

To me, interpretation is a keyword. There is an old Hebraic rule, that says: a text only has a value if it is commented upon, and I consider it as a highly valuable ethical statement: we, as exhibition visitors, artists, curators, writers, citizens even, we have to keep culture alive. Our duty is to react to it. We all have to be actors, somehow, and not those passive customers required by the mechanics of 'hyper-capitalism'. That is what a show like *Altermodernis* about: telling you a story, different from what you have been told before. This story starts with a provocative idea: postmodern times are over, let's invent the new period to come. A curator is someone who, like the African storyteller used to do under his sacred tree, will reinvent the narrative of his village, again and again. Greek tragedy was doing the same. And if I had to sum up the idea behind the *Altermodern* in a few words, I would only say this: maybe where you come from is not that important. Maybe your identity is still to be found – do your own travel.

Nicolas Bourriaud

Gulbenkain Curator of Contemporary Art, Tate Britain,
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The project name *Visual Dialogues* well chosen. It involves a series of exchanges between works of art and audiences. The paintings 'speak' to the young participants in the project; they, in turn, produce a form of 'interpretation' to help other viewers to 'hear' what those works might be saying.

The intervention here - the extension of several paintings beyond their frames - plays with ideas of what a modern painting should be or can do. An ambition of modern painters was to resist narrative, to make works of art that were self-contained and autonomous (detached from the real world), to resist creating an illusion, or telling a story.

This autonomous work of art is a kind of visual machine, activating through its form and colour the space in which it hangs. The way in which Matthew Smith's enigmatic, green nude animates the entire room is emphasised by the extension of its horizon line across the expanse of the wall.

On the other hand, Francis Bacon's melancholic painting of his fellow-artist Van Gogh has its self-containedness removed. No longer is the subject a static, enclosed embodiment of solitary artistic identity. The road that was only implied has been imagined and extended, turning his metaphorical journey into something more literal. It is, without doubt, not something Bacon would have done but it shows how works of art can generate ideas well beyond those intended by their makers.

Chris Stephens

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