

David Hockney Arts & Design

## David Hockney show is fastest-selling exhibition in Tate's history

About 20,000 advance tickets have been sold for the retrospective which opens on Thursday at Tate Britain



David Hockney pictured in Los Angeles last year. The artist still paints every day and has said he is in his most prolific period. Photograph: Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima/Tate

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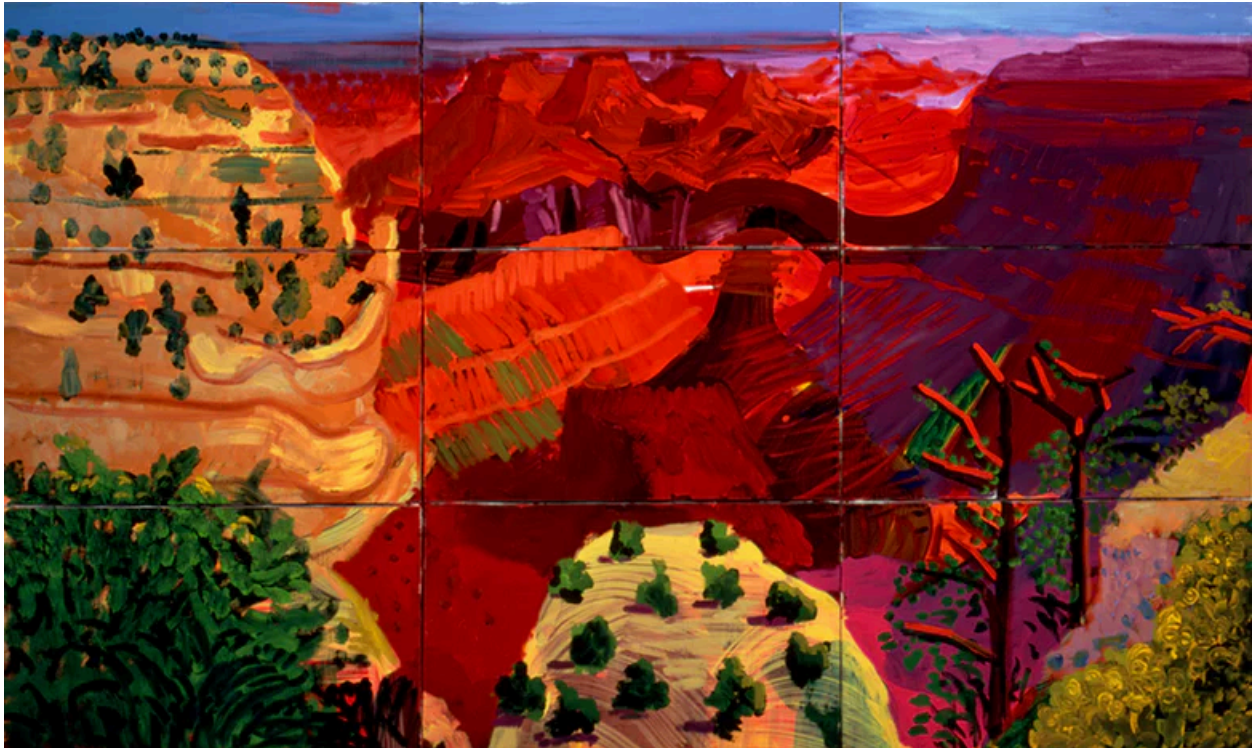
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Tate's David Hockney retrospective, which will trace the artist's career from his early sketches in the 1960s to unseen new paintings, has become the fastest-selling exhibition in the gallery's history.

The exhibition, which opens on Thursday, is the largest ever staged by Tate Britain and is Hockney's most extensive show, covering six decades of his life lived between London, Yorkshire and Los Angeles. It is also his first retrospective since 1988.

A Tate spokeswoman said about 20,000 advance tickets had been sold so far.

Hockney, 79, is regarded as one of the world's greatest living artists, his vibrant canvases capturing 1960s bohemia, the lush foliage of the Hollywood Hills and the rolling landscapes of Yorkshire, where he was born and later returned to live for a time.



Hockney's 9 Canvas Study of the Grand Canyon, 1998. Photograph: Richard Schmidt/Tate

Hockney is said to be thrilled with the exhibition, which he was closely involved with over the two years it took to select and gather the works from galleries and private collectors across the world.

Always one for understatement, walking around after the exhibition installation was completed on Thursday, his only comment was: "I made some quite good pictures, didn't I?"

Hockney still paints every day, and recently said he was in his most prolific period. Having always documented the places and people around him, his works act almost as a diary for his life, capturing the bohemian world in LA in the 1960s and 1970s, his travels, and his various lovers and acquaintances who crop up again and again in his paintings. He described revisiting his works for the retrospective as like encountering old friends.

Hockney has said the retrospective's curators struggled to cajole some of the collectors of his work into loaning it for the show, which will go to Paris and then New York after London.

The Tate curator was “having a hard time borrowing paintings, actually”, he said last April. “I’m not surprised. It’s for 18 months.”

As well as his paintings and drawings, the Tate Britain show will also showcase Hockney’s experimentation with new technology, including video and his iPad and iPhone paintings, some of which were displayed at the Royal Academy in 2012. That show became one of the most successful in the gallery’s history, attracting more than 600,000 visitors.

Should Hockney do the same with this retrospective, he could beat Tate’s record for visitor numbers, which was achieved by the Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs show with 562,622 visitors in 2014.

Despite his willingness to embrace technology in his work, Hockney recently gave a derisive verdict on virtual reality headsets. “I don’t think it will catch on,” he told Esquire magazine. “It’s isolating.

It’ll be good for pornography, but not much else, because with pornography you’re alone. But where is the shared experience going to come from?”

As part of his promotion for the retrospective, Hockney also raised some eyebrows by his decision to redesign the masthead of the Sun for a one-off edition. However, it is a move in keeping with his belief that art should be popular and accessible.

“I always thought art was for everybody,” he has said. “It’s like when the concert masters of Europe in the 19th century said classical music is for the educated, it’s not folk music. And Wagner said that’s not understanding the power of music ... Never underestimate the power of cheap music.”

The David Hockney retrospective is at Tate Britain from 9 February to 29 May.



Detail from Going Up Garrowby Hill, 2000. Photograph: Jeff McLane/Tate