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David Hockney, Grey Blooms, May 1986

ARTIST

David Hockney (1937-2026)

TITLE

Grey Blooms, May 1986

MEDIUM

Home made print in two parts, on 120g Arches rag paper executed on an office colour copy machine

DATE

1986

SIZE

14 x 17 in : 35.6 x 43.2 cm

EDITION

From the edition of 50, signed, numbered and dated by the artist.

PRINTER

Printed by the artist

PUBLISHER

Published by the artist

LITERATURE

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, and Tankosha Publishing Co., Ltd., Publ., David Hockney Prints 1954-1995, 1996, cat. no. 305, p.167, (col. illus.)

David Hockney, Home Made Prints, Self-published catalogue to accompany the exhibition at Andre Emmerich's New York gallery, Zurich, 1986, no.18 (col. illus.)

EXHIBITED

David Hockney, Home Made Prints, a concurrent exhibition at the following galleries, 6 December 1986 - 17 January 1987, in which this work was no.18 (another example exhib.):
André Emmerich Gallery, New York
Knoedler Gallery, London
LA Louver Gallery, Los Angeles
Nishimura Gallery, Tokyo

REFERENCE

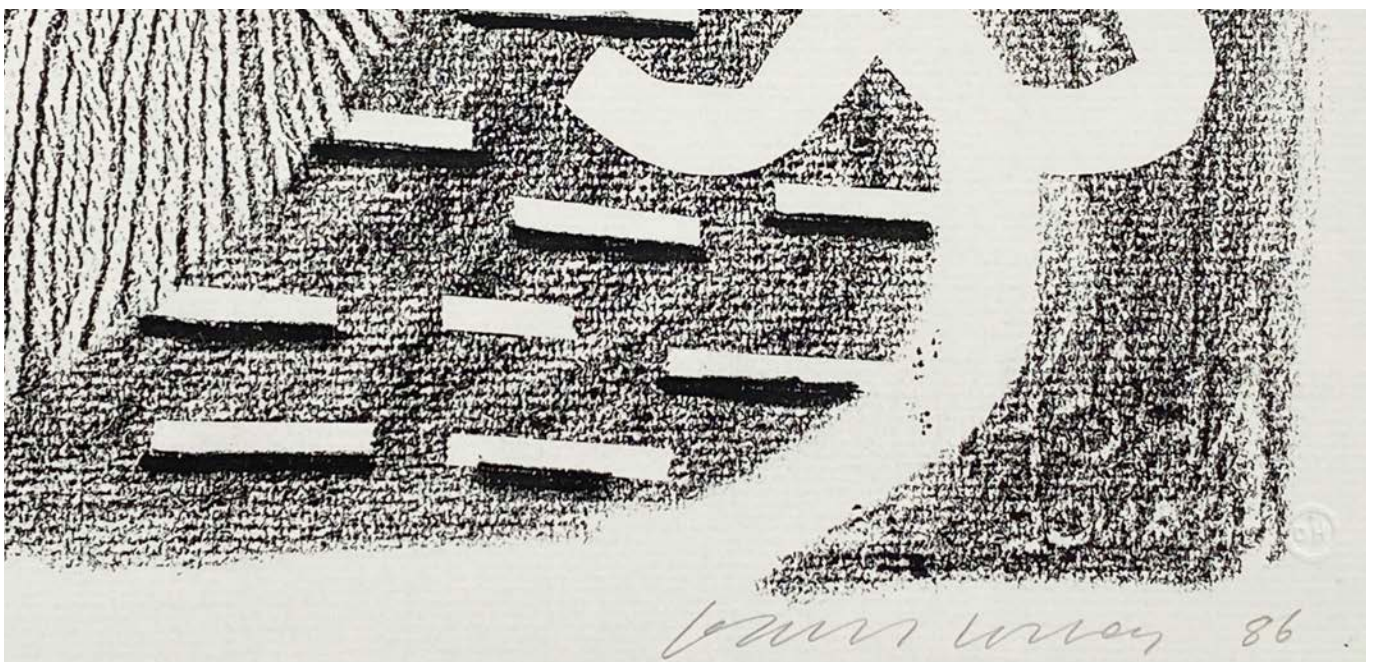
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David Hockney's investigation into the newly invented technology of photocopying in 1986, which resulted in the series Home Made Prints, typifies the artist's restless drive and skill in invention over 6 decades. Hockney, fascinated by the new devices, deconstructed the printing capability of these office "cameras", and created a series of works, each made by the artist himself with no proofs. Puzzled by the flatness of photocopies generated by the early xerox machines, he set out to see if they could be improved upon and soon realised that the textures sharpened if printed one layer at a time. He demonstrated that prints made from these machines with care, attention and an enquiring skill are vastly superior to their products when used as intended, i.e. to make a full copy in one single pass. This demonstration, and this typical mode of enquiry, defines completely what makes Hockney one of the greatest artists working today.

In May 2021 Sotheby's New York sold a complete set of the 33 Home Made prints to have been included in the 1986 André Emmerich catalogue for a record price of \$963,800.

A PRISTINE example of this rare print. Never before framed, the print has been kept in a print drawer for the entirety of its life, having fresh and bright inking precisely as printed.



NOTES ON THE TECHNIQUE by DAVID

HOCKNEY from the self-published catalogue to accompany the exhibition at Andre Emmerich's New York gallery, Zurich, 1986.

It is difficult to be spontaneous making a colored print. The necessity of drawing in layers that will fit together causes this, and techniques that help the artist with this problem have been very few, and artists have had to accept a certain stiffness as the price for the colors.

In 1973 Aldo Crommelynck, in Paris, explained to me a method he had devised for Picasso to get round this problem in colored etchings. His explanation and demonstration was very clear and made me abandon my plans and experiment with it. I later used the technique in a series of 20 etchings inspired by Wallace Steven's poem "The Man with the Blue Guitar".

My own photographic experiments made me look into cameras and what they were really doing, making me realize that an office copying machine was a camera that confined itself to flat surfaces. It never attempts to depict space. That the machine is also a printing press we knew, but never regarded it as a good one. Yet thinking about these machines for awhile before I first played with them two things occurred to me: that there is no such thing as a copy and that there is no such thing as a bad printing machine. (Only bad printers.)

Of course in an office, it is used for copying messages; the slight variations in the marks from one to the other is not noticed because the content of the readable message is what is important.

I began experimenting with a friend's machine in February of this year and within an hour realized my hunch was right. They were fascinating printing machines, indeed they were a totally new kind of printing that offered the artist new areas and possibilities.

First let me talk about it as a camera. I quickly realized that it was also a new type of camera, that had in effect moved right up to the surface (two dimensions), narrowing the space between the lens and the object. It photographs one for one, same size. This might seem at first a trivial point, and it took me a while to realize what it might be doing - was this space (or lack of it) important? Was it visible? I came to the conclusion that it was visible after studying the effects of textures produced by the machine. The most important aspect of the machine though seemed to be that this "new space" was combined with a totally new form of printing, very high-tech.

It is new in this way: it prints from paper to paper, it prints totally dry, and the "ink" is put on the paper electronically. For the artist there are great advantages here. First, printing from paper to paper means that the original marks can be made on the same kind of paper one prints on. This seemed to me to remove a layer. For instance a wash in a lithograph is made by dipping a brush in touche and laying it on a zinc plate, a stone, or mylar. Now the way a brush behaves on these surfaces is different from the soft absorbent surface of paper, the way the wash dries is different-on paper it is through absorption and evaporation, on the hard surfaces it is evaporation only, so the marks

printed on paper from paper seemed more direct. (A lithographic wash on paper is an illusion of a paper wash - it was made on metal.)

Secondly, printing totally dry enables one to put layer upon layer immediately (in some prints here as many as twelve); and thirdly, the way the "ink" is put on the paper is totally new. It is not an "ink" in the normal sense, but a powder - called "toner" in the office copy business. It is a powder fused onto the paper by a heat process. Now all printing inks begin as powder (pigments) and with the addition of oil become inks that can be rolled into a thin film. But oil is a reflective surface, so however little there is left in the ink on the paper, a slight reflection will occur. With black this is very noticeable, but here I noticed how beautiful and dense the black was especially on the larger Kodak machine. It seemed to me it was the blackest and most beautiful black I had ever seen on paper. It seemed to have no reflection whatsoever, giving it a richness and a mystery almost like a "void".

I used three different machines, first a Canon P.C.25, then a Canon N.P.3525 and lastly a Kodak Ektaprint 225F.

The images are made like one makes any color print. Each separate color is drawn onto a separate piece of paper (as each color is printed separately in the machine). I had experimented with methods of making marks and how the machine "sees" them, discovering that some marks are more easily translatable by the

machine than others - I assume one of the subjects of these prints is the joy of discovering a new medium.

I attempted to get 60 "identical" prints, not always achieving this number, as the complicated layering made me lose many, but whatever number I finished up with is all there is. I printed them all myself (it seemed to me that the drawing process and printing process fused) therefore my numbering system is quite simple. If I finished up with 45 then they are numbered one out of forty-five, two out of forty-five and so on - there being no "artist proofs," "printer proofs," "roman numeral proofs," or any kind of proof that is not involved in the stages of making the print.

Now one might ask, couldn't the machine make a copy of the print? Well of course it can attempt to, but the results look like office copies usually look. The reason here is that naturally the machine cannot copy its own layers. That would be the equivalent of going backwards in time and this is not yet possible even in high-tech.

There are amusing reversals happening. The pictures in this book are photo reproductions of prints from an office copier, as such they cannot have the physicality of the color on the prints, in short they are not as good. Of course you can make a copy of the reproduction in this book, and it too will be different. It seems to me that it's nice to know we have not yet reached "the age of mechanical reproduction" -and it's still love and care that makes a difference, even with machines.

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, photocollage. 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 Warter 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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