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Looking at the Flowers from Hockney's new show *20 Flowers and Some Bigger Pictures*, which opens in November in galleries in London, Paris and the US. Photograph: © David Hockney

‘An incredible work’: David Hockney’s new 5-metre digital artwork unveiled

The Observer
David Hockney

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The 85-year-old British artist plays with traditional still life in his latest exhibition – and stars in its enigmatic centrepiece

“pictures of a very beautiful world” is how the artist [David Hockney](#) describes his latest works, a series of digital drawings of flowers that culminated in an extraordinary, 5-metre-long picture of the artist in front of these still-life images, revealed for the first time in the *Observer* today.

Hockney is teasing the eye and playing with perspective and the passing of time in his newest creation. In a vast photographic drawing, entitled *25th June 2022, Looking at the Flowers (Framed)*, he has created an enigmatic, striking picture in which the onlooker sees the artist as onlooker, observing his own works.

Hockney has depicted himself twice, on the right and the left of the composition – seemingly caught in a private moment as he looks at 20 of his own exuberant floral still lifes that hang on a wall in front of him.

In both self-portraits he wears the same blue-checked suit and white flat cap, but he is sitting in different chairs and smoking a cigarette on the left, while an ashtray is among objects on a simple table placed next to his other self. A solitary rose in a blue vase echoes the beautiful blooms captured in pictures on the wall, suggesting their fleeting existence.

From his home in Normandy, where he created the image, he told the *Observer*: “This is not an ordinary photograph.”

By manipulating numerous photographs on a computer, he played with time, illustrating that a photograph is not “the ultimate depiction of reality”: “You have to look at these through time, unlike an ordinary photograph, which you see all at once.”

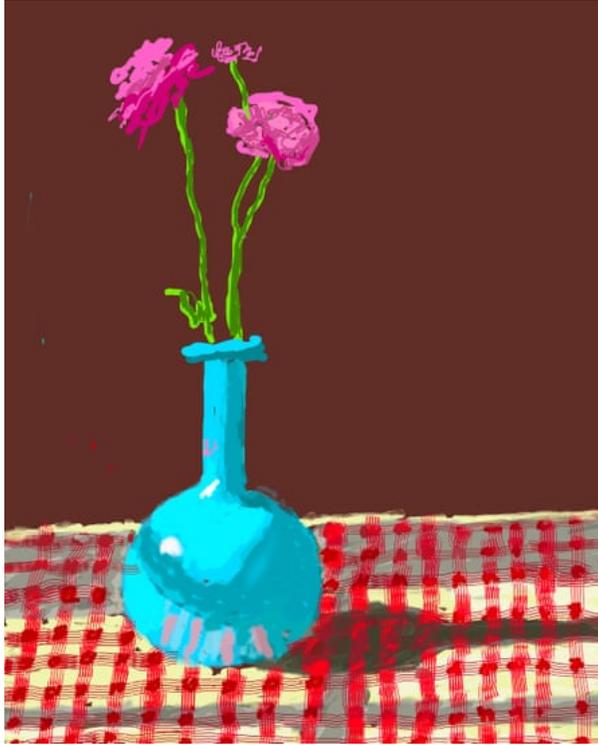
25th June 2022, Looking at the Flowers (Framed) will hang alongside the actual flower pictures depicted within it in a forthcoming major exhibition, *20 Flowers and Some Bigger Pictures*.

It will be staged next month by Hockney’s London gallery, [Annely Juda Fine Art](#), one of five galleries in five cities worldwide, in an unprecedented collaboration.

The state of the world may be looking grim, but these are flower pictures to lift spirits, each painted with his trademark palette of vibrant colours. He calls them “new-looking fresh pictures of a very beautiful world”.

David Juda, director of [Annely Juda Fine Art](#), has been exhibiting Hockney for 30 years. Commenting on the previously unseen picture, he told the *Observer*: “It’s an incredible work. It’s about perspective and how we see things. This will take up the whole of a wall because it’s over 3 metres high and 5 metres long. It’s really powerful.”

Juda added: “It isn’t a photograph. It’s a photographic drawing. It’s not someone who’s just taken a snapshot. It’s made up of a lot of photographs to make a photograph. That’s what creates the different perspective. He’s very interested in the perspective of the eye.



📷 28th February 2021, Roses in a Blue Vase. Photograph: © David Hockney



📷 20th March 2021, Flowers, Glass Vase on a Table. Photograph: © David Hockney

“What he’s trying to say is, it’s your eye that sees things, not the camera. The camera can’t move. If you look through your camera, it takes a picture, but that isn’t actually the real picture of what your eye sees because your eye sees a whole load of other things.”

Hockney, 85, is the Bradford boy who set off for Los Angeles and found inspiration in the American dream, swimming pools and sunlight, becoming one of the world’s foremost contemporary artists. His masterpieces include *A Bigger Splash*, in which he captured the shimmering sparkle of a turquoise pool under the intense light of the California sky. In 2018, Hockney became the most highly valued living artist, after one of his swimming pool paintings – *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* – sold for \$90.3m (£81m) in a New York auction.

A painter, draughtsman, printmaker, stage designer and photographer, he has shown endless passion for experimentation, using fax machines, laser photocopiers, tablet devices and other digital instruments as artistic tools.

In the exhibition catalogue, he recalls using an iPad to start the flower pictures in February 2021 at his studio and home in France: “I was just sitting at the table in our house and I caught sight of some flowers in a vase on the table. Being February, the sun was low, casting a deep shadow on the table. I decided to draw it, the background was dark, so I made a rich brown for it. After printing it, I put it on the far wall facing the table. There it stayed for a few days. It looked very beautiful to me...

“A few days later, I started another from the same position with the same ceramic vase... I then realised if I put the flowers in a glass vase the sun would catch the water, and painting glass would be a more interesting thing to do. So then I was off... It was very cold outside and I could work indoors more comfortably.”

The exhibition is at Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 3 November to 23 December. Also at Galerie Lelong & Co, Paris; Richard Gray, Chicago; LA Louver, Los Angeles; and Pace, New York.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/oct/08/david-hockney-new-5-metre-digital-artwork-self-portrait>