

Life & Times Exhibition

David Hockney

Tate Britain London,
9 February 2017–29 May 2017

DAVID HOCKNEY AND THE BJGP

One of the nice things about going to a David Hockney exhibition is that almost everyone comes out smiling. This was certainly true at the recent Tate Britain retrospective *David Hockney: 60 years work* which brought together, in a compact show in only 12 rooms, key pictures from the 1960s to the present. Rather like a visit to the Frick Collection in New York, a Hockney exhibition contains almost nothing ugly, visceral or alarming, although it raises plenty of questions. I am hopeful that a visit to the *Life & Times* section of the *BJGP* also puts a smile on some of our readers' faces, and makes you ask some questions. I trust that you will not think it too fanciful if I draw some parallels between Hockney's career



David Hockney, 2016. Photograph by Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima. Copyright David Hockney.

Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool acrylic paint on canvas by David Hockney, 1966. Photograph by Richard Schmidt. Copyright David Hockney, National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery.



and the development of the Journal, and of general practice more broadly.

Hockney is 80 this year, despite being a dedicated smoker, and began his training at the Bradford School of Art in 1953. At more or less the same time one of the founding fathers of the RCGP, Robin Pinsent, responded to a government White Paper on clinical research by launching the College's Research Newsletter, which eventually became the *British Journal of General Practice*. The world's first professor of general practice, Richard Scott, was appointed in Edinburgh in 1963.

In 1964, after 3 years at the Royal College of Art, Hockney moved to California which, according to the engaging audio commentary on the Tate exhibition, was 'three times better than I could have hoped'. He had found his natural habitat, and loved Santa Monica's climate, light, and culture. In paintings like the famous *A Bigger Splash*, and the picture shown here, *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool*, he not only represented the idyllic, homoerotic world of the West Coast, but also quietly poked fun at the dominant school of abstract expressionism. Not long after these paintings were created, in 1967 RMS McConaghey launched the *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, leading the world in the establishment of a new academic discipline, with its own journal.



Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy acrylic paint on canvas by David Hockney, 1968. Copyright David Hockney, Private Collection.

larger and larger canvases, recorded the changing seasons. Most recently, he has gone back to photography, with multi-screen video works, created using nine cameras attached to a Land Rover driven along the road into the woods, in spring, summer, autumn and winter. Ever restless, he has also used his iPhone to produce beautiful images, including portraits, still lifes, and landscapes.

Our most recent works include a hugely increased online presence, including digital downloads, social media and Altmetric measures, rapid online first publication and a highly successful open peer review system. We have offered a programme of journal internships, including the opportunity to do research projects. We have put on writing and publishing workshops at national and international meetings. Euan Lawson runs a very lively *BJGP* Blog, and most recently we have launched *BJGP Open*, an online only, open access international journal of research, policy and practice.

Like David Hockney, we are celebrating, more or less, 60 years of work.

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For both Hockney and general practice research, the late 1960s and 1970s were dominated by the description of people and places. Led by giants such as John Fry, GP researchers painstakingly documented the workload, patterns of morbidity, and natural history of conditions seen in general practice. This period of Hockney's career was dominated by a series of double portraits, such as the study of Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy shown here. Hockney is a brilliant draughtsman and portraitist, and some of his most affecting works are his line drawings of his friends. In these double portraits he suggests and reflects the complex relationships between his sitters, who included his parents, Kenneth and Laura, and figures from the 1970's Notting Hill beau monde including designers Ossie Clark and one of his muses, Celia Birtwell.

For general practice, the 1980s and 1990s were a time of increasing expansion, sophistication and achievement, as the range of research methodologies broadened to include everything from the analysis of large databases and randomised controlled trials to ethnography and discourse analysis. At the same time Hockney's lifelong fascination with seeing, representation, and the communication of images found a new focus in the use of photography and the creation of photo-collages, assembled from multiple photographic images taken from different viewpoints. Multiple viewpoints were also in

evidence at this time in discussions about the role of the Journal and its relationship with the College, eventually confirming the importance of the Journal as an academic publication with editorial independence, emphasised by the change of title in 1990 to the *British Journal of General Practice*.

Hockney's more recent works range across studies of landscape, including the Grand Canyon, the Hollywood Hills and, when he came back to live in Bridlington, his beloved landscapes of East Yorkshire. He has returned time and again to the Woldgate Woods, shown here, and, using

Woldgate Woods oil paint on six canvases by David Hockney, 6 & 9 November 2006. Photograph by Richard Schmidt. Copyright David Hockney, David Hockney Inc. (Los Angeles, USA).

