



## DAVID HOCKNEY

**Born:** David Hockney, July 9, 1937 (Bradford, Yorkshire, England).

**Artistic style:** Pop artist; painter, photographer, printmaker, illustrator, and stage set designer; portraits, panoramic landscapes, and swimming pool scenes; photomontage; themes of relationships and homosexuality.

David Hockney's fame began in the "swinging sixties" when he was at the center of the British pop art movement along with artists such as Sir Peter Blake. That some of his work had openly homosexual themes added to his early celebrity.

Hockney has continually reinvented himself: photographer, printmaker, illustrator, and stage set designer. Yet it is his paintings of Los Angeles swimming pools and apartments, combined with his numerous portraits, often of family and friends, for which he is best known. *A Bigger Splash* (1967), one of his first Los Angeles swimming pool paintings, conjures up a suggestion of wealth and sun-soaked glamour, with a human presence merely a splash in the swimming pool. After Hockney moved to California, his canvases became packed with vibrant color, bright patterns, palm trees, fit young men, and a hint of sensuality and laid-back decadence.

Of his portraits, the most famous is *Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy* (1970–1971). Hockney has painted many double portraits, giving him the opportunity to use his canvas to portray subtly



### Masterworks

*Myself and My Heroes* 1961 (Tate Collection, London, England)

*Man in Shower in Beverly Hills* 1964 (Tate Collection, London, England)

*Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool* 1966 (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, England)

*A Bigger Splash* 1967 (Tate Collection, London, England)

*Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy* 1970–1971 (Tate Collection, London, England)

*David Hockney (The Student-Homage to Picasso)* 1973 (National Portrait Gallery, London, England)

*Celia with Green Hat* 1984 (Tate Collection, London, England)

*40 Snaps of my House, August 1990* 1990 (Tate Collection, London, England)

*A Bigger Grand Canyon* 1998 (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia)

ABOVE: Hockney photographed with some of his theater sets in Paris in 1991.

RIGHT: David Hockney at work on a typically vibrant and colorful piece.



not just his sitters' likenesses but also their relationships. The eponymous *Mr. and Mrs. Clark* are fashion designer Ossie Clark and his wife, textile designer Celia Birtwell, with their cat, Percy, surrounded by the minimalist chic of a 1970s apartment. The painting's stillness causes viewers to wonder about their life, with the artist asking the viewers to supply their own narrative. Hockney has painted many of his subjects repeatedly, especially Birtwell, who has become known as his muse.

Hockney experiments with form and media: this includes etchings for literary works such as *A Rake's Progress* (1961); set design for ballets and operas, including *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) for New York's Metropolitan Opera in 1978; and forays into cubist photomontage. His capacity for direct observation—or "eyeballing" as he calls it—is, however, his greatest talent, and has led to his continuing exploration of portraiture and landscape, works that will stand the test of time. **CK**

ABOVE: *Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy* shows a concern with the quality of light.

### Focus on Photography

Digital photography has led Hockney to declare the art of photography dead, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s the artist concentrated on photography in preference to painting. He produced several series of photomontages from Polaroids, taking landscapes from various angles and at different times. He then joined the photos to make composite images revealing his movement through time and space. The results, distinctly Hockney in style, were obviously influenced by his hero Pablo Picasso's cubist phase in their depiction of a location from multiple angles.