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David Hockney, *Almost Like Skiing*, 1991

**ARTIST**

David Hockney (b.1937)

TITLE

Almost Like Skiing

MEDIUM

Oil on canvas

DATE

1991

SIZE

36 x 48 in : 91.4 x 121.9 cm

PROVENANCE

Private Collection, USA

Anon. sale, Christie's New York,

11 November 2004, lot 192

Peter Findlay Gallery, New York

Collection of Carolyn and Bill Powers

(acquired from the above in 2005)

Anon. sale, Christie's London,

26 June 2013, lot 127

Private Collection

EXHIBITED

Chicago, Richard Gray Gallery,

David Hockney: Recent Pictures, 1992,

illustrated in the catalogue colour p. 15

Venice, L.A. Louver Inc., David Hockney;

Some New Paintings, Drawings, Prints

and Gouaches 1989 - 1994, 1994

LITERATURE

The David Hockney Foundation,
[thedavidhockneyfoundation.org/
chronology/1991](http://thedavidhockneyfoundation.org/chronology/1991)

Documentary: David Hockney: The Colors of
Music, 2003 - 0.31 - 0.35, 45.10 - 45.16, 52.15,
52.22- 52.30 - <https://vimeo.com/12991557>

REFERENCE

AC24-07

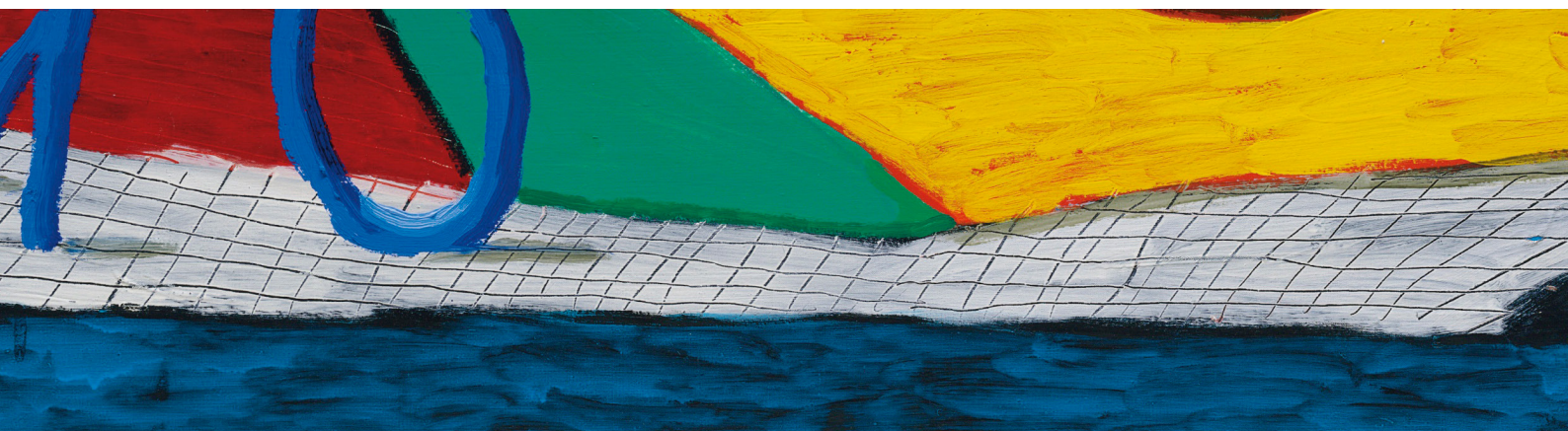


With whimsical abstracted forms standing proud upon a stage, *Almost Like Skiing* dates from an experimental phase in David Hockney's distinguished career. Set amongst vividly coloured, interlocking shapes, Hockney has conjured before us a theatre stage that is almost cubist in its composition. A painterly frame of deep royal blue and shadowy greys evokes the darkness of the auditorium, drawing our eye to the brightly lit stage and its lyrically surreal backdrop. Painted in 1991, it is directly contemporaneous with the set designs Hockney was producing for Richard Strauss's *Die Frau Ohne Schatten*, performed at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden in London the following year.

Almost Like Skiing has a celebratory energy that seems to revel in the freedom that Hockney found returning to paint and canvas after designing sets. Perhaps referencing the way in which he has manipulated the journey of the eye through form, texture and colour, the title is evoked in the sweeping curves, leading pathways and tumbling forms. Our gaze soars round the composition in sweeping curves, guided first by the fresh green that swoops through centre of the work, led along a slim white path up to the top right, doubling back across the width of the composition, and finally plunging down a sequence of curving triangles onto the stage below.

A visual precursor to his series of *Very New Paintings*, painted and exhibited in 1992, *Almost Like Skiing* shows Hockney reconnecting with the modernist principles enunciated by abstract artists and theorists, and exploring the limits of realism and abstraction that he so admired in Picasso. Combining a belief in the expressive potential of non-figurative painting with his masterful understanding of perspective and illusionistic space, Hockney's abstract works from this period are above all extraordinarily inventive responses to subjective experiences. 'Although I am interested in theory, I am not of course a theoretician. Picasso or Braque would have looked at their pictures after they were painted, they were not self-consciously thinking of Cubist theory while they painted. You allow a semi-consciousness to tell you how to go on, or else the painting would be intentional, and you couldn't be doing it intentionally. You make the discoveries of what is going on inside you; you don't need to know this; you work intuitively. Cubism was discovered intuitively, it was all intuition. Most artists, good artists, trust their intuition. I trust mine' (D. Hockney, quoted in *That's the way I see it*, London, 1993, p. 131).

These works and the *Very New Paintings* that immediately followed, have their origins in Hockney's paintings of the Grand Canyon. As the artist has stated, the Grand Canyon is "*the biggest space you can look out over that has an edge*".



DAVID HOCKNEY

David Hockney is considered one of the most influential British artists of the twentieth century, and was a key member of the Pop art movement of the 1960s. Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, he studied at the Royal College of Art. He was featured in the exhibition *Young Contemporaries* with Peter Blake, and was almost instantly successful as an artist.

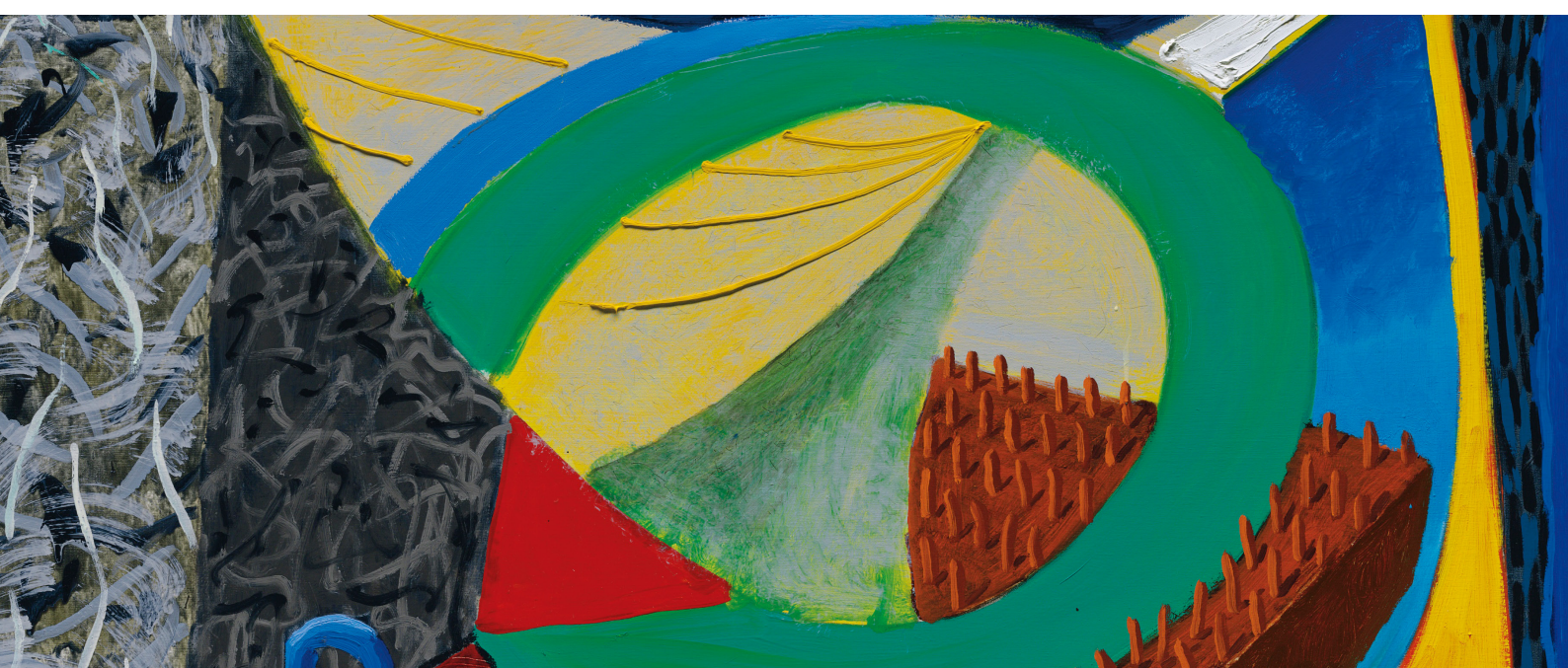
In 1963 Hockney visited New York where he met Andy Warhol. He subsequently settled in California, and was inspired to make a series of paintings of swimming pools in Los Angeles, in the comparatively new medium of acrylic. A *Bigger Splash*, from this series is in the permanent collection of the Tate Gallery. In 1967 his painting, *Peter Getting Out Of Nick's Pool*, won the John Moores Painting Prize at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.

Hockney has also worked with photography, or, more precisely, photcollage. Using varying numbers of Polaroid snaps or photolab-prints of a single subject he combined them to make a composite image. Hockney created these photomontage works mostly between 1970 and 1986. He referred to them as "joiners". These works show the movements of the subject seen from the photographer's perspective. In later works Hockney changed his technique and moved the camera around the subject instead. Hockney has always embraced new media and technology, using xerox machines and more recently iPhones and iPads to create works.

In October 2006 the National Portrait Gallery in London held one of the largest ever displays of Hockney's portraiture work, including 150 of his paintings, drawings, prints, sketchbooks and photocollages from over five decades. Hockney himself assisted in displaying the works, and the exhibition proved to be one of the most successful in the gallery's history. In June 2007, Hockney's largest painting *Bigger Trees Near Water* which measures 15x40' and was painted on 50 individual canvases, was included in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. In 2008, he donated this work to the Tate Gallery.

A Bigger Picture, the Royal Academy's 2012 David Hockney exhibition became the best attended in the institution's history, often staying open late into the evening to accommodate visitors. Hockney turned down a Knighthood in 1990, but accepted an invitation to become Companion of Honour in 1997. He is a Royal Academician, and recently received the Order of Merit.

In 2019, Hockney briefly became the most expensive living artist in history when *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* sold for \$90,312,500 at Christie's in New York.





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