

Review: Paper, Saatchi Gallery, London

The Saatchi Gallery hosts Paper, which addresses important questions over where art and the rest of the world is heading. Katy reviews

By [Katy Gregory](#)

Monday 8 July 2013



Venue: Saatchi Gallery, London

In a digital world where books are replaced by kindles, email is the death of traditional letter writing and the internet overtakes printed newspapers, it would seem plausible that the art world would follow suit. Not quite.

A new Saatchi exhibition is a surprising regression to an artistic climate dominated by one traditional material. It demands a reinterpretation of the modest medium of paper. In an exhibition called Paper the Saatchi Gallery reinvigorates this forgotten material through collage, sculpture, painting, and installation.

Abstract ideas gain a new lease of life in *I see it all now...some of it!* by Daniel Kelly. Even the wildest ideas in architecture prove capable of being expressed through paper. His two-dimensional designs perfectly "describe building projects too ambitious to exist anywhere but on the page."

Saatchi, whose gallery is in Chelsea, is an influential figure in the commercial art market. At a time when the Young British Artists (YBA) movement was unknown to the general public, their showing at the gallery,

which opened in 1985, became the group's big break. Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst have since reaped the benefits of being associated with Saatchi. Throughout the 90s they became a powerful force in British art and have since become household names. With Saatchi's magic touch, could Paper spark a revival in one of art's most primitive mediums?



The diverse range of works in the exhibition all have one thing in common: paper. As the cultural sector seems to be dictated by a desire to feed a modern appetite with what is considered commercially viable, paper has become in recent years a marginalised choice for curators everywhere. Blockbuster exhibitions such as David Hockney: A Bigger Picture (2012) have been very popular with the public and dominate the scene with 'new technology' works such as iPad/ iPhone drawings and video installations. However compared to the hand-made works in Paper, the process of works like these in David Hockney: A Bigger Picture call into question the authorship of the art. As opposed to those produced on paper, drawings produced on an iPad have the potential to be copied and reproduced endlessly.

Marcelo Jalcome's *Pianos-pipas n17* (2013) stands as the exhibition's popular signature piece. Photographs don't do it justice. In a dream-like way this piece dramatically floats alone in a spacious white room and appears free standing. Coloured tissue paper is transformed into what the gallery describes as "a flock of disturbed parrots" and is shaped with fibre glass, bamboo frames and cotton threads. The simple medium of paper is carefully orchestrated and sculpted with striking colours. It is in pieces like *Pianos-pipas n17* that Saatchi expresses the new potential of paper.



The meaning of this exhibition of 44 artists from around the world is increasingly relevant since we are witnessing an era where the internet is destroying many traditional industries. Some have argued that works of art in this exhibition appear disconnected as they confront each other side by side, and perhaps the broad theme of 'paper' is not enough to narrate an exhibition on such a grand scale. However, on the contrary, to me it is an intelligent re-evaluation of an overlooked concept. By focusing on this one theme Saatchi is able to address the implications the digital world has on art and how art changes the way we think about the age we live in.

The sentimentality of the exhibition even extends to Ry Fyan's *The Metropolitan Meth Silo*. This acrylic and ink sketch represents the disenfranchisement felt by those who are caught up in the American dream. An isolated US flag-bearing, multi-turreted castle represents the ghostly vision of corporate America. Stand-alone drawings like Ry Fyan's could even be considered a reaction to a rapidly changing technological world which has left many disillusioned.

Although paper is an outdated mode in the real world, Saatchi proves a revival could be on the cards for it in the art world. Despite some concerns over the quality of certain works, the exhibition addresses some important questions over where art and the rest of the world is heading.

Paper exhibition is at the Saatchi Gallery, Sloane Square, London, until 29th September 2013.



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