



The Crystal Clarity of Salvador Dali

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We recently took a look at *The Art in Video Games – French Inspiration*, an exhibition at Art Ludique in Paris featuring the artwork involved in the creation of French video games. Now it's time to cross the Seine and head up to Montmartre, for a visit to Espace Dali, home of the largest collection in France of the works of Salvador Dali. [While](#) always worth a visit, of particular interest is the recently-opened *Daum, variations d'artistes*.

The exhibition brings together the works of not only Dali but a range of artists, all created in the cast crystal known as *pâte de verre*, literally glass paste. [Daum](#) was founded in France in the late nineteenth century and is perhaps best known for its elaborate decorative glass work from the Art Nouveau era. But in 1904 the firm managed to perfect the *pâte de verre* technique, which was apparently first used by the ancient Egyptians as far back as 5000 BC.

It was in 1968 that the firm modernized the production of such pieces by switching to a process similar to the lost wax method of casting bronze sculpture, in this case involving the fusion of crystal fragments. While imitated, Daum remains the acknowledged leader in the creation of *pâte de verre* sculpture (you'll find photos showing the steps of the process below).

Along with the modernization of the production technique came the approach of creating limited editions of commissioned sculptures. Dali was one of the first to participate and ultimately contributed 21 designs. At right is his *Dance of Time*, created in an open edition especially for this show, yours for 250 euros.



Commenting on the medium, Dali once stated that "Glass paste is truly a dalinian material. Hence I have used it to create masterpieces; I am delighted with this new material, which has both the molecular elasticity of a snail, and the consistency of the Perpignan train station." Which pretty much sums up the pieces of his in this exhibition, some of which you'll find below. More information is available [on the Espace Dali site](#).



L'important c'est la rose, Salvador Dalí, limited edition: 850 copies, © Gilbert Mangin - Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy



Hieronymus Bosch, Superstar

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It has taken 500 years since the death of painter Hieronymus Bosch — best known for *The Garden of Earthly Delights* — for his work to be really celebrated. But this year will see a series of events marking the anniversary, many of which, being big fans, we'll be covering on Graphics.com.

And there's no better place to start than with the triptych itself, the fascination for which never seems to fade. Just when we were giving up hope that the internet was to become anything but a banal stew of social media and marketing messages, along comes an interactive online exhibit that renews faith in what's possible online.

Begin with a [well-crafted tour](#) of not only the painting but much of what lies behind it, in the form of a guided commentary, complete with music and ambient sounds. You can also simply click on one of dozens of tagged areas on the painting to learn about that element in detail.



However, it seems that this is just one part of its own Boschean triptych, a second component being a documentary film — *Hieronymus Bosch, Touched by the Devil* — which investigates the authenticity of the 25 surviving works by Bosch. The final element, billed as a "virtual reality documentary," is *Hieronymus Bosch, the Eyes of the Owl* and is set for release in April, with the trailer below providing a sense of what to expect.



In essence it's a "making-of" devoted to the comprehensive Bosch exhibit that recently opened at the Noordbrabants Museum in the Netherlands. Can't attend the show? Below you'll find some of the works on display.



Hieronymus Bosch - Visions of the Hereafter, ca. 1505-15, Venezia, Museo di Palazzo Grimani. Photo Rik Klein Gotink and image processing Robert G. Erdmann for the Bosch Research and Conservation Project.



40 Fresh Posters Celebrating Paris

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You'd think France, with its rich history of art and design, would be one of the last countries that would feel the need to launch a government-funded celebration of graphic design. But that's exactly what lay behind the recent Fête du Graphisme. According to the organizers, "In contrast to several of our European neighbors, for which graphic design is a discipline much like other domains of design, photography or architecture, France has a complex relationship with graphic design and graphic designers."

What that "complex relationship" might be isn't clear but there isn't any downside to an initiative that involves top French and international designers, and tries to bring their work to the attention of a broader audience. Of course that broader audience is in this case, as so often in France, confined to just that of Paris.

du Fête
graphisme

Those of us living elsewhere in France apparently don't need to be proselytized. So I wasn't able to check out this initiative, which saw the streets of Paris invaded by 40 posters celebrating... Paris. Created by a bevy of international and French designers, there are more Eiffel Towers than might have been hoped for. But the collection is nevertheless broad in scope and energetic. We'll always have Paris!

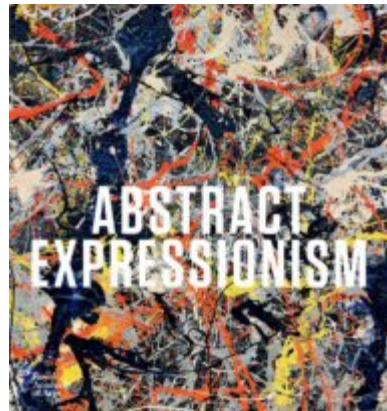




Abstract Expressionism at The Royal Academy of Arts

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There's a scene in Tim Burton's 2012 movie [Big Eyes](#), set in the late 1950s, in which the owner of an art gallery specializing in the abstract paintings of the era is disgusted to observe the success of a gallery across the street, which is devoted to the work of [Margaret Keane](#). Because Keane's wide-eyed waifs, as shown below, came out of nowhere to become a cultural sensation in the pre-internet era that's now hard to imagine.



These sad kids were everywhere, with inexpensive prints driving wide adoption and the paintings themselves becoming fetishistic objects of the rich and famous. Never one to let a cultural phenomenon go unremarked, Andy Warhol observed of the cheap prints that "I think what Keane has done is just terrific. It has to be good. If it were bad, so many people wouldn't like it."

Hard to argue with that. And yet what a contrast between Keane's faux-sad waifs and the work of the abstract expressionists, who dominated the New York art scene in the 50s.



A show opening at The Royal Academy of Arts doesn't attempt to frame Abstract Expressionism within the admittedly kitsch-ridden America of the 1950s but we can't hold that against it. Instead the focus is on the work itself, freed of any real-world context, as critic [Clement Greenberg](#), the champion of the movement, would have been happy to observe.

Greenberg was something of an expert on kitsch, having declared that it was the manifestation of the working-class hunger for culture. According to Clem, "Kitsch, using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensibility. It is the source of its profits. Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money – not even their time." No sad-eyed waifs for him!

But to return to the matter at hand. The exhibition at The Royal Academy of Arts is apparently the first major exhibition of Abstract Expressionism to be held in the UK in almost six decades, and includes more than 150 paintings, sculptures and photographs from public and private global collections. All the heavy hitters would seem to have been rounded up, including Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still.

These days you can't just slap some cool paintings on the wall, so the art historical trope for this hymn to paint dripped, slathered and poured on canvas is a "re-evaluation," something much beloved of art historians. In this case it's a question of "color-field" versus "action" painters. I can hear you yawning but such is the stuff art historical careers are based on, so please cut these folks some slack.

To say things more plainly, the organizers have brought together some funky, energetic work from a movement that was overhyped at the time and may have been used as a [Cold War weapon](#) by the CIA.

Despite that, the work remains well worth experiencing in the flesh. Because we're talking about huge canvases, often energetically, even frenetically actualized. These simply die in reproduction, so this represents a great chance to stand in front of them and drift away while contemplating all that paint.

You can catch the show at The Royal Academy of Arts in London until January, 2017, after which it heads to the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, from February 3 until June 4, 2017. More information is available on [The Royal Academy of Arts site](#).



Willem De Kooning, *Woman II*, 1952. Oil, enamel and charcoal on canvas. 149.9 x 109.3 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller, 1995 © 2016 The Willem de Kooning Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York and DACS.