action, for breach of copyright, by the producers of a £14.99 toy which resembled his 20ft bronze sculpture *Hymn*. Mr Hirst has denied any plagiarism.

The *Bristol Post* attempted to contact Mr Hirst about the latest claims but received no reply.

GQ declined the opportunity to comment.