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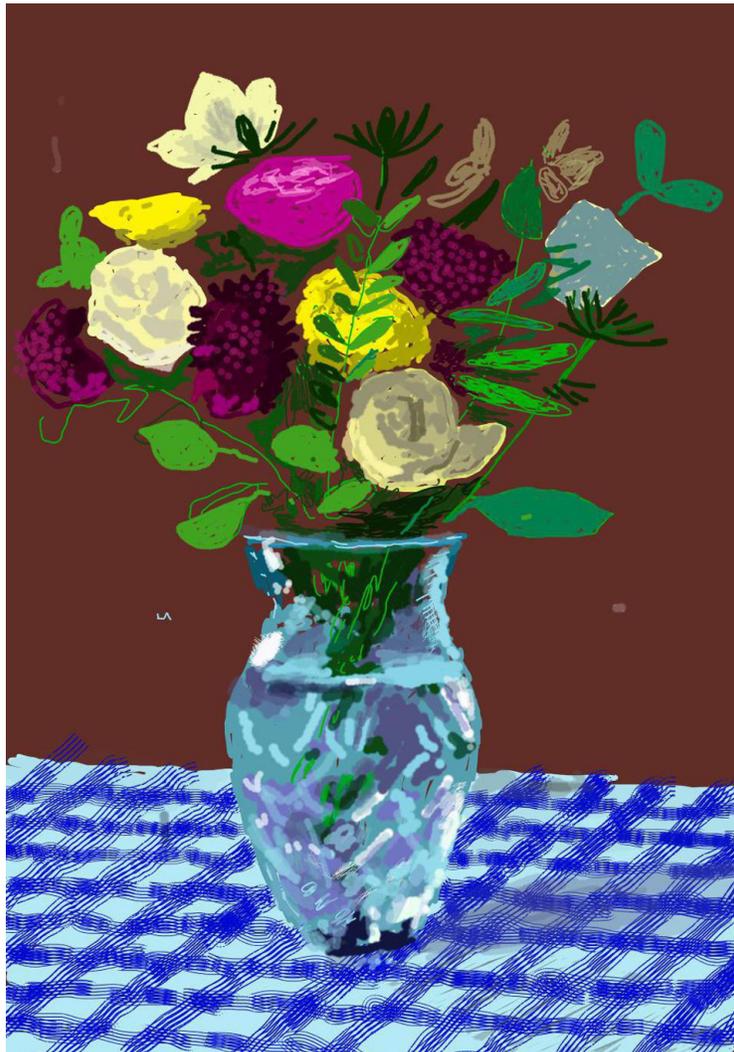
David Hockney's Beautiful World

Tom Teicholz | Contributor

I'm a culture maven and arts enthusiast.

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“I know it’s an unusual picture because there are not many made this way. I think it’s what we need today. New looking fresh pictures of a very beautiful world.” – David Hockney.



David Hockney "20th March 2021, Flowers, Glass Vase on a Table" iPad painting printed on paper.
© DAVID HOCKNEY. COURTESY OF LA LOUVER

Late November-Early December has gotten cold, damp, and grey in most places, even in our paradise of Santa Monica, and Venice, California. Fear not! Along comes David Hockney to cheer us up with his new exhibition *20 Flowers and Some Bigger Pictures*.

This collection of 20 iPad drawings of assorted flowers displayed in a vase, as well as several larger drawings, and a photographic drawing where we see Hockney seated both on the right and the left gazing at the work, will be exhibited globally concurrently in five cities this fall and winter: Annelly Juda Fine Art, London November 3 – December 23, 2022; Galerie Lelong & Co., Paris November 3 – December 22, 2022; GRAY, Chicago November 4 – December 23, 2022; L.A. Louver, Los Angeles November 16, 2022 – January 7, 2023; Pace, New York January 12 – February 25, 2023.

Throughout history, Art that pleases has been given short shrift, as if it were a lesser accomplishment to paint the beautiful than the dark, as if the pretty should not be taken seriously. I'm as guilty of this as anyone: Watteau and Fragonard have never done much for me, and as beautiful as Botticelli's Venus may be, I'd take a Picasso portrait in all its emotional complexity over it any day to hang on my wall. Beyond that I struggle with the line between what is art and what is merely decorative.

Still, there is plenty of great art that pleases or delivers a sense of satisfaction, from the Impressionists to Matisse to abstractions by Agnes Martin, Joan Mitchell and Tobi Kahn that deliver a sense of unity derived from nature.

Hockney has spent the last several years living in Normandy in France, and the setting agrees with him. As I heard from one of his gallerists, he appreciates that, among the French, he can still smoke; as well as the extent to which he is insulated from his celebrity and its attendant social obligations.

As Hockney has aged and become less mobile (he's 85!), painting what's right in front of him and doing so on an iPad has become a wonderful medium for his still evolving art. What is remarkable about this exhibition, as has often been the case recently with Hockney, it feels as if he is as delighted by the work as we are. Still engaged with making art, still involved in what Hockney calls "this research."

This current exhibition (Hockney's 24th at LA Louver), all made since the pandemic (primarily in 2021) involves 20 paintings of cut flowers in vases on a table. The flowers were chosen at a local florist in Normandy and arranged on

a table in his home. Hockney draws them on his iPad with various techniques – some more smudge-like and suggestive; and others evidencing greater precision. One is not better than the other; they are all captivating. It makes one think of late-life Monet painting water lilies and the natural beauty of Giverny.

There are several larger works made up of several iPad prints together to form a larger work: *Water Lilies on the Pond with Pots of Flowers* uses six iPad drawings to make a single work printed on two sheets of paper (in an edition of 25) – in some ways this work recalls Cézanne with the flowers in hyper-focus in the foreground, and the perspective of the pond distorted. There is also *View from the Studio* made from three iPad drawings comprising a single work (in an edition of 25) which is a more gauzy look at the landscape. *La Dorette Winding its Way*, eight iPad paintings comprising a single work, printed on paper (also edition of 25) is a painting of a river through the woods. The trees are extraordinarily rendered, not unlike one of Klimt's forests. There's also a twelve iPad drawing, *Landscape with Shadows*, whose bold color blocks seems to recall Hockney's earlier work. And my favorite, *Rain on the Pond*, also eight iPad drawings (also an edition of 25). This work, which can be seen upstairs on the second floor of LA Louver, is very affecting. The feeling of being in the rain permeates the entire room and you can almost feel the dampness in your bones. It is quite astonishing.



Installation view of David Hockney Photographic Drawing, "25th June 2022, Looking at the Flowers. PHOTO BY JEFF MCLANE. © DAVID HOCKNEY ASSISTED BY JONATHAN WILKINSON. COURTESY LA LOUVER

And then there are what Hockney calls Photographic Drawings, one printed in a very large life-sized format on five sheets of paper in an edition of 15, and another set in a more wall friendly size of 42.75 inches by 74.25 inches in an edition of 35. They are remarkable, particularly in their precision and detail: You can see the exact details of the cane chair Hockney is sitting in and make out every fold in his clothing. Speaking of which, Hockney appears twice in the image – once on the left, with a cigarette dangling from his fingers, and once on the right. Hockney has flattened the perspective yet still created depth in the work.

Here is Hockney's description in the wonderful exhibition catalogue: "The objects on the floor are all photographed in 3D, one walks round the object and then the computer makes an image that can be turned any way you want, this is why I called them photographic drawings. You can place them anywhere in the picture, so I think it's a new kind of photography that avoids perspective..."

Think about it: Arriving at "a new kind of photography" at age 85, at this point in his career. I don't know what else to say but: Hooray for Hockney!

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomteicholz/2022/11/30/david-hockneys-beautiful-world/?sh=7427697ef7d3>