San Francisco Chronicle

Leah Garchik Friday, March 30, 2007

If thinking about British artist Damien Hirst tends to make you all somber and dead-animal-minded, well, block that thought, toots. The Sorokko Gallery's American premiere of Hirst's "New Religion" show, just in time for Easter, includes only a few skulls and smidgeons of blood. The works of art focus instead on pretty little pastel-colored jewel-like objects, all light and bright and lovely.

The artist's concept is that prescription drugs are the new religion. The jewel-like things are pills, bright as emeralds and sapphires ... or, for that matter, Easter eggs.

Springlike images of the pharmaceuticals evoked Peter Rabbit hippety-hoppeting, despite the one bleak reference: A sarcastic art lover examining a large silk-screened chart juxtaposing episodes from the New Testament with images of hundreds of pills pronounced it "Anna Nicole Smith's autopsy report."