

Pick of the Week

by Jody Zellen

December 29, 2022

David Hockney
20 Flowers and Some Bigger Pictures
LA Louver
November 16, 2022 - January 7, 2023



David Hockney

The combination of his versatility and his ability to embrace new technologies and methods of working sets David Hockney apart from many other artists of his generation. He has had a long and very successful career making paintings, prints, drawings, photographs as well as operas and stage sets. Most recently, he has been creating works with an iPad. Since 2008 when he first got this device, he has experimented with the application Brushes and a custom stylus provided by Apple, developing ways to create drawn lines on the screen that have depth and texture. There is a casualness and spontaneity to Hockney's iPad drawings. They are humble and expressive. When speaking about his early iPhone works he stated, *"I draw flowers every day on my iPhone and send them to my friends, so they get fresh flowers every morning... And my flowers last."*

In February 2021, Hockney began painting the flower images that make up his current exhibition, *20 Flowers and Some Bigger Pictures*. Flowers in vases could be construed as old fashioned and easy but it is remarkable the way Hockney uses his iPad to transform the arrangements, capturing the light and the individual shapes and colors of the stems and petals, as well as the way light reflects through the glass vases. Images of landscapes and flowers have long been the subject of Hockney's work. During the pandemic when travel was limited, a vase on the table caught his attention. He states in the wall text accompanying the exhibition. *"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, this took longer to do. 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."

Twenty flower prints (each 35 x 25 inches) are evenly spaced along deep blue walls, bracketed by small and large versions of *25th June 2022, Looking at the Flowers (Framed)*. In this multi-panel photographic print created via three-dimensional scanning, Hockney is depicted twice, both times from the back, sitting in different chairs, but wearing the same cap and bespoke plaid suit. A stool with an aqua colored vase and a single pink rose (like those in some of the images), as well as a low table with two packs of Camel cigarettes and a bottle of water separates the two depictions of the artist. He regards a deep blue wall covered with the twenty flower images in the show, each in a different decorative carved frame. Hockney delights in the contrast of the old-hand carved frames and his hand-drawn pictures, created in a new way — on the iPad.

In addition to the twenty flowers-- variations on a theme -- are "some bigger pictures" also made with the iPad. Here, Hockney ventures outside again and records his impressions of the area around his studio focusing on trees surrounding a pond, as well as a flowing stream, in addition to a more abstract work, *August 2021, Landscape with Shadows*, a twelve panel work that depicts a more Cubist view of the landscape as each panel (individual iPad painting) contains wide areas of bright colors and textures, that when presented together don't exactly line up. This creates the illusion of movement, as well as depth. Not only is Hockney an astute observer, but he has the unique ability to transform 'reality' into the flattened picture plane, in such a way as they still retain their crispness and the subtleties of experiencing nature.

That Hockney is prolific goes without saying and while he might create similar images, each work has its *raison d'être* and becomes an integral part of the series. He has not only embraced digital technologies, but has excelled in making the tools disappear -- for him, painting on the iPad is like using a pencil on paper or a brush on canvas. His iPad images continue to get brighter and bolder. This, coupled with changes in ink jet printing technologies and three-dimensional scanning (photographing subjects from all sides and digitally compositing them), has enabled Hockney to create bigger and more complex works that continue to wow viewers.