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David Hockney is brighter and bolder in new Kings Cross dynamic art space



David Hockney at Lightroom © Justin Sutcliff 2023

What better way to launch a new cultural destination onto the London art scene than host a unique and immersive exhibition that brings some of David Hockney's most celebrated paintings to life? We look closer at the artist's much-anticipated new show at London's latest venue, Lightroom.

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Last autumn, HERE at Outernet opened as a new purpose-built music venue beneath the streets at Tottenham Court Road and the largest digital exhibition space in Europe. It holds 2,000 people and has already put on some fantastic gigs.

Further north, and under the managerial arm of the London Theatre Company (Bridge Theatre), a second underground destination has just launched. Lightroom has been designed by Haworth Tompkins. The King's Cross cavernous cubic space similarly lies several storeys under the continuous local development, but the venue is altogether genteel.

Its debut exhibit is a collaboration between artist David Hockney (b. 1937) and a substantial team from 59 Productions led by director Mark Grimmer. Years in the making, the key difference between this and similar experiential artist exhibitions with Dali or Van Gogh is Hockney's very real presence in almost every aspect of the presentation. He is very much alive.



Lightroom exterior, Haworth Tompkins photo by Philip Vile © 2023

Around 50 minutes long, the looped screening touches upon key drivers and projects of his long career over an ever-changing layout. Up to 380 viewers in the audience are sprawled on the floor, leaning against walls and sitting on occasional benches or in one corner, tiered seating. The seamless digital projections cover all four walls and often the floor. Sometimes the effect is immersive, all five surfaces within a single image or animation – in quieter moments, the opposing walls may display the same picture. At one point, there is a

striking stained glass window and the effect of the sun shining through it onto the floor.

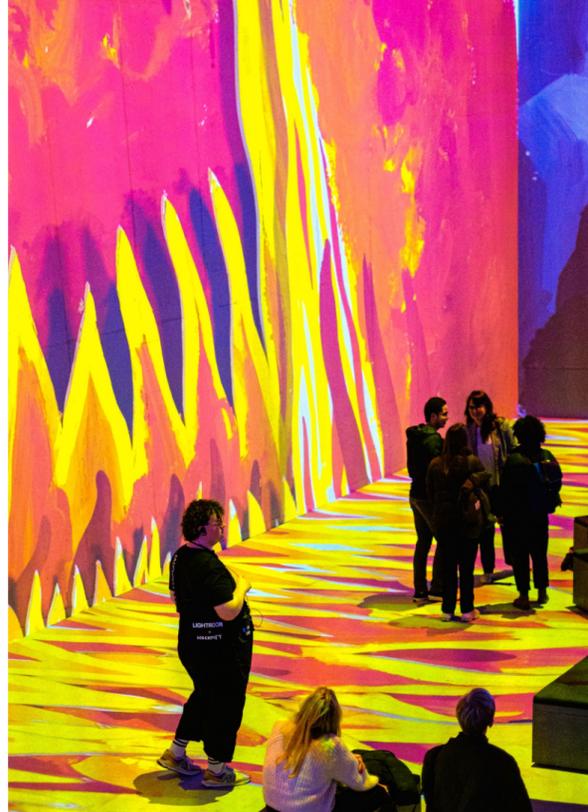
Cleverly avoiding a chronological sequence of works, there is a gentle back and forth between themes such as his move to Los Angeles in the '60s and his manipulation of photography to explore non-traditional means of perspective, as well as a rousing sequence based on his opera stage sets – complete with a Wagner and Stravinsky soundtrack. There is superb sound design throughout the show. The viewer is spoilt with a riot of colour, and Hockney's own broad Bradford accent narrates (with recordings from his 20s to 80s) his thoughts and explanations throughout.



David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller and further away) installation at Lightroom © Justin Sutcliffe 2023



David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller and further away)
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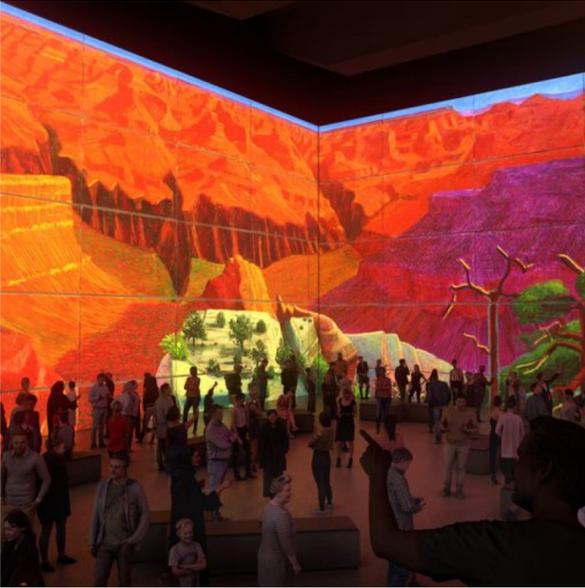
David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller and further away)
installation at Lightroom © Fred Howarth 2023

Many of his most famous works are shown in passing. Still, in the collaborative sequences, the new space shines brightest, and the artist's misgivings on working with people ("Collaboration means compromise") are proven wrong. In a series of Polaroid photo montages, the finished works are shown 'developing' as if the Polaroids have just been taken. In another element, the sun rises, and a single bird flies across the evolving fields.

His most recent iPad drawings were shown at huge retrospectives at Tate Britain in 2017 (seen by 478,082 visitors, it remains the most popular Tate show of all time) and at the Royal Academy in 2012 and 2020. They have become very familiar, but watching the creation of these images on 12m tall walls, there is a serenity to seeing the artist's creative process, despite his use of digital painting software.



David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller and further away) installation at Lightroom © Creative Boom 2023



Installation of David Hockney's "A Bigger Grand Canyon" 1998 Oil on 60 canvases , 81 1/2 x 293" overall, © David Hockney Collection National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller & further away) Photo by Justin Sutcliffe © 2023

This is a sensitive and insightful new look at a contemporary master. He has always embraced new technologies, and here at Lightroom, a space has been created that celebrates decades of creativity as well as cutting-edge presentation.

In fact, the experience overall is one of collective emotion and energy. Toddlers run around chasing animations, disturbing no one. There is

so much colour, energy and happiness on every surface; there is no interruption to anyone's view. Twice Hockney mentions he's been painting for 60 years and wants his works to elicit joy. This is a triumph of his ability as a colourist, his bold life decisions and how they've manifested themselves in his glorious art.

David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller and further away) is at Lightroom, King's Cross, London now extended until 4 June.

<https://www.creativeboom.com/news/hockney-is-brighter-and-bolder-in-new-kings-cross-dynamic-art-space/>