DAVID HOCKNEY
A BIGGER EXHIBITION
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LAWRENCE WESCHLER
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DAVID HOCKNEY

CURATED BY
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The presentation of a major exhibition of a living artist’s work is always a special occasion for any museum, and it is no less so for the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in organizing this survey of David Hockney’s oeuvre since 2002. Ever prolific, the artist has arguably made the past decade one of the most productive of his career, working in a staggering array of media, old and new—from watercolor to iPad, charcoal to computer, and oil paint to digital movie.

David Hockney: A Bigger Exhibition is the first major presentation of his work since the critical and popular success of David Hockney: A Bigger Picture, which was shown in London, Bilbao, and Cologne. Our show, the largest in the history of the de Young, features more than 250 works of art, including landscapes, still lifes, portraits, and digital movies. The monumental canvases, A Bigger Message (pl. 105) and The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven), Version 3 (pl. 178), as well as the five iPad drawings Bigger Yosemite (pls. 197–201), are shown here for the first time in North America.

We are proud to be the first museum to exhibit and publish the artist’s most recent output, spanning a year in which he has worked exclusively in charcoal. In fact, a special place was reserved in this catalogue for a work Hockney was excited about completing. The twenty-five drawings The Arrival of Spring in 2013 (twenty thirteen) (pls. 231–255), were finished in May of this year and are now accorded a special place in this volume. These remarkable works, made with the most basic of materials, underscore the fact that Hockney is, without question, one of our greatest draftsmen.
The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco wish to thank the Board of Trustees and President Diane B. Wilsey for their unconditional support of this project. Our deputy director, Richard Benefield, brought his years of experience working with living artists to the organization of the exhibition and catalogue, working directly with the artist and his associates at the Hockney studios in Los Angeles and Bridlington, England.

Through their astute essays for this volume, both Lawrence Weschler and Sarah Howgate have shared important insights into Hockney’s work, made all the richer by their years of association and friendship with him. A special mention is given to Leslie Dutcher, director of publications, and her staff for overseeing the editing and production of this catalogue. We thank Ann Heath Karlstrom for her deft editing, Bob Aufuldish for his elegant design, Roberto Conti and his colleagues at Conti Tipocolor for their beautiful printing of this book, and Mary DeMonico and Karen Farquhar at DeMonico Books | Prestel for their partnership. This catalogue is published with the assistance of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Endowment for Publications, for which we are grateful.

Thanks are also due to the Museums’ exhibitions team and its leaders: Krista Brugnara, director of exhibitions; Therese Chen, director of collections management; Craig Harris, manager of installation and preparation; Rich Rice, manager of audiovisual services; and Bill Huggins, lighting designer. We also thank Suzy Peterson, executive assistant, for overseeing the myriad details of this undertaking. Our further thanks are given to the members of the Museums’ extended staff, including the entire marketing, development, design, education, public programs, and member and visitor services teams.

Our donors and sponsors make it possible for the Museums to bring major exhibitions to San Francisco. We are grateful to those who provided leadership support for this particular exhibition: David Davies and Jack Weeden, the bequest of Dr. Charles L. Dibble, Ray and Dagmar Dolby, Marissa Mayer and Zachary Bogue, the Michael Taylor Trust, and Diane B. Wilsey.

Numerous individuals and institutions deserve our thanks for their assistance in the development of this project. These include Peter Goulds and Kimberly Davis at L.A. Louver, David Juda at Annely Juda Fine Art, and Sylvia Weber at the Warth Collection. We also thank the National Portrait Gallery, London, and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, and other private lenders for sharing their artworks with us.

We extend the deepest gratitude to Gregory Ermine, curator and designer of the exhibition, for his insights into David Hockney’s biography, creative processes, and working methods. This exhibition and catalogue would not have been possible without his gracious partnership. We also thank his colleagues at the David Hockney studios: Julie Green, Shannan Kelly, Greg Rose, Richard Schmidt, and George Snyder in Los Angeles; and Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima and Jonathan Wilkinson in Bridlington, England.

Our greatest debt, of course, is to David Hockney, whose extraordinarily diverse and critically acclaimed art we are proud to share with our audiences. It has been a pleasure and an honor to collaborate with him on the presentation of this luminous chapter of his life’s work.
David Hockney first visited the New de Young Museum in 2011. He was in town for a San Francisco Opera performance of Puccini’s Turandot, for which he was scenic designer (see fig. 1). At the de Young, he saw the exhibition Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris. Hockney has always held Picasso in high regard. During his art school days, when Hockney saw that Picasso really could draw, other students as well as faculty regarded Picasso as a philistine. Hockney was a music lover from his youth, when he regularly served as an usher in exchange for a seat to hear the likes of Schubert, Wagner, and other classical masters. This deep knowledge and love of music, combined with his own observations of Picasso’s understanding and mastery of chiaroscuro, led Hockney to the conclusion that the Spanish master must have been tone-deaf—increasing capacity in one of the senses with diminished acuity in another.

In those same months that Hockney visited the Picasso exhibition at the de Young, he was in the midst of developing his ideas for the multicamera digital movies. These movies are made using as many as eighteen separate digital cameras, mounted on a grid, recording the action simultaneously (see figs. 2-4). They are shown using just as many video monitors, mounted on the wall in an equivalent grid, playing simultaneously. Because each camera has its own single-point perspective, one movie ends up having as many as eighteen perspectives. The foci of the cameras do not line up exactly to present one continuous view, hence, the Cubist movie. Hockney is not only in his post-Pop, post-minimal, and post-conceptual mode, he has come full circle, back to his earlier and lifelong fascination with Cubism.
On my first visit in August 2012 to David Hockney's Hollywood Hills home and his two Los Angeles studios, I was treated to a viewing of years ago Cubism was invented, and this may be the first Cubist movie.”

Hockney continually investigates aspects of time relative to the image. From his own observations of the development of Cubism in the early twentieth century, he surmises that what we see in a single painting are multiple perspectives of the artist, which could happen only over time. In other words, the artist paints one perspective, he looks again and again, and the photographs used in a collage are taken in different moments. ‘There are so many more options to look at’, says Hockney. ‘I have conquered the tyranny of one-point perspective’; and ‘Imagine the number of comments: “There are so many more options to look at”’.

The year 2002 was particularly significant for Hockney, as Lawrence Weschler puts it in his main essay for this catalogue. That was the year that Hockney returned to making art full-time following an intense period of research on the development of portrait making. Something—a certain line? a photographic quality?—had caught his eye, and Hockney began the process of assembling reproductions of hundreds of portraits, which led to building The Great Wall (see figs. 27 and 32). Using high-quality color photomechanical prints, he arranged the portraits chronologically on a horizontal axis (early to late, left to right) and geographically on a vertical axis (transitional from Northern European works at the top to those from Southern Europe at the bottom). With the Wall constructed, he continued his discussions with scientists and art historians around the globe to study his theory that artists had, indeed, for centuries used optical devices as aids in their drawings. With the Wall assembled, he was able to pinpoint the moment in time, circa 1430, when artists began using optical devices as aids in their drawings. With the Wall constructed, he was able to pinpoint the moment in time, circa 1430, when artists began using optical devices as aids in their drawings.

As we discussed the exhibition at the de Young, Evans hit on the brilliant idea of doing a comprehensive retrospective from 2002 to the present day. As I thought to myself, ‘Evans is making art at the breakneck pace. What will that mean? Will we have a final checklist in device, one had to be a very good draftsman. ‘It’s not that easy. The truth is, if you need the device in order to be able to draw, it won’t be of much use at all. On the other hand, if you don’t, it can be immensely useful.” That feeling of liberation manifested itself in an explosion of activity over the next decade: watercolor, painting, prints, prints, print experimentation with the iPhone, iPad drawings, oil paintings on the grandest scale imaginable, digital movies, and, more recently, charcoal on paper. Throughout his life, Hockney has explored new technologies, new ways of making pictures, various ways of, to borrow a word he uses often, ‘deconstructing.’ This post-Secret Knowledge period has seen an explosion of experimentation and creativity, as well as productivity.

David Hockney A Bigger Exhibition, with more than 250 works of art displayed in roughly 18,000 square feet of gallery space, is the largest exhibition in the history of the de Young, and it includes some of Hockney’s grandest works both in terms of size and concept. Several of the groups of paintings in the exhibition are considered as single works of art, and some works actually comprise as many as thirty-two canvases. The show also illustrates the fact that Hockney has, over the last decade, concentrated on two genres: portraiture and landscape (though Weschler makes a very good case in this volume for considering the landscapes as portraits). These two genres encompass many media, from the complex technologies used to make the movies to the simplest technology of all, the pencil and paper. Like an artist alchemist, in one minute Hockney sees a fancy digital device to make a colorful iPad drawing (see pls. 196, 197) in the next he shows us that he is one of our greatest draftsmen by rendering
an exactlying detailed charcoal drawing of a forest scene in East Yorkshire, England (see pls. 179–196). For the most part, the work since 2002 is shown in roughly chronological order. This points to the fact that over the past decade Hockney has been making landscapes and portraits essentially simultaneously, although he went through periods where he would focus on one or the other. Sarah Howgate, in her essay in this volume, has made her own observations about how the landscapes also largely factor in his use of digital technologies. In 2011, he has mastered the medium of charcoal to make twenty-five monumental multicanvas fantasy paintings chronicling the arrival of spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven), Version 3 (pls. 231–255, rev. ed.). Each of his versions became progressively more abstract or, better, Cubist, before he completed the larger piece. This group of paintings is not considered a single work as are several of his other groups or series; rather it visually documents Hockney’s thinking and rethinking of the Yosemite trip. Hence, Bigger Yosemite, comprising three free drawings made on that subsequent sojourn in 2011, each made with the intention of being printed as large as twelve feet high (pls. 197–202). His continuing uses of digital technologies also include a period of portrait making on the computer (see pls. 37–39) and on the iPad (see pls. 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 151, and 153), as well as a series of iPad self-portraits (see pls. 213–219).

Particular groups in the exhibition deserve special explanatory mentions. The four nine-camera digital movies documenting the four seasons in Woldgate, England (pls. 210–214), are considered by the artist to be one work. The same is true for the thirty-two-canvas painting and its accompanying twelve iPad drawings entitled The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven), Version 3 (pls. 231–255). A Bigger Movie (pl. 103), consisting of thirty canvases, grew out of the artist’s interest in the Baroque-era French artist Claude Lorrain’s Seven Sermons to the Beast in the Frick Collection, New York. At the time, the painting was very dark and needed cleaning. Hockney did his own “restoration” of the painting, working with a photograph on the computer and cleaning it digitally. He then copied in oil both the dark and brightened versions. Fascinated by the topic, he then painted several reinterpretations of the work (see pls. 212–214). Each of his versions became progressively more abstract or, better, Cubist, before he completed the larger piece. This group of paintings is not considered a single work as are several of his other groups or series; rather it visually documents Hockney’s thinking and rethinking of the Yosemite trip.

Only by seeing The Great Wall and understanding the scope and scale of this enormous undertaking can one ultimately have any sense of the freedom it gave the artist going forward. Hockney invested more than a year of initial research into Western portraiture and his assembly of The Wall. Along with the rare showing of The Great Wall, the exhibition includes a selection of Hockney’s camera lucida drawings, his own experiments with using an optical device as an aid.

Hockney continues to generate new ideas and methods, and his work remains fresh and remarkable. Since the opening of David Hockney: A Bigger Picture in Cologne in October 2011, he has worked exclusively with charcoal on paper, and the exhibition displays a considerable number of these drawings. Making portraits of loved ones and those who have worked closely with him (see pls. 212–213), alongside his continuing documentation of his beloved East Yorkshire countryside, Hockney has not turned away from color so much as he has begun to lavish upon his work an extraordinarily generous amount of detail about what he sees. As has happened again and again when Hockney turns his attention to a different medium, he proceeds to mastery. Then, it is as though he cannot keep up with all the things that he wants to get down. This foray into drawing with charcoal has all the intensity of his work on the multicanvas paintings, the iPad drawings, and the movies. Finding himself in East Yorkshire in January 2013, Hockney realized that he had the opportunity to capture the arrival of spring once again. Without the use of the iPad and those colorful drawings that led to the monumental multicanvas painting chronicling the arrival of spring in 2011, he has mastered the medium of charcoal to make twenty-five drawings (pls. 231–255) that capture the event on paper in staggering, almost breathtaking detail. There is no color, yet in them “you can see the blueness of the winter and its exciting transformation to the summer.”3 Without the aid of an optical device to render such levels of intricacy, with these most recent works, Hockney has proven that he is, above all, a consummate virtuoso of draftsmanship.

Notes

1. It was also on this trip that Hockney visited Yosemite, where he made the second series of iPad drawings that are known as Bigger Yosemite.
2. Lawrence Weschler, True to Life: Twenty-Five Years of Conversations with David Hockney (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), 90.
3. By 2011 he had used only as many as nine cameras.
5. Weschler, True to Life, 146.
6. E-mail from David Hockney to the author, May 15, 2013.


Hockney selbst kommt in einem aufschlussreichen Text über Perspektive zu Wort, in dem er seine eigene Sicht auf die gerade hinter ihm liegende Werkphase formuliert; Beiträge des bekannten Essayautors und Kunstkritikers Lawrence Weschler und der Kunsthistorikerin Sarah Howgate vertiefen das Thema.