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# Hockney's brush with a new dimension



**Hockney's new works include experimental photographs**

**Valentine Low**

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He is 77 years old, an age when many people have long since given up the thrill of challenging new ideas. For David Hockney, however, it is never too late to push once more at the boundaries of what art can do.

Instead of sitting back to reflect on his past glories, he has been producing a new body of work for an exhibition next month which includes experimental photographic works.

Described as “3D photographs without the glasses”, they are an attempt to address the problem of perspective in a new way, using hundreds of close-up photographs assembled like a collage or jigsaw puzzle.

“Ordinary photography is too flat,” Hockney said. “If you look, the eye is always moving, if it isn't you're dead. This means there are hundreds of vanishing points, not just one.”

These latest techniques are merely the latest manifestation of Hockney's never-ending thirst for innovation. He made hundreds of drawings on his iPhone before moving on to the iPad as soon as it came out, using Brushes as his art app of choice. As he put it: “Who would have thought the telephone would bring back drawing?”

His taste for exploiting technology for art's sake goes back to the mid-1980s, when he bought one of the first colour photocopying machines and used it to create a series of works. Later he did the same with the fax.

His new 3D collages are also a reminder of the photo-montages he created using vast numbers of Polaroid photographs to produce what has been described as “a kind of mechanical cubism”.

The new photographs and paintings, which features a series of group portraits, including card players, will go on display at Annely Juda Fine Art in London on May 15. They were created in his studio in Los Angeles, where he returned in the summer of 2013 after spending eight years painting landscapes of North Yorkshire.

His departure from Britain came months after his 23-year-old personal assistant, Dominic Elliott, died from drinking drain cleaner fluid at Hockney's home in Bridlington while high on Ecstasy and cocaine after a 24-hour drink and drugs binge.

Mr Elliott had a nine-month relationship with Hockney's long-term partner, John Fitzherbert, before the young rugby and hockey player joined the artist's inner circle. Hockney, who missed a lunch for members of the Order of Merit at Windsor Castle last week because he was in China, said he was excited by the new photographs. "The bottom line is they seem far more real," he said.

Writing in the show's catalogue, he said: "Painters have always known there is something wrong with perspective. The problem is the foreground and the vanishing point. The reason we have perspective with a vanishing point is that it came from optics.

"This is why there is always a void between you and the photograph. I am taking this void away, to put you in the picture. Each photograph has a vanishing point, so instead of just one I get many vanishing points. It is this that I think gives them an almost 3D effect without the glasses."

He added: "If you really think about it, the single photograph cannot be seen as the ultimate realist picture. Well, not now. Digital photography can free us from a chemically imposed perspective that has lasted for 180 years." In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* last month, he said that he was having his most productive period in two decades, inspired by seeing shows of works by Picasso and Matisse — another artist who turned to new techniques late in life when he produced a series of large-scale works using paper cut-outs. "I came back absolutely thrilled with what I saw," he said. "I realised Picasso worked every day. That's what you must do."

His London gallerist, David Juda, told *The Guardian* that he was "on an absolute roll" and "work[ing] like crazy" in Los Angeles.

He recently completed two portraits in just nine days.

The artist, who was born in Bradford, added that he now feels most comfortable working inside.

"I hardly go out now because I'm too deaf. Most of the time, if you go out, it's to listen to something, and I'm not good at listening now," he said.

"I can't hear music any more. I can't hear the high notes, and I can't hear the low notes. It's gone for me now, music."