

*Bayeux Tapestry* is defined by the movement of figures, horses and ships, *A Year in Normandie* focuses on the quiet rhythms of the natural world. Rather than figures, the main protagonists are trees and streams, while the occasional chair or treehouse alludes to human presence.

An additional source of inspiration for Hockney, who has long sought alternatives to Western approaches to perspective, have been Chinese scroll paintings from the fourteenth century. During a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1983, he first encountered Chinese scrolls and was captivated by their lack of shadows and reflections, as well as their capacity to evoke the experience of walking through a landscape.

Influenced by both the *Bayeux Tapestry* and the capacity of Chinese scrolls to mobilise the viewer's gaze, Hockney created more than two hundred iPad paintings of the Normandy landscape, later selecting around half of them to form his monumental frieze. *A Year in Normandie* functions as a portrait of 2020, a year that confined many people globally to isolation, slowing the pace of life and heightening awareness of time's passage through the changing of the seasons.

Extending the exhibition beyond the gallery walls, an enlarged detail from *A Year in Normandie*'s spring cycle is situated in the Serpentine North Garden. The work places Hockney's impressions of the Normandy countryside in dialogue with the shifting seasons of his current residence in London.

#### **AND SOME OTHER THOUGHTS ABOUT PAINTING**

Created for this exhibition, Hockney's most recent series of paintings from late 2025 comprises five portraits and five still lifes. The portraits depict people closest to the artist: friends, family and carers, while the still lifes focus on different abstract painting styles. All ten paintings are united by their frontal perspective and recurring motif of a checkered tablecloth. The gingham cloth is rendered in reverse perspective, slanting towards the viewer. Hockney considers this approach truer to the way the human eye sees objects in space, prompting viewers to look at the paintings from alternating vantage points.



SERPENTINE

12 March –  
23 August 2026

DAVID HOCKNEY

Throughout his seven-decade career, David Hockney (b. 1937, Bradford, UK) has remained endlessly inventive, driven by a commitment to celebrating and reimagining the world around him. Deeply fascinated by the many ways in which reality can be observed and represented, Hockney has worked across a variety of artistic media, including painting, photographic collage, set design, drawing and printmaking. *A Year in Normandie* and *Some Other Thoughts about Painting* brings together the artist's latest series of paintings alongside his monumental frieze, inviting audiences to encounter Hockney's different modes of expression and his sustained dialogue with art history and perception.

#### ***A YEAR IN NORMANDIE***

Conceived over the course of twelve months, *A Year in Normandie* is among Hockney's most ambitious works and marks the period when he first settled into his studio in the countryside of northern France in 2019. While the studio was still under construction, Hockney turned to the outdoors, painting directly on his iPad. From the first frosts of winter through to the blossoms of spring, the golden fields of summer and autumn's bright red and orange tones, he captured the ever-changing light and atmosphere of his new surroundings.

In the spirit of the Impressionists, Hockney painted the shifting colours of trees, skies and fields around him on a modern canvas, the iPad screen. Hockney's engagement with digital media began in 1985 when he was invited to draw on the Quantel Paintbox for the BBC programme *Painting with Light*. Since then, he has experimented with a wide range of digital tools, from Photoshop and fax machines to the iPhone. He began painting on the iPad in 2010, and has worked with custom-made digital brushes since 2018. These technologies enable him to work swiftly, allowing the immediacy of his observations to be preserved, freed from the constraints of slow-drying paint.

*A Year in Normandie* is the artist's homage to the 11th century *Bayeux Tapestry*, a nearly seventy-metre-long embroidery narrating the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. The embroidery has captivated Hockney since childhood and he has visited the Bayeux Tapestry Museum in Normandy on numerous occasions. Its narrative format and depiction of time unfolding inspired the artist's own panoramic frieze. While the



Throughout his career, Hockney has treated the portrait as a means of investigation rather than direct representation. For the artist, portraits are not primarily about people; 'They're about painting, the painting of a person.' Each work reflects the passing of time, the slow rhythm of looking and the act of applying paint to canvas to create a composition. Among the sitters are the artist's partner and studio manager Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima, his great-nephew Richard Hockney, and his close acquaintance Joe Hage, depicted in front of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Tower of Babel* (1563). Hockney has long been engaged with the study of art history, from Renaissance painting to the spatial techniques of Cubism. He was drawn to *The Tower of Babel's* expansive pictorial space, which echoes the monumentality of the *Bayeux Tapestry*.

The portraits of Jack Ransome, the designer of Hockney's distinctive spectacles, and Thomas Mupfupi, one of his carers, have backgrounds that reference *A Year in Normandie*. Mupfupi is shown wearing one of the badges the artist designed inscribed with the playful call to 'END BOSSINESS SOON'. Usually completed across three to five days, his portraits reveal a deep familiarity with the sitter and an ongoing dialogue between artist and subject.

The five still lifes in this series extend Hockney's interest in abstraction and embody his belief that 'Everything on a flat surface is an abstraction.' From the well-balanced expanses of colour-field painting to the dense surfaces of impasto and squeegee techniques, each work explores a distinct painting style. In these recent canvases, Hockney continues to challenge the conventions of perspective, inviting audiences to look at the very act of seeing itself.

*A Year in Normandie and Some Other Thoughts about Painting* at Serpentine North is curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director, and Claude Adjil, Curator at Large, with Liz Stumpf, Assistant Exhibitions Curator

Our sincere thanks and deepest gratitude to David Hockney and his studio: Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima, Richard Hockney, Shannan Kelly, Elise Wille, Lyle Baker, Tracy Bartley, James Comer, David Egan, Corey Mihlo, Megan Mueller, Brittnee Zuckerman

Production team: Richard Install, Head of Production; Honor Bailey-Rosse, Production Manager; Alice Houghton, Registrar  
Exhibition build by Beyond Surface

Graphic design by Giles Round  
Exhibition guide printed by Impress Print

### SATURDAY TALKS

28 March 2026, 12 PM  
Claude Adjil, Curator at Large, leads a tour of *David Hockney: A Year in Normandie and Some Other Thoughts about Painting*

13 June 2026, 12 PM  
Liz Stumpf, Assistant Exhibitions Curator, leads a tour of *David Hockney: A Year in Normandie and Some Other Thoughts about Painting*

BSL interpretation is available on request for all our Saturday Talks

### IMAGE CREDITS

Cover: David Hockney, *Abstraction Resting on a Green and White Checkered Tablecloth* (detail), 2025. Acrylic on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm  
© David Hockney. Photo: Prudence Cuming  
Inside: David Hockney, *A Year in Normandie* (detail), 2020-21.  
Composite iPad painting © David Hockney

### Bloomberg Connects

Discover more about *David Hockney: A Year in Normandie and Some Other Thoughts about Painting* in our free digital guide on Bloomberg Connects  
Available in over 40 languages



Serpentine is a charity and we need your help to continue our work more than ever. Please donate today to help keep our programmes free and open to all

Sign up to our newsletter at [serpentinegalleries.org](https://serpentinegalleries.org) and follow @SerpentineUK on social media

**Serpentine**  
+44 (0) 20 7402 6075  
[information@serpentinegalleries.org](mailto:information@serpentinegalleries.org)

**SERPENTINE**

A YEAR IN NORMANDIE AND SOME OTHER THOUGHTS ABOUT PAINTING

MAJOR SUPPORT

**L U M A  
F O U N D A T I O N**

Megha Mittal

SUPPORTING PARTNER

**BURBERRY**

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

Annely Juda Fine Art

ADVISORS

**AECOM**

**Weil**

**GALLOWGLASS**  
Health & Equity

SERPENTINE SUPPORTED BY



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

**Bloomberg  
Philanthropies**

SERPENTINE SUMMER PROGRAMME  
MADE POSSIBLE BY

**Kenneth C. Griffin  
GRIFFIN CATALYST**