



Culture > Art > News

David Hockney's cigarettes set off fire alarm at launch of new exhibition

The 85-year-old painter is a passionate advocate for smoking

[Ellie Harrison](#)

2 days ago

[David Hockney](#), a man never without his favourite Camel cigarettes, set off the fire alarms during the launch of his immersive new art exhibition on Tuesday night (21 February).

The much-loved [British artist's new show, *Bigger & Closer \(not smaller & further away\)*](#), was the first exhibition to open the Lightroom venue in Kings Cross and aims to allow attendees "to see the world through Hockney's eyes".

It uses virtual reality with immersive audio and visual techniques to guide visitors into Hockney's world, featuring some of the Bradford-born artist's most recognisable paintings alongside rarely seen pieces and some newly created work.

In the show, Hockney, 85, reveals his artistic processes using a cycle of six themed chapters, with a specially composed score by American composer Nico Muhly and a commentary by the painter himself.

The Independent understands that the fire alarm at the new venue was set off after Hockney, who is a passionate smoking advocate, puffed away on his cigarettes before making his speech.

"Collaboration means compromise," he joked in his address to attendees. "But I think it's a work of art itself – and mostly, it's me."

Hockney, wearing his trademark checked suit and flat cap, was met with applause and laughter in the room.

In a [recent interview with *The Independent*'s editor-in-chief Geordie Greig](#), throughout which Hockney smoked, the artist discussed continuing to paint into his eighties, and said that he believes that “making pictures is a better high than sex and drugs”.

In a five-star review, [critic Mark Hudson praised Hockney's foray into the world of technology](#) as a “breathtaking triumph”.

[Read his review of the “utterly beguiling” exhibition here.](#)

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/david-hockney-lightroom-exhibition-smoking-alarm-b2287130.html>