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## Visual Arts

David Hockney: Painting and Photography at Annely Juda Fine Art



**The Group V, an acrylic on canvas, by David Hockney** Richard Schmidt  
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What has our most famous living painter been up to? *David Hockney: Painting and Photography*, which opens tomorrow at Annely Juda Fine Art in London, offers us the chance to catch up.

At first glance it looks like a radical departure. Two years ago Hockney, having suffered first a stroke and then the distressing death of a studio assistant, abandoned his home in East Yorkshire and returned to sun-drenched California where he first established his artistic name.

After almost ten years spent painting landscapes, his new works are all interiors. Some show empty spaces; articulated only by scattered furniture. Others are inhabited by card players, or studio visitors or dancers. Others present a series of lone sitters, all posed upon the same chair against the same blue backdrop.

It may look very different, but these new works are part of a long ongoing project. Hockney is fascinated by the problems of perspective.

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"Chinese perspective," he argues, "does not have a vanishing point. And neither does the living eye as it looks. It is always moving (if it isn't, you are dead). This means there are hundreds of vanishing points, not just one."

These are the myriad viewpoints that Hockney brings to his "painted photographs". Using a camera he takes multiple pictures of, for instance, card players. Every part of every sitter is shot and each image has its own vanishing point. These images are then collaged together. The familiar sweep of the perspective which normally controls a picture is shattered. Tables grow wider as they recede; angles of floors and walls swoop and veer. He is aiming for "a 3D effect without glasses".

Does he succeed? An almost eerie atmosphere of exaggeration haunts these images. It starts with their large scale and their colour: Hockney's acrylics are abrasively bright. But most striking is the sense of space. The viewer feels as if he hovers: sees, from a slightly elevated angle, not just the people but the gaps in between.

Yet rather than feeling more engaged, you grow more detached. The composition as a familiar whole falls apart; it becomes a group of different assemblages instead. This reflects the way in which the roving eye gathers its information and in this Hockney's work succeeds, even though the experience feels not so much more real as hyper-real.

What is not in doubt, though, is that Hockney, now in his late seventies, works with his vision, enthusiasm and determination undimmed.