

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Happy Birthday, Mr. Hockney

Alton Schoener · Wednesday, August 9th, 2017



Two exhibitions at The Getty.

Photographs, Opening, July 17, 2017, The Getty. David

David Hockney, is one of the pre-eminent artists of our day. Although “Pop Art” is generally considered to have been an American art movement of the 1960s, Hockney, who is British, is considered to be one of its most versatile and prolific practitioners. Los Angeles has been a periodic center of his activity off and on for thirty years with a home in Nichols Canyon and an office and archives on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood. A versatile artist, he has worked in a variety of media with painting, drawing, photography and printmaking among them, often experimenting with their inherent characteristics and potentials.



Hockney is seated with cap. Photo credit: Georgiana Allen.

The two exhibitions at The Getty – *Self-Portraits* – June 27- November 26, 2017 and *Photographs* –July 18 -November 26, 2017, testify to his ingenuity and commemorate his career. They do not attempt to be comprehensive testimonials to his talent. Other concurrent and future exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou, Tate Modern, Guggenheim Bilbao, Ca Pesaro, Venice, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art accomplish that objective.



Self-Portraits

The 15 self-portraits provide an intimate and unusual view of the artist and his personality. The earliest from 1954 – one a drawing and one a lithograph – introduce us to a bespectacled seventeen year-old.

Self-Portrait, July 1986, 1986, Homemade print on two sheets of paper. Collection: The David Hockney Foundation, © David Hockney, Photo Credit: Richard Schmidt

In two charcoal drawings from 1983, we see a serious forty-six year old. In *Self-Portrait, July 1986*, we see reiteration of his debt to Picasso’s collages. In *Self-Portrait with Red Braces*, a watercolor from 2003, we begin to see the evidence of aging. In two pencil drawings from 1999, we see two sides of his personality: obstreperous and meditative.



From left to right: Self-Portrait, 13 March 2012, No. 1 (1196) 2012, iPad drawing printed on paper mounted on Dibond; Self-Portrait, 17 March 2012, No. 1 (1215), 2012, iPad drawing printed on paper mounted on Dibond; Self-Portrait, 17 March 2012, No. 2 (1216), 2012, iPad drawing printed on paper mounted on Dibond; Self-Portrait, 20 March 2012, No. 1 (1219), 2012, iPad drawing printed on paper mounted on Dibond. Collection of the artist © David Hockney.

Perhaps the most striking images in this exhibition are four *Self-Portraits*, iPad drawings printed on paper from 2012. Always experimenting and innovating, Hockney saw the iPad as offering new potentials for creating drawings. There is no question about the fact that he has mastered the potentials of this digital device and converted it into a medium of artistic expression. Here, we see the unmistakeable physiognomy of a person who is not attempting to hide the irreversible impact of his, at that time, seventy-five years.

Photographs



Yellow Chair with Shadow Los Angeles April 18th 1982, 1982, Polaroid composite. Collection of the artist © David Hockney. Photo Credit: Richard Schmidt

All of the photographs in this exhibition are Polaroid composites. They are ingenious demonstrations of Hockney's dedication to experimentation with different media. To create them, he would take dozens of Polaroid photographs from different vantage points and piece them together as composites. In his youth, having been influenced by Picasso's collages, he utilizes fragments to create a composite image.

These Polaroid composites offer a remarkable visual effect. From a distance, you see a composite image. On closer examination, you realize that it is a composite of many fragments articulated to create the impression of a single image seen from a specific vantage point. As he progressed with each Polaroid composite, he had to determine how images would align next to each other and unify into a composite from a distance. Although Hockney has not mentioned Georges Seurat as an influence – he does mention owing a debt to Picasso's collages. It would not be inappropriate to draw a comparison between his Polaroid composites and Georges Seurat's pointilism, a technique of painting in which small, distinct dots of color were applied in patterns to form an image. On close examination, Seurat's paintings are fields of dots of color. From a distance, they create a unified image. Much the same could be said of Hockney's Polaroid composites.



Nicholas Wilder Studying Picasso, Los Angeles 24th March 1982. 1982, Polaroid composite. Collection of the artist © David Hockney. Photo Credit: Richard Schmidt



Paint Trolley, L. A. 1985, 1985, Collage of chromogenic prints. Collection of the artist © David Hockney

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