

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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REEVALUATING DAVID HOCKNEY

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## INTRODUCTION

I came to know more about David Hockney's work a few years ago, when I was experimenting with photography. The book 'Cameraworks', which is based on Hockney's photocollages was a revelation to me and seemed much more exciting than anything I had up to then encountered in the field of photography.

In these works Hockney moves away from conventional photography. Instead of using a single photograph, he had many photographs depicting the one image joined together to create what he termed a photographic 'Joiner'. The method behind these works reminded me strongly of cubist paintings and it is with cubism in mind that Hockney created them. At the time I was not aware that Hockney's main body of work was actually painting. So, when I decided to use Hockney as a subjectmatter for my thesis, I was primarily interested in his photography. Through studying his work I felt that his 'Joiners' were the most revolutionary works he had created up to then. I could not get enthusiastic about his paintings. To me at first glance they seemed bland and uninteresting representations of his immediate friends. At second glance not much of this impression had changed. There is also the question of influence in Hockney's work. Even though he began his career with a distinguished style of his own, I noticed constant reminders of Picasso in his work, either through direct reference or through imitating a Picasso style. Picasso seemed to have a very strong influence on Hockney, maybe too strong. Some aspects about Hockney's work seemed quite conflicting. While one body of his work excited me, another part of his work would bore me. This formed questions in me, such as:

'Why did Hockney achieve such popularity with his paintings?'

'Why is there so little content (social comment) visible in his work, when he had every reason (his homosexuality) to use it?'

'How deep is Picasso's influence in Hockney's work really?'  
'Is Hockney just a fancy portraitist in the end?'  
'How many barriers did he break with his photocollages?'  
I hope to be able to shed some light on these questions  
and more in the next few chapters.



David Hockney was born in the industrial city of Bradford, England in 1937. His parents were quite extraordinary. They were workingclass, never educated and quite eccentric. (His father was known to have wheeled his armchair in a handcart to the public telephone to await phonecalls) However, they insisted on the best education for all their children. And this was to be the foundation and the platform from which David Hockney drew his initial inspiration. With the encouragement of his parents he made the conscious decision to leave school and go to study painting. Ever since Hockney can remember, he wanted to leave Bradford. Even though it was home to him, it was not an attractive city and the combination of the class-system and total Britishness did little to alter the alienation he, as a young student, felt there. He studied first at the Bradford School of Art between 1953 - 1957, where he received the National Diploma in Design. And it was around this time that he became known for his outrageous clothes combinations and for carting his artmaterials around in a pram. (Even at this stage showing similar eccentricities as his father). In 1959 Hockney's dream of leaving Bradford became true, when he went to London to further his studies at the Royal College of Art. It was around this time that David Hockney felt the courage to be open about his homosexuality. Tentatively at first, he began to paint about homosexuality. In retrospect Hockney thinks it was quite an exciting time for him. In his biography he wrote : "What one must remember about some of these pictures is that they were partly propaganda or something I felt had'nt been propagandized, especially among students, as a subject: Homosexuality. I felt it should be done. Nobody else would use it as a subjectmatter."<sup>1</sup>

For David Hockney it was a time of 'coming out', becoming aware of his desires and learning to deal with them. He read poetry (mainly written by homosexuals) and became

aware of gaymagazines such as 'Physique Pictorial', imported from California. It was mainly these images from gaymagazines of healthy young brown bodies lying under palm trees by a pool, that awakened David Hockney's dream to go out to California and be a part of this life one day. It happened sooner than he thought.

Actually, for Hockney everything seemed to happen quickly. He was always at the forefront of what was going on, organised his own group exhibitions, was invited to exhibit in various galleries around London and thus found his first crucial contact, John Kasmin, who was a young manager of a gallery. When he saw Hockney's work in the 'Young Contemporaries' show in February 1961, he knew he had struck gold. "I knew he would be a success, and his homosexuality and use of gay imagery would be to his advantage since gay people always have money to spend on art."<sup>2</sup>

Around the same time Hockney made two lasting relationships: He met Mo McDermott, a fabric design student, who modelled for him in college and later became his full-time assistant. Hockney also met Celia Birtwell, a student friend of Mo's. She was to become Hockney's greatest confidante and frequent model.

While all this was going on Hockney finished his studies and was awarded the rare distinction of the gold medal for outstanding student on leaving the Royal College of Art.

By the autumn of 1962 Hockney was really beginning to attract attention. It seems that he was in the right place at the right time. Through Andy Warhol he met Henry Geldzahler, a curator of 20th century art in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. This period marked a new trend in Hockney's life. He was to travel extensively and again as he was so open about his homosexuality, was seen as a leading figure by the gay community. This of course did no harm to his popularity as an artist! Wherever he travelled he made friends among the gay community and as a result, his works sold well at every show.

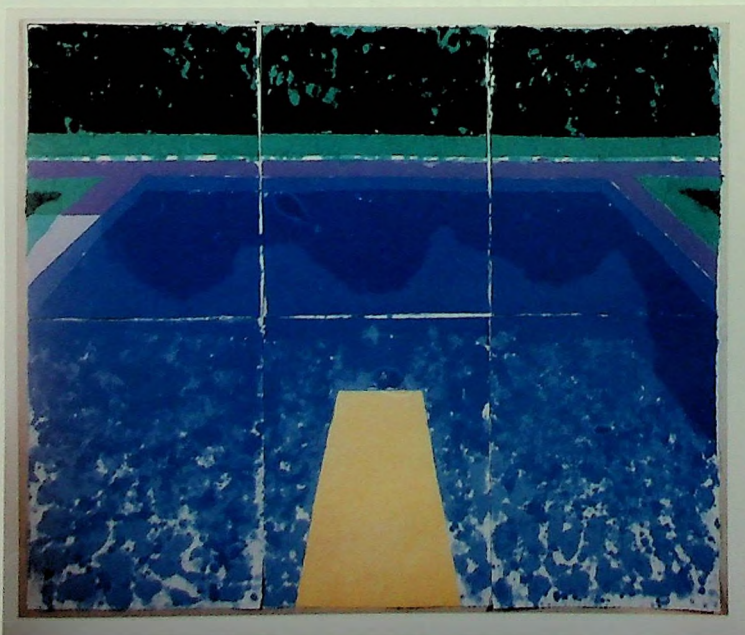
To me it seems that Hockney's life is unusually well documented and that he himself was the major factor in the spreading of a 'happening' each time he met a new lover or had a tea party in London. California was to Hockney a voyeur's paradise. He considered himself a voyeur and was constantly attracted to the gay parties in wealthy houses where beautiful young boys attended his every whim. This seems a far cry from his interest or adoration for the intense Picasso, whom he adopted as his 'father of inspiration'.



Hockney's main interest as an artist has to be with technique. He does not show much concern for the lack of content in his works. These works must be like some sort of diary to him and are monotonous in their repetitiveness.



'Sun on the Pool , Los Angeles' 1984



'Day Pool with Three Blues (Paper Pool 7)



The two examples on the previous page show how Hockney repeats himself over the years. While his techniques change quite frequently, his subjectmatter always revolves around showers, water, houses, family or friends. It is obvious, that even though he travelled a great deal, to some of the most inspiring countrys in the world (Mexico, Japan, Italy ...), there is no social or creative comment in his works from any of these trips worth talking about. He seems to ignore this completely or perhaps it was not visible to him. Somehow I doubt this. He knew early on in life about hardship through his workingclass upbringing. His early paintings seem to show a certain concern with the right and wrong of the world we live in. So, did he then just turn his back on his past and begin afresh in California? Living in California must have removed him from the straightjacket that homosexuality must have placed on him. California was no challenge and it unfortunately shows in his works.

When he was still at college in London he seemed to be trying to express deeper emotions that dealt directly with his life. In paintings such as 'Doll Boy', 'The Prettiest Boy in the World', 'We Two Boys Together Clinging', Hockney was at least expressing himself, saying something.



Fig. 11. We Two Boys Together Clinging 1961

We know that these were some of his first works dealing with his homosexuality. He obviously had a need to express himself, since he was only just 'coming out'. In these paintings we see a Francis Bacon-like style combined with Hockney's fantasies and emotions. Men are half dressed as women. He also used numbers and letters in his works as a type of secret code. These works were expressive as well as original and furthered his reputation in the artworld. When Hockney moved to California, his attitude and style began to change. No more was he using homosexuality from a critical or emotional point of view. He merely did representations of Los Angeles, being inspired by it's architecture and generally occupying himself by making lots of portraits of his friends and lovers in various stages of undress, either on bed, in the shower or in the pool. His titles would be 'Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool' and so on. What we see is what we get and no more. There are certainly no deeper conclusions to be made from his titles. One could say that Hockney had achieved the perfect way to portray Los Angeles, known for it's bland culture. I would agree with this if he had given only a certain period of his creative time to this type of portrayal, but it is a style which he keeps with him, no matter what the situation is or in which country he is staying in at the time. Looking through all his works we can follow the progression of each of his friends. we can watch how his models grow older through the years. The earliest portrait of Celia was done around 1966 and all through the years, until today she is portrayed most frequently. We see pictures titled: 'Celia amused', 'Celia tired', 'Celia dressed in a black dress with white flowers' and so on; we see her rendered in oil paint, in acrylic paint, in various drawings and in his photo-collages. Yet Hockney portrays all his friends in this constant manner. To me he is an ordinary person making a more elaborate, creative family album than most people would or could. But yet, like a layman with a camera, he



is not able or is he willing(?) to capture moments that really count. For example, through all the many portrayals of Celia through the years, she appears to be no more than a model, posing for an artist. We get no personal glimpse of her, no inner depth.



'Cilia wearing Checked Sleeves' 1973



'Celia II' 1984



Everything Hockney does is very much premeditated. when he did his first paintings about his homosexuality, he mentioned himself, that he saw them mainly as propaganda, 'a means of publicity', showing us that he knew well what he was doing. When he moved to California he thought to himself: "My god, this place needs its Piranesi, Los Angeles could have a Piranesi, so here I am!"<sup>3</sup> And it is as if, due to the hype that went on around Hockney in California at the beginning, that his creativity got dammed, he was not able to let go of the style everyone adored so much. Like so many other people, I believe, he became a prisoner of his own success.

Around 1970, Hockney began painting double portraits. He claims, that at the time he was very interested in exploring relationships. But after a close look at these portraits it becomes obvious, that they are all quite similar in what they express. Usually one person is looking straight ahead, while the other person is looking in a different direction. There is no action involved, his subjects are usually just sitting or standing. They tell us next to nothing about any relationship going on, they could be strangers in the same room, for all we know. The face, which could tell so much is painted with very little expression visible. I find these portraits a typical example of a total absence of content. If he is dwelling on relationships, he is certainly not using this in his painting, they are mere exercises compared to portraits painted by Egon Schiele, where tension or eroticism is clearly visible.



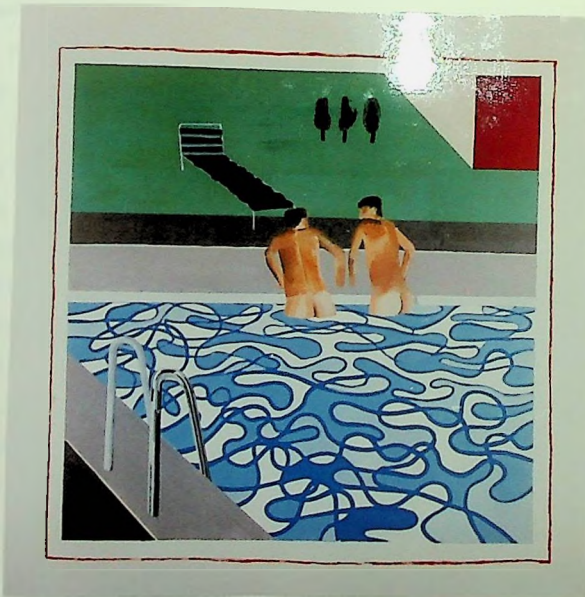
'Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy' 1968

People's general non-acceptance of homosexuality and all the inherent problems attached to the gay rights issue do not figure in Hockney's paintings or drawings. He remained preoccupied, portraying many young boys, mostly nude or in various stages of undress. Nudity remains the only 'controversial' issue in his works and his reluctance to take his obsession further is again greatly reduced by his dogged repetitiveness. Hockney has said himself, that he is only interested in showing the sunny, happy side of life and he believes that art today is much too obsessed with content, which makes it boring. But surely it must be the same the other way around? In the picture 'The Room Tarzana' ( see illustr. p. 14) Hockney is being controversial in the sense that the person on the bed is a boy. Seemingly it was inspired by an advertisement for a bedspread, that Hockney found in a magazine. The person on the bed is obviously a young boy offering his backside to a lover. It is a very type-cast portrayal of gay life. Because he is wearing white socks and a white T-shirt, we are given the impression that he is an athletic, pretty young boy. This is a aspect of gay life but it is not a critical one in any way. If anything, it is showing us a very onesided view of homosexuality. The young boy, who is dominated by an older lover and is always at his command. Hockney does not make any critical comments about homosexuality at all in his work even though he has been actively involved in gay rights movements.

### His techniques

Hockney's mediums and techniques have changed quite often over the years. The painting style of his double portraits is quite impressive. Since he left London in 1964, Hockney changed from using oil paint to using acrylics, achieving much brighter, stronger colors which suited the

sunny atmosphere in California much better. They have become stronger all through his career to today, where he uses enamel-paint to achieve vividly strong colors to abstract reality. At first, in his pool paintings, around 1965, he had only started to use acrylic paint. He used them very simply, dividing his canvas into squares and rectangles of houses and pools with maybe a figure resting. He then filled each space with a separate color, finding it difficult to blend colors together. I find those paintings were poorly executed and the colors are still reminiscent of the previous dull colors he was using while in England.



'Two Boys in a Pool, Hollywood' 1965

In the example above we see how dull the green of the grass is, the water does not look like water and if you look closely it is noticeable how seemingly carelessly it is painted. The only element with a bit of detail is the front ladder rail. The legs of the two men getting out of the pool look as if they were dismembered. In his double-



portraits he seems to have found a way of using acrylics which suited him. He wanted to be able to blend colors together like with oil-paint, which he could only do, when his assistant kept spraying the canvas to keep it moist, while Hockney was painting. This way the fast drying acrylics would stay moist long enough for Hockney to blend them with another color if he worked very fast. The success is visible in his paintings from then on. The colors are much brighter, he blends them in lively color combinations and this together with the fact that these are quite large canvases (approx. 2 x 3 meters) and the figures are overlife size, do well to impress the viewer.

But apart from using paint, Hockney has tried his hand at many mediums. He likes to experiment with new mediums all the time. Starting in oil-paints, Hockney moved to acrylics, then to photography and is now experimenting with the newest techniques such as the 'laser color copier' or the 'Quantel paintbox'. But all during his career Hockney had been doing etchings (inspired by poetry), he experimented with making works with his own color paper, he also dabbled in stagedesign which was very successful and he has always been a very skilled draughtsman. These drawings which Hockney does in both pencil or color-crayons are one of his great strengths. These portraits, which are always done from life, are full of vitality which is lacking in most of his other works. I believe this is mainly due to the fact that for his paintings he uses mainly references taken from photographs or magazine clippings. He does not like to paint from life and therefore when he does a portrait he will take many photographs of the subject and then paint from them. It is this trait, which I believe lend so many of his paintings a photographic quality. (See illustr. p. 14)

By using the camera for reference he was slowly leading himself towards photography and his photocollages. So



'The Room, Tarzana', 1967

many of his paintings are reminiscent of photographs, that I believe his next step had to be to use photography as a direct art medium. In his paintings he explores the different problems of photography, like for example in his painting 'A Bigger Splash'. He consciously painted a picture of a moment which only a camera could capture and which could not be seen like this in real life. Hockney has a lot of criticisms to make about photography and yet so many of his works are similar to photographs. His figures seem trapped and lifeless, captured forever on canvas.



'A Bigger Splash' 1967



In many of Hockney's works, he is emphasizing how we look at things. In 'Looking at Pictures on a Screen', Hockney is exploring this with a bit of humor. He calls it double enjoyment, since he had painted a man engrossed in studying a painting. Hockney enjoys these puns and they crop up in his works so often. In his photocollage 'Noya and Bill Brandt with selfportrait', we find ourselves looking at a couple who in turn are also studying a photocollage. Hockney wants the viewer to become involved in a more direct way with his works. He achieves this best in his photocollages by bringing an element of himself into the foreground and thus giving us the impression that this foot or leg could be an extension of ourselves and that therefor we are in the picture itself.



' Noya + Bill Brandt with Selfportrait' (Although They were Watching This Picture Being Made) 1982

All Hockney's explorations into how we perceive things invariably led him into the theory of Cubism. First he explored cubism through the camera and nowadays he uses it in his painting, which as a result is much stronger



and more expressive than his previous paintings. Even though these paintings hold no deeper meaning than any of his earlier works, they are much more interesting to look at. He has left photography behind but not the theory of cubism, which he has now carried into painting. This made them quite abstract, taking away from the usual straight representations or portraits he used to do. He further has begun to use strong luminous colors out of context. Even though some of these paintings are very Picasso like, Hockney says, that his best work is yet to come and he believes, that in todays artworld there is only cubism left to explore.



'A Visit with Christopher and Don, Santa Monica Canyon', 1984

The painting shown on page 16 was done in 1984 and shows how Hockney was exploring further in painting what he achieved in his photocollages. At first glance it seems like our eyes are dragged in every direction, but if we only focus on one area at a time, it all makes sense. We can literally walk through this house and look out of every window at each specific view. It is meant to make the viewer participate on a small journey around the house. Our eye can only rest in one particular area at a time. This gives us a better impression of the layout of the house and its surroundings than if it were painted in a more realistic style. I believe Hockney has only just found his strength and that it began with his search into cubism and into photography.

It is in 1982, that I believe Hockney made his first unique contribution to the artworld. He was always looking for a new way to use the camera as an artmedium but it was not until 1982 that Hockney felt that the means lay through cubism (a direction first taken by Picasso). He took the basic theories that lay behind cubism and translated them to suit the camera, thus opening a new avenue in photography.

Polaroid versus 35mm camera

Hockney began making photocollages by using a polaroid camera, which he up to then had always used to take holiday snaps and only later, when he seemed to have exhausted the possibilities of the polaroid, did he move on to using a more professional 35mm camera. By that time he had mastered his technique so well, that he could radically reduce the scale of his collages, while still sustaining the complexity of the images at a level he'd attained in the largest works. At this point it is important to note the differences between the two types of cameras and to show how the characteristics of each contributed to his different collages. At the time, in 1982, the differences were very great.



The polaroid camera was limiting in a sense that there was only a standard lens attached to it, which could not be replaced. This meant that to take a close-up, one had to move very close to the subject to focus. Each polaroid photograph also had a white border surrounding the image, which could not be cut off. This would limit Hockney to doing either square or rectangular collages. But on the other hand a polaroid produces an instantly developed picture, so Hockney could always retake a wrong angle or expression until it was just right. The colors of a polaroid are more intense than in reality, adding a slightly unreal or abstract element to the image, which I find enhances them. Hockney soon found the polaroid camera too limiting in its possibilities and turned to the 35mm camera. With this camera certain possibilities are endless. He could change the standard lens for a zoom lens and bring closer what is in the distance without having to physically move. This gives him the possibility of using the landscape as a subjectmatter. Also, because there exists no border around each image Hockney could overlap them as he chose, giving him much greater freedom while taking the photographs as well as allowing him to highlight an action, feeling or emotion by layering the different photographs to form a particular pattern or shape.

To say that Hockney used photography only during the eighties is untrue. As an artmedium - yes. But all through his career Hockney has made use of the camera. The camera

was always an important aid to him in his paintings where, more often than not, he would use different photographs or magazine clippings to paint from. He always carried a camera and whenever some object, form or color caught his eye, he would capture it. At home he had volumes full of snapshots just like any other person who likes to keep notes of where they were and what they saw. He just found a new and much more artistic way to present them.

Hockney always had an aversion to traditional photography, criticising it for its unreal portrayal of life, for how it froze only a moment in time, which as he believed denied the picture any longstanding interest. Needless to say he felt bored at most exhibitions of photography. Of course this is his own point of view and even though I tend to disagree with his reasons for disliking photography, it is interesting to see in which direction these views led him.

### Cubism in Photography

Hockney based his photocollages, which he calls Joiners, on many theories. They grew from his aversions to traditional photography and his interest in cubism, which mainly dealt with how we humans perceive.

The theory of cubism began with Picasso and Braque around 1909, when Picasso had painted his first cubist picture inspired by the angular and hard forms of the spanish

village 'Horte de Ebro'. The theory was to dissect a form into its constituent elements which we see in cubist paintings. Each subjectmatter is reduced to its elementary forms, built up of flat areas set against and contrasted with each other. At the time, they were looking for a new figurative language, that would no longer represent reality as we know it, but rather the essential order that lies behind it. Hockney was led by a similar line of thought to achieve his Joiners, looking for a new way to use the camera as a substitute for how we perceive and thus changing the way we are used to viewing photography in exhibitions. He has similar possibilities to a painter, to abstract the human figure but with a camera.



'Henry Cleaning His Glasses (detail) 1982



'Ambroise Vollard'  
1909 -10, Picasso



The two illustrations on the previous page have a strong likeness to one another. Picasso's painting is dividing the man's figure with horizontal and vertical lines that do not always join together. The man in Hockney's Joiner looks very similar and is equally divided by white lines, giving a slightly disjointed view of the figure. This, to me, demonstrates the likeness Hockney achieved with his Joiners to early cubist paintings. In cubism artists such as Picasso went further and further towards abstraction, only halting when the total limit had been reached, until only the title would tell us what was being represented. Hockney on the other hand is portraying reality as he believes we perceive it and is basing his works mainly on this one cubist theory, which he further develops in his own way. The degree of abstraction Hockney can achieve with a camera was limited, since a camera will always reproduce what it is aimed at. This leads Hockney to experiment with other forms of abstraction, showing the same head multiple times within an image or by arranging his photographs in a disjointed way, corners jutting out here and there.

It is in this way, that Hockney had opened a new way of using the camera different from any other artists who also use multiple images in their work. Photography was by no means all about the single image at the time. Long before Hockney created his Joiners artists had been experimenting with multiple images, finding new

ways to use the camera and moving away from conventional photography. Yet Hockney's strong profile was the means to bring his development to the forefront of the art-world. Many of these artists, like Gilbert & George, had been using photographs as the main body of their work and had joined photographs together in various ways as early as 1968. But their way of using the camera and joining photographs together depended more on the content they wished to achieve, rather than on particular theories like in Hockney's work.



'Naked Beauty' 1982, Gilbert & George

Jan Dibbets for instance had also used multiple images since 1969. He also moved from painting to using the camera, similar to Hockney, but his work is mainly based on architecture and nature. For instance, he may put many photographs in sequence for the purpose of recording natural phenomenon at regular intervals; integrating them into a technical drawing or a painting.



'Octagon I' 1982, Jan Dibbets

#### To Hockney's different Theories

First of all, Hockney wanted to capture the viewers attention for longer than they would normally spend looking at a single photograph, which he believed, would not be very long. To achieve this he felt he had to spend

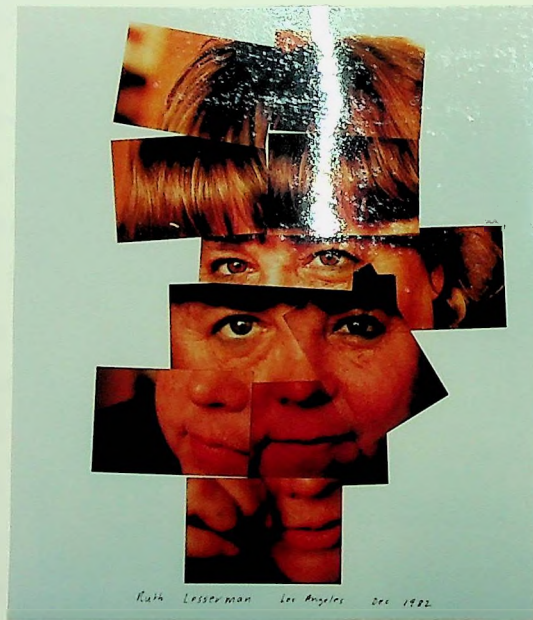


more than the usual 1/125sec. taking the photograph. So, he spent anything from one hour to nine days taking all his photographs to make the one piece, developed them in a 'one hour photo service' and afterwards he had to assemble them. This all took quite some time, which he believes is visible in his work and that, because of this amount of time he spends, people would be likely to study them longer. What he seems to forget is that, even though the photograph he might be looking at might only have taken 1/125sec., the photographer probably spent weeks thinking of the idea, finding the right setting, the right model or arranging the lights and then he still might take 50 separate shots to get the perfect single image. Hockney made no such preparations, he used the camera much like he always used it for his holiday snapshots. He never used any extra source of light other than what was there, nor did he spend days thinking of the idea. His are spontaneous collages of simple, everyday events that really were, candid shots taken while he just happened to have the camera with him. It is strange, that even though he seems to be more interested in technique than content, most of the time he used the camera in its most basic manner, which is very visible in some of his works.

Reality has always been a focalpoint of Hockney's. When he was in college everyone was inspired by abstraction. Hockney dabbled a bit with it, but soon went back to painting figurative, wanting things to be 'real'. Even

though it is usually considered that the camera produces quite realistic images, this is not what Hockney believes. Scientifically speaking, when we are looking at something, our eyes pick up many different messages from this image, transmit these to the brain where, when all the information is gathered, the whole picture emerges, much like a puzzle that has to be put together. Our eyes can only focus on a small part of the whole image at one glance. When for example we are talking with someone, our eyes wander over the whole person, even the surrounding. We look at things not only once but twice or three times from slightly different angles. We capture the mood of a person by catching different facial expressions. To Hockney this way of vision is truer to life than anything that could be achieved within a single photograph. But obviously the question arises: Are Hockney's joiners more representative of reality than the single image? His theory is very interesting and plausible from a scientific point of view. The eye gathers fragments to create the whole image, yet looking at the collage of 'Ruth Lesserman' (see illustration on page 27), reality seems obscured. She has four eyes, three noses and three mouths. It is an interesting new way of making a photographic portrait but it is quite unbelievable that this image is more real than a studio portrait, where the lighting could be false and strange filters could have been used, yet the person will only have two eyes instead of four. Hockney's theories make it possible for him to execute his work. It is the

foundation, within which he gives himself great space to move around, while at the same time leaving questions and doubt in the critical viewer about the practical use of his theories.



'Ruth Lesserman, Los Angeles' 1982

Another important aspect in his work is the element of lived time. He was unhappy with how one could not show 'time passing' in a photograph but that instead, it froze only a moment in time. We are all familiar with the single



image of a person just about to speak or captured forever in midstride. Hockney has overcome this problem very well and it is this ability, which he achieves through his collages that makes them so interesting. His images are awake, alive and maybe in this respect more real and true to life. They remind one of us of a slowmotion film or many stills layed over each other. Sometimes we are given the impression, that a long conversation is taking place or that a person has just completed a whole movement like in 'The Skater'. He achieves this by overlapping many different movements or expressions of the one subject, giving us the feeling of virtually seeing time pass. This cannot be achieved in one picture unless it is worked on in the dark-room or special devices are being used, such as 'multiple flash' or a very slow shutterspeed. 'The Skater' (see illustr. p. 29) is a good example of how Hockney has succesfully overcome the problem of the frozen image. Even though each single photograph shows a frozen moment, when they are overlapped a whole story emerges. The skater is doing a full pirouette, which we can follow with our eyes. We virtually see the movement taking place, even though it is a still image. In the collage 'Paul explaining Pictures to Mie Kakigahara - Tokyo' (see illustr. p. 29), the man is doing a lot of explaining while the woman is listening. From the amount of times Hockney uses their heads we can feel, that it is a long conversation. Our eyes get dragged in at the bottom. we become the extension of Hockney's knee,



'The Skater, New York' 1982

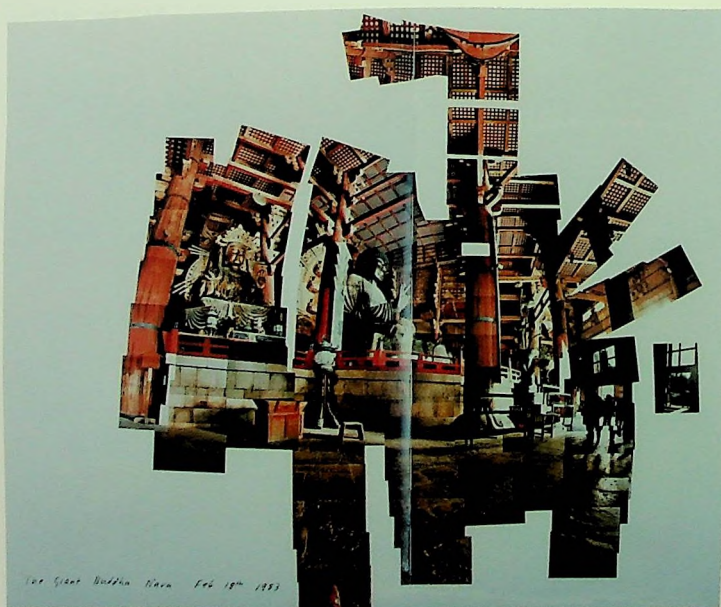


'Paul explaining pictures to Mie Kakigahara, Tokyo' 1983



which is in the picture, giving us the feeling that we are in the room as well. Our eye wanders maybe to the man first, he seems very excited, his head and his hands are all over the place, while the woman is a tower of silence, only listening and looking. Our eyes wandering back and forth between the two figures, kind of following their conversation.

As I have already mentioned, Hockney wanted viewers not only to look at his collages but to actively participate in them. He does this by bringing an element of himself into the foreground like a shoe or part of a leg, giving the viewer the feeling of it being a continuation of themselves.



'The Giant  
Buddha Nava'  
1983

In the example above we are invited into the picture through Hockney's shoe. We have the feeling of being in a huge temple, the height of which is indicated through the



distance between the shoe and the very top photograph of a bit of the ceiling. Everything is in focus, as it would be if we were present, since the eye never sees anything out of focus. It is as if we are there, measuring up the size of the place, having a good look around but our main attention being drawn to the Buddha to the right.

### To the Different Collages

It is a pity Hockney has not been more selective in showing his works. So many of his collages attempt to achieve the exact same idea; so many of them give the impression of being done solely as an exercise, a quick experiment, a fidgeting with the camera, that the impact of his achievement becomes watered down. One has to sift the really good works from the repetitive ones. In the pollaroid collages, if the image is not interesting enough or disjointed enough, all we focus our eyes on is the white grid, which then becomes a cage for his images. I find that some of Hockney's best portraits were done using the pollaroid. Eventually it was the unavoidable white grid which made Hockney move from using the polaroid camera to using a 35mm camera.



'Detail of Celia' 1982



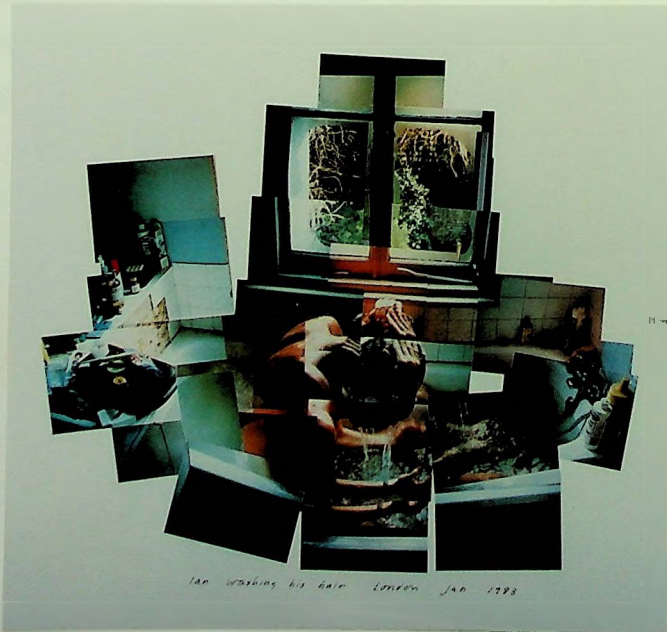
'The Printers of Gemini' 1982

In this example the many people seem like captured in a cage.

To show more clearly how Hockney has achieved his works I will divide them into three categories depicting movement.

1. Movement of the Subject

'The Skater' (see illustr. p. 29) is a very good example of how the subject is moving and not the camera. In the example below we are shown the action of a boy washing his hair. He dips into the water many times while all around him it is still. This contrast adds to the feeling of 'lived time'. It is an action we can follow with our eyes. These type of collages deal with the idea of making movement more visible, we see time passing and not just a frozen moment captured forever.



' Ian washing his hair, London' 1983



## 2. Movement of the Camera

In the next two examples there is no actual movement visible, the camera has become our eyes and is looking for us. To make this feeling more real, Hockney brings an element of himself into the picture, which we translate into being a part of ourselves, while viewing these works. In the picture of Zion Canyon there is a small story attached. We are standing in front of this sign that tells us how challenging it is to photograph these mountains. The many rolls of film indicate, that we have already taken our pictures and the end result is the collage in front of us. Yet at the same time the mountains could also be seen as the real mountains, which we should now photograph with the film that is there. We are at the same time viewer and participater. 'Shoes, Kyoto' is done with the same idea of us being present, and the camera being our eyes. To achieve this Hockney had to use the camera like a pair of eyes, that check out the boundaries of a room when we arrive somewhere. (see illustr. p. 35)



'you make the picture - Zion Canyon, Utah' 1982



' Shoes. Kyoto' 1983

### 3. Movement of Camera and Subject

This kind of movement is usually achieved when Hockney is trying to capture a situation involving more than one person. He is the eyes that are watching everyone while everyone is involved with their own thing. In the illustration on page 36 a group of people are playing Scrabble. Through the multiple projections of each persons expressions we can nearly follow their game and how it was going for each at a certain time. We can even join in the game if we like to.





'The Scrabble Game' 1986

Hockney is a man who will try anything and while he tries out one technique, he will openly discard another. When he first got into making Joiners, he claimed that maybe he would never paint again, that his photoworks would be his only real important works of art. Nevertheless, during this time he continually referred back to painting, wondering when he would get back to it. He made many drawings during this period, mainly self-portraits. Yet in 1986 the photocollage called 'Pearblossom Hwy, 11-18th April' signified the end of the joiner era for Hockney. This work for him contained all his ideas united within it and he felt he had exhausted all possibilities. I can see, that Hockney had arrived at a stage where he either had to make a drastic change in his photographic direction or leave it for a new medium. This collage does signify an end to his photographic period. He had repeated himself too many times and was caught within his own theories, which would'nt allow



him to move in a new direction photographically. It is his last and largest collage, which took him a full nine days just to photograph. It has a definite painterly quality and is unusually cropped along the edges to form a rectangle, which measures more than nine feet across. At first glance it seems to use conventional one point perspective but this is not so, our eyes tend to wander in every direction at the same time. It is as if we are standing on the road but here he has achieved this without adding an element of himself. For Hockney this work encompasses everything an ordinary photograph cannot do. But compared to his earlier joiners it is too close to reality to be hugely interesting. It is full of theory but with no content at all and is therefore boring. It has come together in a rectangle which makes it much more single-image like and the comparison with painting is much too obvious.



'Pearblossom Hwy., 11-18th April' 1986

Yet as Hockney says, he felt that he had summed up all his own discoveries of playing with the camera and he felt that like painting had led him to the camera, the camera was now taking him further into painting.

At the end of a South Bank Show interview, Melvyn Bragg said: "I'm not sure that without Hockney's vivid explanations the work would have quite the power that he claims for it. There is no denying it's interest though and even if you doubt that he is right in suggesting that his photography will outlast his painting, it could be that these joiner photographs will be more influential."<sup>4</sup> At the end of this interview, Hockney was given the use of nine filmcameras to try and experiment with them in the same way he had done with the photocameras. He set the cameras up in his studio and filmed a man walking downstairs, towards the camera and sitting down on a chair in front of the camera. Using all the cameras, he filmed the man coming down the stairs nine different times from nine different angles. The final product was a film of nine overlapping sections of the room all running at the same time, each showing only a section of the man, similar to his collages, except that this is a moving picture. Everything in the film is still except the man walking and it is a strange sensation to see these disjointed parts of a person moving through this strange unreal room full of unreal angles. It reminded me strongly of the film 'Caligaris Cabinet' and was

exciting to see, since I had never seen anything like it before. So, even though I criticise Hockney for his lack of content and for not developing his joiners into more exciting works of art, he does find the techniques, shows them to the public and in that way leaves plenty of room for artists to further these techniques.



Ever since Hockney went to a large Picasso exhibition in the Tate Gallery in 1960, he was impressed by Picasso. This at first did not seem to influence his own style. He went to America and became quite successful with a definite Hockney style of portraying the blandness of Los Angeles life. He did not instantly try to paint like Picasso as one might have expected but Picasso's influence seemed rather to gradually creep into his work. His first fascination seemed to be more in Picasso's lifestyle, being a Spaniard but living away from home, loving sunny climates and travelling quite frequently. What also impressed Hockney was how Picasso would move seemingly unhindered between different styles and mediums all through his career. This in a way is similar to how Hockney himself developed. From the start he was keen to leave his home country and throughout his career he travelled almost constantly. Like Picasso he tried out different styles and mediums though never to a great depth and to the successful extent that Picasso did. Hockney's first pictorial references to Picasso occurred nearly ten years later in 1970, when he does a painting with a detail of a Picasso in the background. (see illustr. p. 41)

It is only after Picasso's death in 1973, that Hockney begins to openly show his admiration for him in his work. He does a series of etchings referring to Picasso. One of



'Three Chairs with a Section of a Picasso Mural' 1970

these is called 'The Student: Homage to Picasso', which clearly declares his strong admiration and love for the deceased master. Hockney did this etching while he was staying in Paris. It is interesting to note, that he went to the same printers that Picasso always used and was shown a new technique which was designed specially for Picasso. It could be coincident that Hockney used the same printers Picasso had always used, but to me this was a first indication that for Hockney it was more than just mere admiration for another artist.

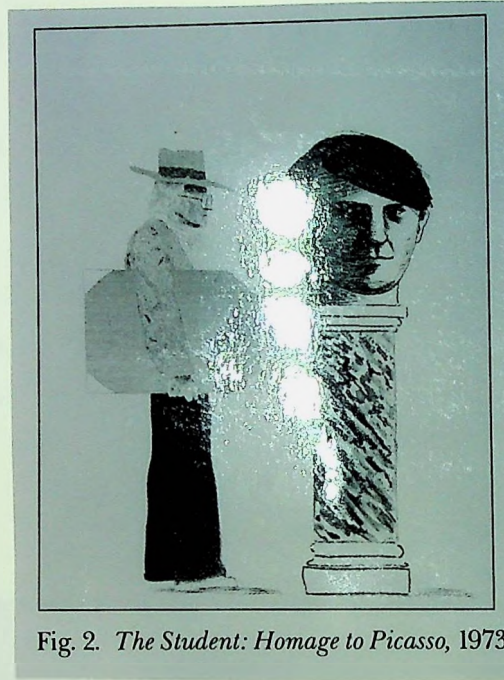


Fig. 2. *The Student: Homage to Picasso, 1973*

In the book 'A Retrospective' the etching 'The Student: Homage to Picasso' is quite extensively explained and in the end looked upon as a pictorial realization that Hockney had not even begun to absorb the revolutionary lessons of Picasso's theories, such as cubism, since he had been ensnared in the self-limiting modes of realistic depiction for many years. This is a strong point yet one that could only be made in hindsight, since up to that point there was really no relation between Hockney's work and cubism. But Hockney became increasingly more interested in Picasso. He called him his 'father of inspiration'



and studied Picasso's later works very intensely, giving talks about them here and there, since these works seemed least appreciated. It is largely due to Hockney that these works have today gained more importance among art/critics. In 1976 Hockney read a poem called 'The Blue Guitar', which makes a direct reference to Picasso. This inspired him to do a series of etchings in which he used different elements of Picasso etchings or drawings.



'A Picture of Ourselves' 1976-77 (from the Blue Guitar series)

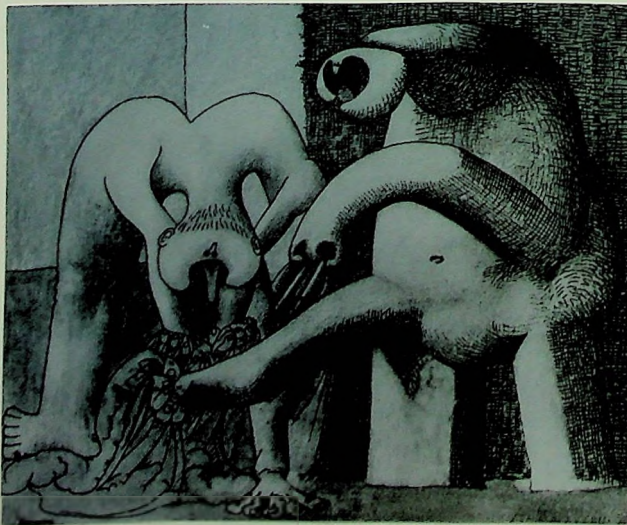
These are the three etchings by Picasso, that Hockney had taken elements from. From one he takes the idea of the woman as a monster, from another he has taken the model and presented her the other way around and from the third etching he has taken the idea of the abstract sculpture.



'Model and Surrealist Sculpture' 1933  
Pablo Picasso



'Sculptor at Rest and Model with Mask' 1933  
Pablo Picasso



'Two Nudes on the Beach' 1937  
Pablo Picasso

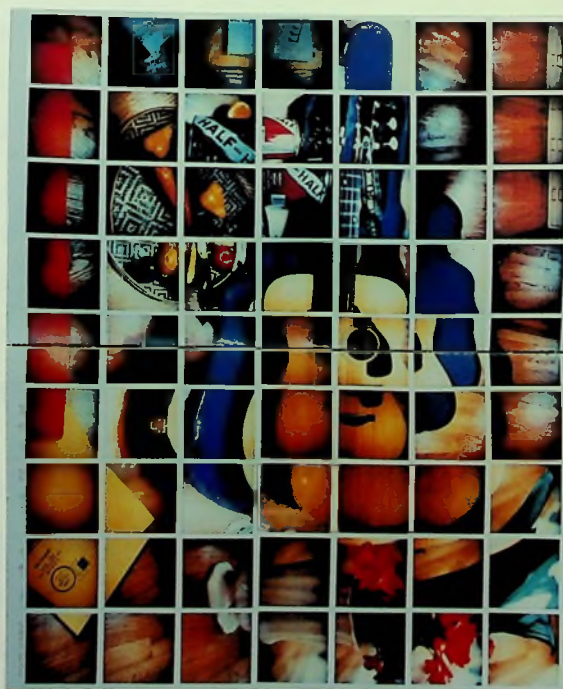


In the example on the previous page we can see, that Hockney combined elements from three separate works by Picasso, to make up his composition; combining the meaning of each separate work together in his one composition. The transition from admiring Picasso from a distance and becoming personally involved in cubism began when Hockney was intensely studying the later Picasso's. He himself came to the conclusion that Picasso had never stopped dealing with cubism and that his later works represent a more refined form of cubism. It seems that through these studies, Hockney himself has come to the conclusion that cubism is more 'real' than his earlier representations and he 'adopts' his own variety of cubism. In a way he is trying to identify or catch up with Picasso through his own work. Hockney took to the camera and began experimenting with cubism. Many works carry a very close resemblance to paintings by Picasso, as if Hockney had deliberately set out to copy them; the only difference being the different mediums they used. Hockney does this quite often throughout his career. He picks up ideas, styles and theories from Picasso and 'redoes' them in his own way. At first he uses the camera as a means to explore cubism - the rectangle of a photograph relating nicely to the lines and sections of cubist paintings. Many of these camera-works relate directly to paintings done by Picasso, others show people studying a portrait of Picasso or are seen leafing through a Picasso catalog. These little hints at Picasso crop up again and again in Hockney's work. Does





'Detail of Nick Wilder  
studying Picasso'



'Still life - Blue Guitar'  
1980

he use these referances to punctuate the fact that he derived cubism from Picasso?, or does this show an overwhelming adoration for Picasso? Whichever way it is, Hockney has already moved from being inspired to directly using a style that Picasso invented. Did he feel that he could break similar barriers as Picasso had?

Hockney wanted to get involved with cubism yet instead of doing this through painting or etching he turns to a totally different and new medium for himself and through which cubism had never been explored before. So, similar to Picasso, who opened painters eyes to cubism, a new way of viewing reality, Hockney did precisely the same through photography. He is in a way stepping into Picasso's shoes. His photocollages had a great impact among photographers and was hailed as a new revolution in its medium, yet among artcritics it was just an older theory presented in a new medium. Interesting, yet not overwhelming or new. During the time he is exploring cubism with the camera he also does some paintings almost directly relating to paintings done by Picasso in later cubism. Instead of, as a student, exploring a much superior artist, he is now a mature artist copying Picasso. My belief is that even though Hockney had always admired Picasso, it was not until after Picasso's death in 1973, and after Hockney intensely studied Picasso's later works, that his admiration changed to adoration. Everything about Picasso appealed to Hockney. Picasso was a man who enjoyed life to the

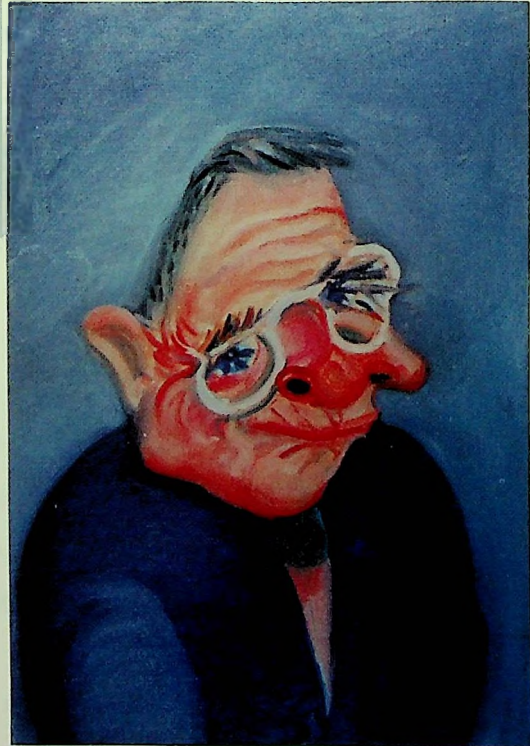
(CONT. P.48)



Here Hockney has taken a painting done by Picasso and has attempted to copy it directly, but for the slight difference of using a man instead of a woman.



'Portrait of Emilie-Marguerite  
Walter, "Memê"' 1939  
Pablo Picasso



'Christopher with His  
Glasses On' 1984  
David Hockney



fullest and art was his way of life. Even though Picasso had a very sensitive and deep side to him as well, Hockney concentrated more on Picasso's liveliness, seeing in it a reflection of himself. Picasso, who adored women and let them be his main form of inspiration, seemed to Hockney to be speaking directly from his own heart. Hockney had always gained his main inspiration from portraying men, which he portrayed over and over again. He felt justified knowing Picasso had relatively done the same. But like so many artists he just picked what suited him from Picasso's life and ignored the rest, like for instance Picasso's darker side. His paintings of women in despair, his blue period, sorrow, grief. Such topics never show up in Hockney's work. He obviously chose the later Picasso, whose paintings are observant yet friendly, as his 'father of inspiration'. Picasso's last works were still exploring cubism and Hockney agrees with him to the extent of having said that he believes there is only cubism left to explore in art. After his basic initiation into cubism through the camera, he is now, today, further exploring it. He has followed Picasso's footsteps through his later works to his very last works. He has now gone back to painting and is imitating Picasso by using paint in a similar way to the way it was used by Picasso during his last period. Picasso's later works are very simply done, using a minimum amount of brushstrokes to achieve a finished work within a short space of time. Many of Hockney's latest works are done in this style and are

even more strongly reminiscent of Picasso. They are very far removed from his early works in Los Angeles. He has found a way, through cubism, to a more interesting expressive form of painting. Even though he has visibly followed in Picasso's footsteps, it will be interesting to see where he takes himself from here, since the master 'Picasso' has left him with no new formulas to follow. It is now up to Hockney to make his own contribution in art and to justify his following of Picasso as being more than a mere obsession but also a way into another form of art.

## CONCLUSION

I believe I have made the point that Hockney's popularity in the beginning of his career was largely due to his being homosexual and he was one of the first artists to portray men from this point of view. He was thus noticed and soon made his contacts among the gay world of California, where he made representational paintings of Los Angeles life, for which he was best known. He is an artist who makes no social comments in his work even though he claims to do in depth studies of relationships. He moves from one medium to another, forever experimenting with new techniques but it is not until he rediscovered cubism, that he finally strays away from his usual representational work. Up to then it seemed to me, he was no more than a fancy portraitist who could pick his models himself and refused to do commissions. It felt as though Hockney were caught in a one way street and would forever repeat himself. Cubism took him in a new direction, making his work much more interesting and stronger.

Hockney is a man who will repeat himself constantly. His cameraworks are all very similar, just like his painted portraits are repeated over and over again. while he is intent on experimenting with all mediums, he is totally reluctant to change his subjectmatter to anything even



slightly more critical than a representation of something. His career since the cameraworks has more or less been led by the influence Picasso holds over him. This influence seems very good for Hockney, changing his work from being very limiting to being much more expressive. The danger could be, that Picasso has too strong a hold over Hockney. Hockney's best work could still be in the coming, now that he has found a better way to express himself. So far, I would not call it very original work. It all depends on his own strength and what he will do after he has overcome the strong hold of Picasso and is finally going his own way, creatively.

# FOOTNOTES

1. Webb, Peter, Portrait of David Hockney, p. 24
2. Webb, Peter, Portrait of David Hockney, p. 33
3. Webb, Peter, Portrait of David Hockney, p. 69
4. Bragg, Melvyn, David Hockney, LWT South Bank Show,  
17. April, 1984 (Video)

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