



Hockneys that aren't only for the rich

The Tate's forthcoming retrospective ignores the artist's prints – but the market for them is thriving, says Colin Gleadell

A major retrospective exhibition for David Hockney at Tate Britain next month promises to cover “the full scope of his artistic practice” – drawings, paintings, photography, and video. But, much to the dismay of print enthusiasts, this medium, which he has always taken extremely seriously as an art form, is to be excluded.

This is a shame, because his prints evolved side by side with his painting and drawing. During his teens, Hockney produced the occasional lithograph, but fully engaged with print-making through etching when

he was a student at the Royal College of Art from 1959 to 1962.

He was so poor, the story goes, that he could not afford painting materials. But when he discovered that materials were free in the print department, he made himself at home there, producing etchings as distinctive and brilliant as his paintings and drawings, characterised by their assured lines and intentional smudging, mixing graffiti with faux-naïve figuration for his autobiographical subject matter.

However, while the Tate will not be covering this chapter of his work, a commercial gallery will. And it will be the first time that examples of every print he made between 1961 and his move to Los Angeles in 1964 will have been shown together. Assembled by print dealer Lyndsey Ingram, the exhibition opens at Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert in St James's on February 2, a few days before the Tate opening.

Hockney treated etching like drawing. Several early works are not numbered because they are unique. In 1961, he won a £100 etching prize, which allowed him to make his first trip to America. The winning print, *Three Kings and a Queen*, is one of the exhibits. When he came to make his version of Hogarth's *The Rakes Progress*, one of the prints, *Receiving the Inheritance*, shows Hockney on this trip offering a \$20 art work to Bill Liebermann of the Met, who comes back with a stingy offer of \$18.

These early etchings mark an innovative break with the past. Hockney's use of black and red

Art sales

Jungle Boy, an etching with aquatint made by Hockney in 1964, features in the Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert show next month

aquatint for his etchings was revolutionary, says Ingram, as were his depictions of himself as a gay man.

Although he continued etching for several decades, his work in the print medium then expanded to embrace lithography, photocopies, fax art, paper pulp pictures and, most recently, printed iPad drawings. And just as each technical experiment brings with it a change in his art, each print medium attracts different types of buyers, so has separate markets.

The most expensive are the *Paper Pool* series, made in the late Seventies out of paper pulp, though they are not strictly prints. When they first came out, they cost about £20,000 each and have since fetched as much as £1 million at auction.

The most expensive pure prints have been his large, colourful Los Angeles lithographs of the Eighties, such as *Caribbean Feature*, which were highly sought after by the Japanese in the late Eighties art boom, and sold for as much as \$275,000. That boom then went bust, and is only now beginning to recover those levels.

The etchings, particularly the early ones, are less obviously decorative and are more of a connoisseur's market, says Ingram. At the moment, they seem very reasonably priced, from £12,000 to £30,000 in this exhibition. When Hockney made *The Rake's Progress*, his dealer, John Kasmin, sold the etchings for about £500 each. Now, a complete set of the 16 prints could be worth up to £250,000, says Ingram.

Possibly the bargain basement of the Hockney market, she says, are the black and white etchings from his *Grimms' Fairy Tales* series. Vincent Eames, a print dealer near London Bridge, has sold signed etchings from the series for as little as £1,500, though that is double their value 10 years ago, he adds. The Goldmark Gallery in Uppingham, Rutland, has unsigned prints for just £300.

Some of Hockney's latest experiments have experienced the biggest price leaps. Two landscape prints made from iPad drawings that were launched in 2014 at £18,000 each (plus VAT) sold at Phillips last week for £31,250 each. Another print from an iPad drawing of flowers, published by Taschen last year and priced at £3,500, sold for £10,625.

If print prices follow painting prices, then Hockney print buyers be prepared: the market has seen a resurgence of interest in all periods of his painting. The auction record is now \$11.7 million, set last year for a 12ft wooded landscape, but that has been far exceeded privately with a price of \$25 million for an earlier work.