

Artist Robert Fry on why London's different cultures make it one of the world's great cities

The London-based artist talks about the capital's culture and how London's "hectic nature" has influenced his work

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Thursday 13 September 2018 12:01

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Robert Fry (Alex Bramall)

Robert Fry is an abstract and figurative painter who lives and works in London.

Here, he explains what makes **London** so unique, and why he considers Battersea Power Station one of London's architectural icons...

Define London's culture?

London is a sprawling patchwork of pockets of history. The many different cultures here have enriched and informed the overall dynamic of the city. It is this diversity which makes London and defines it one of the great cities of the world.

What is it, where is it?

It is a gift that we have the freedom to walk into some of the greatest collections of art in the world for free, walk in beautiful public parks and stumble upon pubs which are hundreds of years old.

What would you say makes it so unique, say different from New York, Paris?

I think it feels more accessible than both Paris and New York.

How has that London culture influenced your work?

The hectic nature of life in London has probably influenced how I work. In any city your voice as an artist can sometimes feel hard to find. Through painting I try to reach through the chaos to explore psychological struggle many of us encounter from day to day. Some of this struggle can be a product of the often anonymous nature of city living.



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How would you like to think you have impacted on London's culture?

Every painting that I have made was executed in a studio in London and I believe the fabric of this context is then somehow present in the paintings.

I would like to think that by contributing to contemporary art emerging from London that this is having a social impact upon the culture of the city. Mental health is a subject that I have consistently drawn upon in my practice as an artist. This is a subject that has in recent years come to the forefront of the public consciousness and continues to be central to my work.

More than 200 languages are spoken in London – how do you attempt to make your work accessible to as many people as possible?

I believe that painting is a visual language and if you have sight there are no constraints to accessing the content of a painting. I hope through my work as a visual artist people have seen my paintings and it has impacted upon them in a way which moves them and communicates beyond language. I would like to think that my paintings have given them something. The art world can be elitist, however despite this art in London is very accessible.

Your most famous cultural icons?

My favourite architectural cultural icon is Battersea Power Station, partly because it is on the front cover of the Pink Floyd album 'Animals', which is a masterpiece. I see David Hockney as a cultural icon.


Name three places people should go, to taste a slice of London's culture?

Villa Di Geggiano, on Chiswick High Road because it serves the best Italian food in London and the service is outstanding. The Wallace Collection because the collection and the space are very impressive, and The Nags Head pub on Kinnerton Street, Belgravia.

Where's your favourite 'cultural hotspot'?

Sometimes I like to go to Tate Modern and simply sit and look at just one or two of my favourite paintings in the permanent collection. I regularly walk on Hampstead Heath and swim in the ponds there. I also like to get up early on the first Sunday of every month and go to Chiswick Car Boot sale. I also find the Japanese Garden in Holland Park, West London a tranquil peaceful place to be and rest from the bustle of the city.

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