



# A Bigger Message: Conversations with David Hockney

*Martin Gayford*

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## **A Bigger Message: Conversations with David Hockney** Martin Gayford

David Hockney's exuberant work is widely loved and widely praised, but he is also an incisive and original thinker on art. Based on a series of conversations between Hockney and the art critic Martin Gayford, this book distills the essence of the artist's lifelong meditations on the problems and paradoxes of representing a three-dimensional world on a flat surface.

How does drawing make one "see things clearer and clearer and clearer still"? What significance do differing media, from a Lascaux cave wall to an iPad, have for the images we see? What is the relationship between the images we make and the reality around us? And how can we fully enjoy the pleasures of just looking—at trees, or faces, or sunrises?

These conversations are punctuated by wise and witty observations by both artist and interviewer on many other artists—Vermeer, Tiepolo, Caravaggio, Van Gogh, and Monet among them—and enlivened by shrewd insights into the contrasting social and physical landscapes of California, where Hockney spent so many years, and East Yorkshire, his birthplace, to which he has now returned.

## **A Bigger Message: Conversations with David Hockney Details**

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## Mary says

If you are an artist or an art lover, you really ought to read this book. I can't wait to read it again. Hockney's insights on topics like drawing, light and seeing have me reeling with the feeling of being drunk on words about art.

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## Mary Leikvold says

Not as wonderful as A History of Pictures, but still delightful and worth reading.

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## Lydia says

This is an excellent book for a stumbling painter, artist, or art viewer. Hockney has been working hard for 50 years--and constantly explores new mediums and ways to create, while firmly believing in plein aire, drawing, and the landscape--all out of favor during the last half-century. He delivers Firmness, Commodity and Delight, as Palladio said of good architecture. David Hockney has a background in classical art. He can build on his understanding of drawing and seeing to explain how perspective, for instance, was painted by Wang Hui, or by Caravaggio, or Picasso. He mentions "photography" was used even in the 1700s to create an image. He says all painting is a matter of seeing and building layers. He describes his methods for painting the 144 ft. canvases for his 2012 exhibit at the Royal Gallery of Art. He knows what we all suspected--that abstract art can't hold the audience. And he shows why he likes drawing on the iPad so much. He believes drawing makes you study every blade of grass until your eyes get tired. He just delights in all nature, especially light, whether it is found bouncing off the water in LA swimming pools or hitting leaves at dawn in Bridlington, creating a riot of 50 different greens.

Hockney has been wildly successful by most measures in the art world--and it is good to hear him in conversation, even if only through a book. He doesn't seem to critique his work, he just believes in it--and it is gorgeous. And it doesn't matter whether he is in L.A. or his small town in Yorkshire on the North Sea coast. He isolates himself, careens on with gusto, and the world still stays in contact with all he does.

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## Christy says

I have more to say than usual about this book, so I'll start by saying that even though I'm sure I drank this up because I'm an artist, I think others could enjoy it too. The concepts that are discussed are very accessible. So if you'd like learning about art but get turned off by the elitist discussion that often surrounds it, you won't find that here.

Reading this felt so exhilarating! A great deal of the book is Hockney describing his approach to landscape

painting, and really delving into what he sees and feels when he looks out at a landscape. I felt like yelling "Yes! Yes! That's it exactly!" My paintings are totally different from his, but I felt so in tune with his passion, and his attitude. If someone wanted to know more about my work I could just plagiarize this book. ...Not that I would! But as an artist its just so exciting to feel that someone else thinks the way you do - if I met him he might understand me! Wow!

Ok, so aside from the personal connection to Hockney's landscape work there was plenty, plenty more of interest - his investigation into Caravaggio's work, his discussion of the impact of photography throughout history, his embrace of new technology, his connection between art and music. Love.

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### **Mary says**

What an incredible mind! Read an advance proof and was gripped even without the benefit of colour illustrations which clearly will provide the meat to the bones of the text. Can't wait to see the final colour publication! I shamefully didn't know much about Hockney until reading, and now I'm eager to know more. Very inspiring and sometimes even humbling. He seems so accessible while bursting with honest, original insight. Despite the sometimes complex artistic subject matter, it's not heady, not innately complex, just him seeing things as he does and constantly, endlessly looking. Makes me want to get off my butt and create.

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### **Grace Kao says**

Amazing. Martin Gayford converses with Hockney over years, returning throughout different moments in his career. The dialogues expand out over time and space as Hockney develops his theory of mark-making & picture-making. The conversations skip and skim over cubism & Picasso, photography & fixed vantage points, iPhones & iPads, the Grand Canyon & one particular tree-lined tunnel in Bridlington. Hockney is obsessed with working out a visual language, and this book is necessary for any one who loves art, makes art, breathes art.

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### **Dina Rahajaharison says**

"I think I'm greedy, but I'm not greedy for money – I think that can be a burden – I'm greedy for an exciting life. I want it to be exciting all the time, and I get it, actually. On the other hand, I can find excitement, I admit, in raindrops falling on a puddle and a lot of people wouldn't. I intend to have it exciting until the day I fall over."

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### **Maria Bergman says**

It was interesting to read about how David Hockney is working with his pictures. I liked the part where he told us how he is working with his iPad and mobilphone. The pictures from the same place in different times was interesting.

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## **Jill Meyer says**

Martin Gayford's new book about David Hockney is not a biography, but rather a series of on-going conversations Gayford had with Hockney over a ten or so year period in many locations. Most were at Hockney's house in a secluded area in East Yorkshire, where he moved after having lived in Los Angeles for many years. The conversations, which make up the basis of the book, give full rein to Hockney's endless interest in almost every kind of creative endeavor.

David Hockney is 74 years old and has been immersed in creativity of one sort or another since childhood. He's dabbled in photography, computer graphics, stage design, and many other forms in addition to his well-known paintings. He seems to be constantly asking questions about how and why both living things and art - in all its forms - come to life. The influences of past artists and designers on his work is readily acknowledged by Hockney. He's had a prodigious creative output in the past 55 years and until I read Gayford's book, I never realised how pervasive Hockney's influence has been on current artists. He seems to be an on-going link from past creativity to current and future creativity.

Author Martin Gayford know what questions to ask David Hockney to get the best and most interesting answers. He's a long-time art critic in London and knows artists and their foibles and seems to work with those foibles to make fascinating articles and books. I've read his recent book on Lucien Freud, which was every bit as well-written as this one on David Hockney. For anyone wanting to know more about David Hockney, his genius and the work that flows from that genius, this is a good book to read. Gayford includes examples of most of the artwork being discussed - that work by Hockney as well as other artists - as well as a good timeline of Hockney's life. Reading this book is a wonderful experience.

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## **Ilse says**

I cannot put into words how much I loved reading this book. David Hockney is an amazing artists and it was great to read more about his thoughts and conversations. It was written really well too, definitely a joy to read :)

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## **Hummingbird says**

Really enjoyable and pleasure to read.

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## **Carol Knox says**

A collection of very thoughtful interviews of Hockney. Descriptions of previous work and current projects as well as his opinions about many artists, role of photography in art and his current use of the iPhone and iPad in his art. I enjoyed it.

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**Jamie Bradway says**

Excellent presented and inspirational. So interesting to read about how Hockney sees and thinks about the world.

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**Paul Johnston says**

I loved this book. I bought it after going to a Hockney exhibition and I felt it really helped me get closer to the artist and understand what painting (and seeing in fact) mean to him. It is easy to read, but made me think about painting in a new way. Seeing is a fascinating thing that we rather take for granted (or at least I do)!

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**Agnieszka Czoska says**

Great, even when a bit chaotic, bunch of facts (on how artists work) and opinions (on art, vision, technology...). It underlines the joy of looking and painting, of the visual world as such, and then - also of analysing the visual, taking different viewpoints into account, at best - all at once. Emanates the same energy and curiosity as Hockney's works.

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