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## Fondation Louis Vuitton Makes a Big Splash with David Hockney's Largest Exhibition Ever

BY SARAH BELMONT

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David Hockney, *Bigger Trees near Warter or/ou Peinture sur le Motif pour le Nouvel Age Post-Photographique*, 2007, installation view, at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris.

PHOTO: MARC DOMAGE/©FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON; ART: ©DAVID HOCKNEY

“Do Remember They Can’t Cancel the Spring,” artist **David Hockney** (<https://www.artnews.com/t/david-hockney/>) told the world in March 2020, just

as lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic began. That **sentiment** (<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2020/03/18/a-message-fromdavid-hockney-do-remember-they-cant-cancel-the-spring>) was in full swing, in the early days of spring now five years later, throughout the artist's just-opened survey at the **Fondation Louis Vuitton** (<https://www.artnews.com/t/fondation-louis-vuitton/>) in Paris (on view through August 31). Spanning all four floors of the museum, the current exhibition is the largest ever devoted to the British artist, whose work was last surveyed in Paris at the Centre Pompidou eight years ago. The eleven-room presentation consists of over 400 objects, from paintings and drawings to digital works (made via both computer and iPad) and even immersive video installations. Titled "David Hockney 25," the show focuses on the last 25 years of his career, but also includes pieces from throughout his seven-decade career.

Upon entering, the exhibition you immediately notice its colorful display, full of brilliant greens, deep blues, and blazing yellows that suffuse the institution's usually immaculate white walls. The Fondation Louis Vuitton's artistic director Suzanne Pagé attributed this sensibility to Hockney himself. "He is the true curator of the exhibition. He called all the shots," she said, adding that the artist worked closely with his partner and studio manager Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima and assistant Jonathan Wilkinson.

The exhibition begins on the lower level, opening with his emblematic works from the 1950s to the '70s, including *Portrait of My Father* (1955), the first painting Hockney ever sold and which he recently bought back. "When he visited the exhibition, you could tell he was not looking at the painting per se, but rather at his beloved father," Pagé told *ARTnews* ahead of the show's opening.



Installation view of “David Hockney 25,” 2025, at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, showing, from left, *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy* (1970–71) and *Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy* (1968).

PHOTO: MARC DOMAGE/©FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON; ART: ©DAVID HOCKNEY

The adjacent gallery is home to 1967’s *A Bigger Splash*, Hockney’s iconic depiction of a Californian swimming pool just after an unseen figure has dived in, and his 1972 *Portrait of An Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, which **sold** (<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/market/david-hockneys-famed-pool-scene-sells-90-3-m-christies-new-record-work-living-artist-auction-11356/>) to top collector **Pierre Chen** (<https://www.artnews.com/art-collectors/top-200-profiles/pierre-chen/>) for \$90.3 million at Christie’s in 2018. On either side of a door leading to a series of Yorkshire landscapes, from the ’90s to the early 2000s, hang two of his most famous double portraits: *Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy* (1968) and *Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy* (1970–71). (Mrs. Clark, or Celia Birtwell, is a frequent model of Hockney’s, appearing in a handful of paintings throughout the exhibition.)

These double portraits hint at what’s upstairs, where the Fondation Louis Vuitton has assembled around 60 such works. Hockney is known for only painting people he knows: his assistants, his cook, his gardener, his siblings, and his friends, like Frank Gehry, the building’s architect. Hockney’s approach to portraiture speak to his painterly affection for his models, as seen in his depiction of Gonçalves de Lima with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees, a pose he borrowed from **van Gogh’s 1882 *Sad Old Man (At Eternity’s Gate)*** (<https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-sorrowing-old-man-at-eternity-s-gate>).



David Hockney, *JP Gonçalves de Lima, 11th, 12th, 13th July 2013*, from the series “82 Portraits and 1 Still Life,” 2013–16.  
PHOTO RICHARD SCHMIDT/©DAVID HOCKNEY

Hockney has always embraced the influence of his predecessors, and much like the van Gogh painting inspired a composition, Fra Angelico’s *Annunciation* (ca. 1440–45), with its emphasis on reverse perspective caused him to update previous works. *Garrowby Hill* (2017), for example, shows the twisty curves and angled plots of the Yorkshire landscape that he has depicted since the ’90s. And when he was stuck in Normandy during lockdown, he turned to the approach of painting *en plein air* favored by the Impressionists like Monet. Using his iPad, Hockney created luminous compositions in juxtaposed flat tints, but with pop accents, to capture the effects of light and climactic changes.



David Hockney, *Garrowby Hill*, 2017.  
PHOTO RICHARD SCHMIDT/©DAVID HOCKNEY

This part of exhibition closes with a handful of never-before-seen works, which Hockney himself refers to as being “more spiritual” than his previous ones. The enigmatic *After Blake: Less Is Known Than People Think* (2024), for example, echoes the illustrations that the Romantic poet William Blake made for Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, though Hockney’s version is a cheerier vision of the strata of heaven, hell, and Earth, replete with a Pointillist sky. Even more recent is *Play Within a Play Within a Play and Me with a Cigarette* (2024–25), featuring the painter in a patterned ochre suit, as he smokes and sketches out the very same scene that unfolds before the viewer’s eyes. On his checkered jacket a round sticker reads “End Bossiness Soon.” This tongue-in-cheek self-portrait recalls a 2004 interview he gave to *BBC Newsnight*: “I hate bossiness ... I smoke for my mental health.”



David Hockney, *Play Within a Play Within a Play and Me with a Cigarette*, 2025.  
PHOTO JONATHAN WILKINSON/©DAVID HOCKNEY

The current exhibition highlights how Hockney has become a master in the art of blending tradition and innovation through his vibrant palette and his appetite for new technologies, like sketching with his iPad. His largest work in the show, *Bigger Trees Near Warter Or/Ou Peinture sur le Motif pour le Nouvel Age Post-Photographique* (2007), consists of 50 panels that had been digitally subdivided by Gonçalves de Lima in order to create this 15-foot-by-40-foot mammoth. Nearby are his nocturnal views of Normandy, which were exhibited last year at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen. So fluid is Hockney's technique in both traditional and digital painting that it makes it almost impossible to tell the acrylics and the iPad works apart.

The Fondation's top gallery, often called "the cathedral" for its high ceilings, has been transformed into a site-specific installation, made in collaboration with 59 Productions, that plunges visitors into Hockney's work for the stage. On view are set designs, and some costumes, for Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (1975), Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1978) and Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1987). Here visitors can sit back on a giant cushion, relax, and enjoy the wall projections, as well as their corresponding soundtracks.



Installation view of *Hockney Paints the Stage*, 2025, by David Hockney & Lightroom, with 59 Productions, at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris.

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