

The Ghost in the Machine

Tate Britain

26 Feb – 26 April

"And more than echoes talk along the walls." (Alexander Pope)

The Ghost in the Machine presents new interpretations of works of art in the Collections Displays and the Triennial developed by young people aged 16-21 years across London, sculptor Nick Hornby and MOBO winning jazz musician and MC, Soweto Kinch. If in the traditional academy the Artist makes copies of the master, these interpretations act as fictions, raising questions about authorship and translation. The resulting gallery interventions and audio trail invite visitors to engage with works of art in new ways: an audio guide layered with rifts and beats, the line of a painting extended across an entire gallery, graffitied sketches around a Francis Bacon, and a large white plaster sculpture that you can touch and sit in.

"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 Altermodern is 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, Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009

"The project name Visual Dialogues is 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."

– Chris Stephens, Curator (Modern British Art) & Head of Displays, Tate Britain

"If the artist steps back from the painting (to see it clearer) and sees the room, his shirt on the floor, what he's eaten, the photos of his grand parents, his Starbucks, his politics, his carbon footprint... by spilling out of the frame and onto the walls, I want the viewer to think about how they embody meaning and politics and what they take into a frame."

– Nick Hornby, Artist

"I like to think outside the frame, to ask the "wrong" questions, which are often "what if" scenarios. Looking at the Bacon painting Study for a Portrait of Van Gogh IV, I think: What if this painting was part of a cartoon? What if there were bombs going off in the background? What if a cat/a cow/a woman was following the man? What if you made all of the red bits green? What if you could see the guy's face? These questions draw me right into the picture. What if I stopped asking such questions? That's one "what if" I never want to have to contemplate."

– **Tracy Chevalier, Historic Novelist**

"[...] derived from a painting by Edward Wadsworth called Dux et Comes [...] for Nick it becomes a sculpture, but to me it resembles two pound signs floating in space opposite one another. Maybe that's why I'm an economist and he's an artist. Money is the ultimate ghost in the machine, a confidence trick that keeps the physical economy moving. If banks can create money out of thin air when they lend it, and the result is new factories, offices and jobs, they can just as easily destroy it by calling in those loans. Sadly our economy is suffering the very tangible consequences of this apparently abstract process. [...] we may think our society is obsessed with the material, but it is built on a fragile abstraction."

– **Rupert Harrison, economic advisor to George Osborne**