

Hockney's Eye: The Art and Technology of Depiction

The Fitzwilliam Museum | The Heong Gallery, Downing College

15 March – 29 August 2022

David Hockney - one of the most popular and influential British artists of our time - will take over The Fitzwilliam Museum and The Heong Gallery, Downing College in the first exhibition to explore the many ways of seeing and depicting art through his eyes.

Numerous works will be seen in the UK for the first time including a new self-portrait painted in 2021 and shown in public at The Fitzwilliam Museum.

The exhibition investigates Hockney's lifelong exploration of how the surface of a picture can convey what we actually see, radically questioning traditional ways of depicting space and optical perspective. His criticism of both photography and linear 'Renaissance' perspective with its lines receding to a single point is that they are untrue to our real experience of the visual environment.

'The world is big', Hockney points out, and we are in it.

Furthermore, he adds, 'the eye is connected to the mind', hence 'we see with memory'. He has employed many diverse ways of representing human experience of time and space, both formally and in terms of medium: among them photo-collages, digital drawings, multi-screen films, and paintings.

Hockney's exploration has been conducted against the background of his intense dialogue with artists of the past. Hockney follows a tradition of creative experiments with optical devices that can be traced from Ingres' proposed use of the camera lucida to Canaletto's camera obscura and to the birth of Renaissance naturalism in the 15th century.

David Hockney said, 'When a human being is looking at a scene the questions are: What do I see first? What do I see second? What do I see third? A photograph sees it all at once – in one click of the lens from a single point of view – but we don't. And it's the fact that it takes us time to see it that makes the space.'

In The Fitzwilliam Museum's picture galleries, Hockney's drawings, paintings and digital artworks, will be shown in a series of provocative encounters with historic works by artists including, William Hogarth, Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, John Constable and Andy Warhol to enable Hockney and artists of the past to speak directly to each other for the first time.

The display at The Heong Gallery will chart Hockney's pioneering approaches to capturing space and visual reality from the 1960s to the present day. Starting with a drawing Hockney made while at The Royal College of Art in 1959, the display will move on to iconic paintings made in America in the 1960s and early 70s, photo collages from the 1980s, and an early digital drawing. It will culminate in a wall-length digital work featuring Hockney's recent experiments with digital photography.



Self Portrait, 22nd November 2021. David Hockney. Acrylic on canvas, 91.4 x 76.2 cm © David Hockney

Press | The Fitzwilliam Museum

It was his visit to a drawings exhibition by the renowned draughtsman Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres at the National Gallery in 1999 that triggered Hockney's interest in the use of optical tools by artists before the advent of photography in 1839.

Hockney began to experiment with a camera lucida, having what the artist himself calls a hunch that Ingres himself had used this, or a very similar optical aid, to achieve his extraordinary ends.

For Hockney, using an optical device does not diminish Ingres's stature as an artist. 'A master of the pencil', Ingres did not need the camera, optical instruments do not make art 'they do not draw for you'.

This was a controversial thought and an idea that disturbed art historians but one that Hockney found entirely natural. Hockney went on to use this thinking to investigate in depth techniques of artists of the past, to test out his theory on artists' historical use of these instruments. These ideas were published in his now famous book, *Secret Knowledge* in 2001.

A selection of drawings that he made using the camera lucida in 1999/2000 including Ian McKellen and Damien Hirst will be on show and in the Dutch Gallery. Hockney's *After Hobbema* (Useful Knowledge) 2017, will hang alongside Meindert Hobbema's most famous work, *The Avenue at Middelharnis*, 1689 on loan from the National Gallery.

Great masterpieces of the Fitzwilliam by Domenico Veneziano who was himself a master of renaissance perspective have undergone technical analysis and 3D modelling as a way of demonstrating how Hockney both respects and diverges from tradition and Renaissance ideas of perspectival space. Hockney's re-working of Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* will be shown beside a virtual reality exploration of two works by Veneziano who was Angelico's contemporary.

The co-curators Martin Kemp, Martin Gayford and Jane Munro, have used The Fitzwilliam's permanent collection to exemplify Hockney's ideas using some of the museum's most famous pictures, Camille Pissarro, *Piette's House at Monfoucault*, *snow effect*, 1874, Claude Monet, *Springtime*, 1886, Jan Brueghel the elder, *A stoneware vase of flowers*, 1607-8, Nicolas Poussin, *Extreme Unction*, 1638-40.

The exhibition spanning two venues is an open invitation to embark with Hockney on his endless journey of looking and experimenting with technologies and strategies of depicting space.

Jane Munro co-curator said 'Drawing significantly on the Fitzwilliam's remarkable collections, this is the first exhibition to give serious scholarly scrutiny to Hockney's ideas as well as his art. Through an extraordinary range of exhibits from paintings, drawings, iPad paintings and video to optical devices and innovative 3D modelling, the show explores Hockney's views about how the art of the past was created, what he learned from it and how he transformed it.'

Martin Gayford co-curator said, 'Hockney's Eye is a new look at the artist's own work, seeing it as lifelong quest to find new ways to represent the world around us, pictures that are closer to human experience; simultaneously the exhibition considers art history from Hockney's point of view, placing his pictures next to Impressionist landscapes and Georgian portraits.'

Luke Syson Director of The Fitzwilliam Museum said, 'David Hockney's much loved for his wonderful colour and for his brilliant draftsmanship. It can all seem effortless, but far from it. We've set out to show how incredibly hard Hockney thinks about the ways we look at the world around us, how he's analysed the painters in the past who used optical technologies to make their images more visually convincing, and what that means for his own, highly considered, wonderfully experimental picture-making. This is a show that grew from our Cambridge culture, an exhibition that we think will feel at home in a place where the arts and sciences meet on equal terms.'

Dr Prerona Prasad, Curator, The Heong Gallery said, 'For our community of students, we hope to demonstrate that disciplinary boundaries between the humanities and the sciences are porous; that the world and its challenges look very different depending on where you stand in relation to them. We hope they learn to look at the world through Hockney's eye and discover the joy in truly seeing.'

The Fitzwilliam Museum press images, terms and conditions of use: <https://fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/about-us/terms/hockney>

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#HockneysEye | 15 March – 29 August 2022 | Admission Free

For further enquires please contact the Fitzwilliam Museum Communications:
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Notes to Editors



[The Heong Gallery](#)

Situated in the heart of historic Cambridge, The Heong Gallery is a public exhibition space for modern and contemporary art within the grounds of Downing College in the University of Cambridge. Designed by RIBA Stirling Award Winners, Caruso St. John, the Gallery opened to the public in February 2016. Since then, it has hosted 15 exclusive exhibitions by world renowned artists, including Ai Weiwei, Barbara Hepworth, Quentin Blake, Yoko Ono, and others, and collaborated with cultural partners such as The Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge Film Festival, and Open Cambridge.

Visitors are free to drop in during Gallery opening hours Tuesday–Sunday 12.00–17.00

[The Fitzwilliam Museum](#)

Founded in 1816, the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funded programme. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation.

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB | Free admission
Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00
CLOSED: 24 - 26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday.