David Hockney: People, Places & Things
INTRODUCTION

This resource is for teachers interested in exploring the exhibition David Hockney: People, Places & Things at the Walker with their students. It includes information and discussion questions about the artist and his work to share prior to a field trip as well as a post-visit activity and list of additional resources for further research.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

David Hockney was born in 1937 in Bradford, England, and has spent most of his life living and working in both England and California. He first became famous during the 1960s Pop art movement for his brightly colored portraits and paintings of sun-dappled swimming pools. He has maintained a constant presence in the contemporary art world ever since. Hockney often revisits and reinterprets his favorite themes through experimentation with a range of mediums, including painting, printmaking, theater set design, video, and most recently, iPad drawings. Hockney is widely considered to be one of the most influential British artists of the 20th century and one of the most successful LGBTQ+ artists of all time.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

David Hockney: People, Places & Things covers the full span of the artist’s nearly sixty-year career, and features prints, drawings, paintings, and digital media from the Walker’s substantial collection of Hockney’s work. The exhibition is divided into four sections, beginning with a selection of works on paper featuring Hockney’s intimate portraits of friends, romantic partners, and family members. Another grouping focuses on his passion for still lifes and simple domestic scenes. One recurring subject for the artist is the California swimming pool, which he explores through a range of pieces.

Designing sets for stage and opera productions has been an important part of Hockney’s artistic practice through the decades, and this exhibition includes the artist’s tour-de-force set design for the opera Les Mamelles de Tirésias (Note: While Hockney’s set design itself is suitable for all audiences, the plot of the opera contains mature themes that may not be appropriate to share with younger students. You can see an image of the set here).

Hockney’s career-long interest in landscapes, from the Hollywood Hills to Mexico to England, is the subject of another group of works. The section features large-scale prints from the artist’s travels as well as more recent explorations of landscape made using an iPad. Together, the pieces presented here show an artist consistently engaged with experimentation and self-reflection.

TOUR OPTIONS

Virtual tours of the exhibition will be available for all K–12 groups. A limited number of on-site guided tours will be offered over the course of the exhibition. Please email tours@walkerart.org for more information or to schedule a tour.

Since their first meeting in 1964, Hockney has created numerous portraits of British textile and fashion designer Celia Birtwell in a variety of mediums. She quickly became one of his favorite subjects, and they remain close friends to this day.

The 1973 Celia is like many of Hockney’s other prints from this time: elegant portraits that celebrate their friendship through soft grey hues and fine lines. By the 1980s, Hockney became less interested in depicting Celia as she really looked and felt free to experiment with her appearance since he was so familiar with her face.

Influenced and inspired by Pablo Picasso, 1984’s An Image of Celia playfully depicts her in a brightly colored Cubist motif, made up of 42 separate collaged lithographs in a hand-painted frame. Side by side, these two very different portraits are a representation of the friendship between Birtwell and Hockney evolving over time.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

• David Hockney kept returning to his friend Celia as the subject of his portraits. Why might an artist want to revisit the same subject matter over years or even decades? Is there anyone in your life you would want to draw for more than 50 years?

• Both Celia and An Image of Celia are lithographs, but their styles are quite different. What differences do you see when looking at these two works? Are there any similarities?

• How do you feel when looking at these portraits? What kind of tone do you think the artist is trying to convey in each image?

“Celia has a beautiful face, a very rare face with lots of things in it which appeal to me. It shows aspects of her, like her intuitive knowledge and her kindness, which I think is the greatest virtue. To me she’s such a special person.” —David Hockney

Celia 1973
lithograph on paper
Edition of 52
42 1/2 x 28 1/2 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of Kenneth E. Tyler, 1985

Image of Celia 1984–1986
lithograph, screen print, collage, hand-painted frame
Edition of 40
59 1/2 x 41 in.
Walker Art Center, Tyler Graphics Archive, 1986
©David Hockney

Throughout his career, Hockney has often returned to landscapes. On view in this exhibition are several series, including The Weather Series, images of the Hotel Romano Angeles in Acatlán Mexico, and the Woldgate series, made near his hometown of Bradford, England. He has experimented with many art forms and mediums over the years, consistently trying out new technologies like fax machines and laser printers in the 1990s and, most recently, iPads and drawing apps. He has since used this medium extensively, often returning to sites—such as a country road in Yorkshire—to explore different times of day or the changing seasons.

**ART IN FOCUS:**
**THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING IN WOLDGATE, EAST YORKSHIRE IN 2011 (TWENTY ELEVEN) – 11 MAY, 2011**

When the Apple iPhone was released in 2007, followed by the iPad in 2010, Hockney began experimenting with an app called Brushes that allowed him to work spontaneously to create drawings that could then be printed. The *Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011* (twenty eleven) – 11 May, 2011 is one of 51 works that Hockney created en plein air (drawing while outside) on his iPad³. The artist depicted the transition from winter to spring on Woldgate road in northern England. He then exhibited this drawing at the Royal Academy of Arts in 2012, along with the other 50 iPad prints and an enormous painting. Hockney considered all 52 pieces to be one large artwork. During the Walker’s exhibition, only a select number of prints from this series will be on display, but you can view the entire *Arrival of Spring* series [here](https://bit.ly/Hockney_Woldgate).

**DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

- How are iPad drawing prints similar to lithographic prints? How are they different?
- Look closely at the lines, textures, and colors Hockney used in this Woldgate print. Do you think he would be able to create this artwork using more traditional art materials such as paint or pastels? Why or why not?
- Hockney once said “The iPad is like an endless piece of paper that perfectly fitted the feeling I had that painting should be big.” What do you think he means by this?


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**The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven) – 11 May, 2011**

iPad drawing printed on paper

Edition of 25

55 x 40 in.

Gift of Dr. Tyler J. Phillips, 2015

The Things section of this exhibition highlights Hockney’s fascination with simple domestic scenes and still lifes. On view are artworks that depict some of Hockney’s most iconic and popular imagery, including swimming pools, vases, flowers, chairs, books, and even theater sets. A recurring theme for Hockney, who first came to Los Angeles from England in the 1960s, is the backyard swimming pool found in many Southern California homes. The artist’s works centered around this theme—which have encompassed paintings, prints, and innovative works on paper—are among his most celebrated images.

ART IN FOCUS: GREGORY IN THE POOL (PAPER POOL 4)

This work is part of a series called Paper Pools from 1978, all of which were made with colored paper pulp while at a studio run by his friend and master printer Kenneth Tyler. A master printer is a specialized technician who prints editions of an artist’s or other printmaker’s work by hand. During the visit, Tyler taught Hockney how to assemble artworks with the pulp used to make paper, utilizing cookie cutter-like molds and flattening the shapes in hydraulic presses. Hockney found the images he created with this technique more spontaneous than traditional art forms. A fusion of painting and printmaking, the final pieces are among the 20th century’s most ambitious hand-made paper works.

For Gregory in the Pool, Hockney used various pulp colors and layering techniques to create the effect of light reflecting off water. The spontaneity of the materials allowed Hockney the freedom to try a more abstract approach to this subject. Unlike traditional print editions, each version of these pulp images are unique, with different variations showing up in each mold pour.

This artwork could also have been placed within People section of the exhibition. The figure in the pool is the curator Gregory Evans, who was Hockney’s long-time friend, and at the time that this work was made, his romantic partner.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

• Look closely at the artwork and notice the amount of (or lack of) detail. Even though it feels somewhat abstract, we can still tell this is a person in water. What details did Hockney include that lets us know it is swimming pool?
• Why do think Hockney was so drawn to swimming pools?

For Gregory in the Pool (Paper Pool 4) 1978 colored, pressed paper pulp 33 3/4 x 50 in. Walker Art Center, Tyler Graphics Archive, 1983 ©David Hockney

FOR ALL GRADES

You will need: School iPads or Chromebooks, a drawing app, paper, pastels and/or crayons

STEP 1: Using school iPads or Chromebooks, download a drawing app for students to create their images. There are many free programs available; a list of suggestions can be found here:

- rigorousthemes.com/blog/best-free-drawing-apps-for-ipad/
- filmora.wondershare.com/photo-editor/best-drawing-apps-chromebook.html

STEP 2: Hockney began making digital drawings after moving back to his hometown in Yorkshire, England. Ask students to select a place near where they live, or somewhere special to them, and let them draw it for 10–20 minutes. Each student should save their drawing as a JPEG or PDF and then print it out on an inkjet printer. It may be beneficial for some students to practice drawing shapes or using colors, erasers, and other app features before beginning their landscapes.

STEP 3: Next, have students draw the same location using traditional art materials such as pastels and/or crayons. How did it feel to experiment with different art mediums like Hockney? Which process did they find more enjoyable?

STEP 4: Place students’ digital drawings next to their pastel/crayon drawing and compare the two images. Have each student share with a classmate why the location they chose is special to them and which art-making technique they preferred.

iPad drawing printed on paper
Edition of 25
55 x 40 in.
Gift of Dr. Tyler J. Phillips, 2015
RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Full catalogue of Hockney’s works and other resources available via the David Hockney Foundation, https://www.thedavidhockneyfoundation.org/.


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