# Transcript

Speaker 1

Time to leave here now and go isolate myself in California.

Speaker 2

David Hockney, one of Britain's most celebrated artists, made his name by painting scenes from his life in Southern California, where he's lived for the last 30 years. He returned last year to London. He stayed for a year, by far the longest time he's been away from America since 1978. It turned out to be one of his most productive and inventive periods. He sketched all the time, completed 2 exhibitions, and made large landscapes. He also revisited a subject that 30 years ago had inspired some of his most famous images, the double portrait. This time, Hockney was to radically reinvent the form in watercolor, calling these paintings portraits for the 21st century. They throw an unexpected light on David Hockney in his 65th year.

Speaker 1

Two people have something and there is a story. It's bound to happen. I mean, each couple have some relationship, man and wife, brother and sister, gay lovers, two brothers. I mean, any couple is interesting.

Speaker 2

The couples came to his studio for a day and sat in two office chairs. Most were intimate or old friends. Some were family, a few he knew hardly at all. As Hockney observed them and put their personal relationships under his intense scrutiny, they observed him. By exploring these intimate encounters from both sides, a revealing and private portrait of David Hockney emerges that gets behind the familiar face of an artist we think we know.

Speaker 3

Amazing how he screws his eyes up. I mean, his eyes are like this, and he looks incredibly hard. Yeah, like swords.

Speaker 4

It's quite a daring thing to do, because really he's penetrating into the private feelings of his sitters, and he's trying to say what their relationships are. It's almost like sort of spying on somebody.

Speaker 5

With straight relationship, he's absolutely fascinated because he has absolutely no sort of concept of how they actually work and what holds them together. He's looking for something in there.

Speaker 2

Hockney didn't want any of these portrait sessions to be filmed, believing this would disturb the delicate chemistry of the day. He's now wary of film crews. and protects the privacy of his studio, but was excited by the new double portraits and wanted to talk about them.

Speaker 6

You talked to me earlier about portrait for the 21st century, and I never really quizzed you.

Speaker 1

I only said it because most people would think, well, yes, it wouldn't be painting. It would be video or photography or something. But, frankly, I think they've been looking optically at faces for an awful long time. And it should be a different way, fresher, actually, I think. Meaning probably observed and painted by hand. I don't think much new will come out of a camera, not really. And, you know, anything involving time, like a video or film or something, means it's harder to locate, harder to find. Still pictures don't talk, and they don't move, and they last longer. You've got to paint them, actually. That's what you do. You paint them by hand. By hand.

Speaker 2

Hockney had not expected to stay in London for more than a few months, but now he'd found a new medium to explore, a renewed passion for painting, and was embarking on a major body of work. Over the space of a few months, he was to produce over 40 large double portraits. Among the first to be painted was art historian Marco Livingstone, who's known Hockney for 25 years and has written extensively about his art and life.

Speaker 7

If he chooses to paint you with your partner, then you want that to come across, that it's commemorating a relationship. So it's something you don't take lightly. I think he's fascinated by all relationships, by any two people who can make a life together, because that's not been the easiest thing for him to achieve. I hesitate to talk about this on film. It seems a little personal to be intruding on it, but he's spoken about it himself. You know, his relationship with Peter Schlesinger in the 60s lasted five years, and it took him a long time to get over that. And he's had other relationships, but he's often spoken of feelings of loneliness, in spite of his success, in spite of being surrounded by people

and having lots of friends and so forth. So to see a gay couple that make a go of it and are in a very settled relationship, I think, gives him pleasure and hope.

Speaker 2

Hockney had begun painting his couples and exploring their relationships almost by accident because of a promise he'd made some years before. Hockney had agreed with the National Portrait Gallery to paint his old friends Sir George and Mary Christie. who'd run Glyndebourne Opera House, where he'd made his first stage designs. This was only his second portrait commission. After his first in 1971, he said he would never do another.

Speaker 1

Normally, I've always not done commissions, portraits. But of course, Christies are old friends, and I deeply admire them. I admire what he did at Glyndebourne. So I did kind of agree. That was about three years ago, but I did keep telling them I wasn't ready yet. I had to find a way to make portraits in the 21st century that were interesting. And I didn't know how to do it until recently.

Speaker 8

This is really a wonderful moment because it has come about that David has got greatly excited about portraits again, and indeed, about watercolours in particular. It is a celebration of achievement. And I think the first thing that we're celebrating is George and Mary in a great image that will live here for the public forevermore. A proud moment for the Portry Gallery. So, David, are you going to pull the cord? It's not for George to come in. Very good.

Speaker 2

The picture of the Christies is unlike anything else in the National Portrait Gallery. Portraits have never been done on such a large scale in watercolour, mostly because the marks you make cannot be changed. The full-length double portrait is seldom attempted. One painted entirely from life in a day is unheard of.

Speaker 1

Portraiture had become dull, I think, whereas the best of it is never dull. Human faces are going to be interesting till the end of time. It's just how well are they done in a way? What do they tell us about people?

Speaker 2

In working rapidly with two people together just feet away, Hockney had set himself a challenge to reinvigorate the portrait.

Speaker 1

Watercolour makes you work fast. It makes you therefore think fast about painting. You seem to do it more intuitively. You get a liveliness in speed, probably sacrificing at times accuracy of some things. Every mark put down counts. You can't remove them. You have to work from light to dark. But it is painting. I'm drawing all in one. I just do them with a brush. To catch lively expressions is not easy. The tiniest little marks, especially around the mouths and eyes, amazing difference happens with them. It has to be direct somehow through my heart, my eye, and my hand.

Speaker 2

Quite soon into the series, Hockney was painting up to 4 double portraits a week. His need for more and more subjects meant a return to his old London life. Film and stage director Anthony Page had seen little of Hockney since the 70s.

Speaker 9

He was trying to grasp onto people that he knew, friends from the past. that would give him something personal to paint about. Poor Ken looks like a caged animal.

Speaker 10

No, I think it's very... I don't.

Speaker 9

You do.

Speaker 10

It's very insulting to me.

Speaker 9

No, you look like something looking through a cage. I like it. I think he's looking at me.

Speaker 6

I think it's got intensity about it.

Speaker 9

It does have intensity, but it still has a certain amount of angst too.

Speaker 6

Look at you, you look disapproving.

Speaker 9

I was watching your nicotine, Ken. I'm sorry. I was feeling like Mayor Bloomberg.

Speaker 2

With the double portraits, Hockney was reaching into the personal and private territory of his subjects, not something everybody would be comfortable with.

Speaker 6

What is the relationship between the two of you?

Speaker 10

Mind your own business.

Speaker 9

Kenny's looking much more pent up, and I'm looking more reflective.

Speaker 10

But I don't think I was pent up. I was just trying to be comfortable. I just wanted to sit as comfortably as possible.

Speaker 9

But the expression is...

Speaker 10

And I didn't want to have a smile on my face because then I would have to maintain the smile. So I wanted to be blank because that's easier to maintain over an 8-hour sitting.

Speaker 9

I think he didn't know Ken so well. I think the portrait of him is more a sort of emotional picture, a state of mind perhaps.

Speaker 10

I think we just sat there and he painted what he saw.

Speaker 9

I think it's emotionally very strong, the picture.

Speaker 2

Throughout the year, Hockney was refining his watercolour technique. One of his subjects was a painter herself and has been a friend since the start of his career in the early 60s.

Speaker 4

David's a sort of master of painting. He's also a kind of naive philosopher about life. And I think these watercolors excite him because he's exploring a philosophical angle about

the transcendence of life. He looks for this second in time and catches an aspect of this person when they're kind of caught off balance. And that's what I think is particularly important in these portraits. They almost come out sometimes very awkward. So when you're looking at them with a sort of critical eye, you say, oh, you know, that hand or that foot, the head is too big or something. But you're missing the point. What he's saying is, right, that was what it was like to me at that moment. You either accept it or you don't. And I think it's very exciting to see something absolutely of the moment, however dotty it is. It's creating a sort of psychological theatre. So it's like a sort of performance. And you're all in there for it, for better or worse.

Speaker 1

Ta-da! When Norman came here and he was looking at this, he said, I see these are psychological portraits. I'll come with... Manuela.

Speaker 11

Yes.

Speaker 1

Well, meaning he knew that that's what you're interested in and that's what you got.

Speaker 2

Norman is Norman Rosenthal of the Royal Academy, one of the most powerful figures in the art world and someone Hockney's known for 30 years. He hardly knew his wife Manuela, a curator at the Prado Museum who lives with their children in Madrid.

Speaker 3

I hope it. I mean, I think it's a very loving relationship. We love each other very, very much. I hope it comes through. I mean, whether there's any ambiguity, I have no idea, because I mean, all relationships have ambiguities.

Speaker 1

She loved it. I didn't know what Norman thought, because Norman looks like a schoolboy. He went like that.

Speaker 9

Well, he wants to look like a mature pillar of the community.

Speaker 1

The strange thing is, when he's with his wife, he seems to disappear into the wallpaper. She is a very strong character, and actually I noticed straight away the way the bodies go. For instance, Norman was sitting there. She was sitting here, and straight away she

did her leg that way, and then leaned over to touch his hand. But I mean, I know if the legs would have gone that way, that's more far normal.

Speaker 12

I look around and I saw all these portraits in which people were very apart from each other. Sort of like these Chinese double portraits, you know, which are all sitting like this and nothing to do to each other. And because we don't see each other too much, I just always tend to sort of... We tend to hold hands.

Speaker 3

We tend to hold hands.

Speaker 12

So I said, well, maybe this is a very good idea if I just... Because I wanted it. I mean, seven hours there, just by myself. I wanted to be with him. So in my case, it was a very sort of touching thing. In the portrait, it comes out and it has a kind of, I don't know, maybe I am sort of rejecting him, you know, or his ideas. I don't know. It is interesting because maybe it was there. What do you think?

Speaker 3

I don't know. It's very difficult to read these things. As I say, ambiguity is the life, the lifeblood of art, of all art.

Speaker 12

I don't agree to that. You don't? What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that?

Speaker 3

Why don't you explain that? Why do you think that ambiguity is not?

Speaker 13

The essence of art.

Speaker 12

Ambiguity is our ignorance, you know? What it is ambiguity, what we call ambiguity in art, it's our ignorance.

Speaker 3

So how do we get to the bottom? How do we sort of get rid of that ignorance?

Speaker 12

It's very difficult. It is very difficult, you know? But the way David smiled and laughed and said, yes, there is tension. So there is no ambiguity in him, you know? And as it is not in Velazquez or in Goya or in Rembrandt. So to look at this is to look at a mirror where you see yourself in the deepest way. I really meditated about myself and our relationship after this.

Speaker 1

Something was revealed there that I didn't know about too much before, and it actually slightly surprised me. And I wasn't sure what to do. I never asked.

Speaker 2

Hockney's double portraits sought to catch the emotions between two people. They would also reveal Hockney's own relationship to those he was painting. One of his closest friends in England, Jonathan Silver, had died five years ago, aged 48. Hockney invited his daughters to come and sit for him.

Speaker 1

I wondered what my portrait caught, something, there. That was only the second one I did, meaning the techniques are somewhat cruder. Nevertheless, I realized I did keep seeing Jonathan, and I'm sure that was in them, meaning, yes, they would be thinking of it perhaps all day.

Speaker 14

I don't know what he was thinking about when he painted it, but I just look at it and I just think about our dad. So that's what it's about to me, really. It's about our dad. You know, David absolutely loved my dad and vice versa. They had this amazing friendship. So, and I suppose it must be quite a strange situation for David as well-being faced with the, you know, the offspring. There's A slightly mournful quality to it as well, just a glance, just a glint in the eye or something like that. And I mean, the obvious similarities that we have physically with our father as well. So like that, I guess that comes into play. I mean, I was thinking about my dad and I was thinking about being sisters and I was thinking, God, my back hurts. And then that's it. And then suddenly it's all over and you've been done. You don't see yourself properly. I mean, nobody knows what they really sound like. Nobody knows what they really sound like. And it's... And sometimes other people do know. I'm not bright pink. Probably best not to have seen the real thing really. Then you're looking at it as a picture and you're looking at it as the two people in the picture and what the picture is about.

Speaker 1

That's what happened. The account of the day is left on a piece of four pieces of paper that I worked on.

Speaker 2

Hockney was testing his powers of observation and intuition, but not so as to achieve any sort of conventional likeness.

Speaker 1

Yeah, how it's seen, and I know about what cameras do, actually.

Speaker 2

He talks about these double portraits as stories, but he appears to be working not so much as a journalist, giving an account of two people, but more as a novelist, constructing his own personal narratives around his friends.

Speaker 1

And I thought I'd got that.

Speaker 6

In the portraits you've been doing, how much is you and how much is them?

Speaker 1

I suppose, actually, most of it is probably me, isn't it? Well, what are you doing? Are you giving an account of an experience? that the experience is odd. Two people sitting in front of you. What are they going to do? It's going to take you some time to do this. I'm doing them for myself, remember, not for the sitters. Frankly, what they think of them, I never ask. I'm unconcerned anyway. After all, I'm not. Giving my pictures to the sitters. No, I'll keep them.

Speaker 2

The sitters have offered themselves as guinea pigs in an experiment they are flattered to have been chosen for, but the nature of which they can only guess at. And the experiment was gradually widening and came to include Hockney's neighbours, ex-Tory minister Lord Gowrie, who he'd known in the 60s, and Knighty, his wife.

Speaker 15

He's A mysterious man. He's very easy and incredibly friendly and great fun, very intelligent. But I think he sees everything. But what he makes of the people he paints is quite another matter. David. thought of two people, and he had a sort of subtext for each of these couples, people who like each other, people who don't like each other, people who may have some tensions between them. And I think he's very interested in the psychological combination between these two people he's painted. With Grey and Mead, it might have been Grey has been ill, You know, how do people look when they've come through a major period of illness? And maybe that fascinated him.

Speaker 3

He was doing it existential reasons that this was the way to spend the day. And you get that feeling. This is an autobiographical series. It's about him being back in London. He's very good at getting the like. of the age or the times, the zeitgeist, the spirit of the times. In the kind of grungy oughties, as I think the age we're now in is described, people look flatter, more withdrawn, more private. The images look slightly like images perhaps seen distantly on television or in a newspaper. The mugshots have an era to me.

Speaker 2

That summer, the tables had been turned on Hockney when he felt the full force of being closely examined by no less than Lucian Freud, an old friend and Britain's most respected portrait painter. In contrast to the speed of Hockney's current style, this encounter was to last for over 4 months.

Speaker 1

Very few people, I think, paint that slow, actually. Always working, always making some decision.

Speaker 2

Hockney filled his sketchbooks with the almost daily routine of the sittings. The early morning walks across Holland Park, the things that caught his eye in Freud's studio.

Speaker 1

I found his energy stimulating. People give off energy, and Lucian at 80 does. It's amazing, terrific. When Lucian painted me, he's actually scrutinizing my face. I was just going to show you a terrible portrait. on a bus pass here. It's not a scrutiny. Most people don't get an opportunity to look at someone's face for a long time. I must admit, I always saw myself there, always. I was looking at him, fascinated, of course. When someone's looking quite intensely. Again, it shows in the face, it's going to. I mean, you're calculating, you're measuring, you're interpreting. My eyes go a bit like, well, Lucian's do when they're looking. Yeah, it's... When he came to sit for me, you see, he won't sit still. He can't. He, I know he won't stay very long. When he came on his own, I did a drawing. It's more like the public image thing, Prince of Darkness stuff, you know. So the next time, because I've been doing the doubles, I thought, I want you to come with David, his assistant, David Dawson. And David, you know, adores Lucien and looks after the studio firm, and thinks Lucien is very kind. So the presence of David makes a difference. You see, and you've got another side, and it was done in 3 1/2 hours. The advantage I had is, of course, I'd been looking at him for 120 hours. I'd been looking at his face, and I have a very good memory. I remember lots and lots of things. So actually, that was how you managed it, because he's asking to sit down and straight away. I mean, if I was

doing that, he'd be complaining. And then he'd fall asleep a bit. I'm tired now. Well, he is 80. What can you do? But he'll come again. Yeah, Lucien was falling asleep. So I began, well, should I do it, begin it again, you know? If people fall asleep well, okay, I'll do them asleep, you know, what do you do? I do have a little bell now to press, if you nod off, that works. I just press the bell and they wake up. When I did it for Howard, and Anthony thought, said to me later, Oh, well, that bell didn't work. I said, Well, it did. He thought the bell was to signal somebody to bring in a cup of tea. I said, No, no, it was to wake up Howard, and it worked. To do them fast, of course, you need some confidence, yeah. Which... Maybe older, I don't know. The Chinese, I said this to Lucian Freud, the Chinese say painting is an old man's art.

Speaker 2

Thirty years ago, Hockney worked on his double portraits as slowly as Freud, taking six months or more over a single picture. Now he was doing them in a day. As to why he'd returned to the double portraits, his friends point out that in painting from life, he was often painting his own life, using his art to tell his own stories and to know himself better. One of Hockney's old London friends was George Lawson, who's appeared in both series of double portraits.

Speaker 16

I'm sitting somehow like this, staring at you, and you're staring at David.

Speaker 10

Yes.

Speaker 16

Right. So the story and the legs, of course, and how they cross and how the figures themselves intertwine is half the story, isn't it? If I'm looking at you and you're looking at him, that's one of David's ways of saying what's going on. We're in a sort of triangle with...

Speaker 10

I was far more interested in David than I was in George that day, understandably.

Speaker 2

George Lawson had sat for Hockney with his then partner, the dancer Wayne Sleep. The large painting was never finished and spelt the end to that era of double portraits.

Speaker 16

In that early portrait, that 1972 one, I'm sitting clavichord playing, and Wayne is standing, looking out, isn't he? Yes, so I'm looking at Wayne. Funnily enough, it's a good

thing, and Wayne's looking out at David. David was unhappy with it, and it's certainly true that when he was breaking up with Peter Schlesinger, he was also trying to paint us. And I think that was very hard for him, because I was, you know, getting on well. There was a lot of talk about a vanishing point, whatever that means. He struggled with it for a very long time, but simply wasn't able to resolve either the problems, perhaps, that were in his own head of his own life, or pictorial problems. We have seen lots of people together for a long time and then changing, perhaps. If you think of the portrait of Ozzie and Celia, which one would you think was about to leave or impermanent. And with Henry Gelzal and thing-me-bob, I suppose he is standing up. That's, there's a standing sitting theme going through, isn't there one standing? So I suppose the standing one is more likely to be the one leaving or in motion or thinking about, less permanent, let's say. Surely these are pictures of a moment. There's not a great history of relationships. That's the way we were then at that moment, yeah. And another time, you'd be looking at me or it would be quite different.

Speaker 6

And how were you at that moment?

Speaker 10

It did come at a particularly strange time.

Speaker 16

Yes.

Speaker 10

David didn't realise that, but at that time I was waiting for some tests from a hospital, which I was due to get the next day. And it was a time of reasonable stress, really, for the two of us. Subsequently, everything turned out fine. But I slept very badly that week, and I wasn't very at ease with myself at that time. And there was a lot of doubt and worry. I think love's very important to David, isn't it?

Speaker 16

Oh, yes, in the Puccini sense, yes, we're Larp.

Speaker 10

My name is Larp.

Speaker 2

John Fitzherbert has lived with Hockney for over 10 years. He's been painted and drawn many times over, and twice in this series, with his half-brothers Robbie and then Jamie.

Speaker 17

John said to me, you've got to have a good night's sleep, you've got to feel fresh, you know, eat lots of fruit and all the rest of it, and come early in the morning, you know, maybe practice getting up early. Of course he didn't. I messed up the whole thing. I said drinking all night, I didn't sleep. I said about half an hour.

Speaker 5

For five hours and then he's like, why am I so tired, John? And that's what David painted, this guy falling off the chair, lunging towards.

Speaker 17

He really understood the way I, he really painted the way I was to feel. No, he definitely paints.

Speaker 5

That's why it's so important to be sort of... I mean, you have to respect the moment, don't you? If you care.

Speaker 1

John, actually, in that picture, you can tell, is a little bit annoyed with Jamie. You can see that John actually squeezing his hands. And he's moving away from him. He was a little bit angry with him. Nevertheless, I just persevered and thought, well, let's see what happens when you put it down.

Speaker 5

It wasn't the picture that I wanted captured. I think it's a unique opportunity and I think it was kind of lost. But I mean, Jamie has a bit of a history. He came out to LA a couple of years ago, and David had bought me a white Jaguar, and Jamie was driving it and totally wrecked it. So David's convinced that it was a conspiracy. I was jealous of John. Never quite forgiven.

Speaker 17

John's lifestyle.

Speaker 5

He's not that keen on my brother, so he's, he will always paint them as a little, I mean, he'll always, I always feel that he does me, well, because we have a relationship with him, so.

Speaker 6

When he paints you, do you see David's relationship with you?

Speaker 5

Yeah, I do. It tells me quite a lot. Sometimes it tells me more of... I get more from the picture than maybe I would from David himself. He's not very good at... Yeah. Yeah, I do.

Speaker 17

Will you find out more about him through his eyes?

Speaker 5

Well, not necessarily about him, but about his relationship with me and how he sees me. I get quite a lot of that from the pictures. And since we've been in England, they've all been rather touching.

Speaker 1

Affection. I mean, it does come into it. Of course it does. But you don't want it to blind you. What is there? What do I see? I mean, as I say, they surprise me a little bit. What is happening? Remember, you don't. You're not thinking consciously when you're painting that way. You're not actually, you're reacting to things and things are happening. You don't, you're not thinking very consciously clearly. It's another kind of thinking you're doing.

Speaker 5

I've always thought that if he doesn't paint, He's kind of lost in a way. It's like a medicine. He has to do it. He said to me one day, you know, I have a bit of a bum deal, John. Relationships I'm no good at, but I realized from a young age that I was given this job to do, and that's, and you accept that, and that's, and it's quite wonderful.

Speaker 17

Yeah.

Speaker 5

I mean, it's hard if you live with somebody, but, yeah. Maybe you could have been there. And he's happiest in the studio when he's working. And we all understand that. And that's what we aim to, you know, make everything comfortable so he can do that. That's our job.

Speaker 1

We draw every day, every day. Oh, every day.

Speaker 17

Every day something.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah, I do. Practice, skill is practice. Did you know? Every day. Every day. And if you do that, you get better and better.

Speaker 6

What so intrigues you about other people's relationship?

Speaker 1

Isn't everybody interested in other people's relationship?

Speaker 6

Are they? Not many artists have that as a subject, though.

Speaker 1

How would I answer that? Well, I am fascinated. Yes, I am, actually. Probably because mine haven't been as good. How do people get on with each other? They do. I mean, I observe that. A lot do. More do than don't, actually. We do need other people. I mean, we all need friends or something. Perfectly natural thing, two people together. I mean, that's how we, why we're here, isn't it?

Speaker 18

You see, Margaret and I have shared so many things over the years, but we both have our own space. So...

Speaker 19

Which that shows in a way, doesn't it?

Speaker 18

We're not the lovey-dovey sort of couple. We do our own things, but as long as we know what the other one is doing, then that's fine.

Speaker 2

Hockney had tried painting a large watercolour of his sister and her partner of 18 years up in Yorkshire, where they live. In the end, he came away with two drawings.

Speaker 19

That was when you were quite ill.

Speaker 18

Yes. It's more of an intimate portrait, that. I think there's more of a relationship.

Speaker 19

Yes, because there's a lot of worry in that one.

Speaker 18

That's right. And Margot's worried about my health, and I'm... Worried about giving Margaret so much. Well, I'm thinking that she's too big for me alone. There's a lot of things come into it from that. And that's on that one. But I'm saying to her, well, look at poor old me. That's when I said I got a graveyard cough. Yeah. I don't think he, you know.

Speaker 19

That was the last he was going to do.

Speaker 18

It was a hacking one.

Speaker 19

I think it frightened David a bit doing that one.

Speaker 18

I think it might have done. Yeah.

Speaker 19

When he's here, it doesn't miss much, does it? So he's observing you separately to me. And when he wants to draw us, he sort of suggests how we should be. And what I think he's probably doing is putting us in a way that he feels, yes, well, you should, you face, because it changes you, doesn't it, first? He'll say, you look at me. No, you look over there. Until he must find the way that he... thinks that's how they depicts them artistically. Now when I first saw the one he did of my parents, when my mother was looking straight ahead, my father's reading a newspaper, do you know that one? When I first saw that, oh I thought he's got them brilliant, they've just done it correctly, that's just how my mother would be. Come on David, I want to come with you, my father, let me know when you're ready. And it dawned on me when he started drawing and painting us, he would have told them to sit like that, because he knew that's how they were. So he knows the story, but he makes it happen. I was quite impressed with that one of my parents. And I said, you've really got them. They're both so much on their own. And then I did tell him that I thought a lot of his portraits were depicting not so much loneliness as a loneliness. They're very solitary, but people are. Everybody's on their own, aren't they? At the end of the day, no matter how much company you've got, you're on your own. And I think that's what does come out. Even with double portraits, to me, I still see two people. alone, but fortunately with somebody who possibly understands that aloneness.

Speaker 1

A lot of me paintings she felt were about loneliness, which was an observation very few others made. And she knows me as well, meaning To assume I always looked on the bright side was a bit of a wrong assumption. I don't, actually. I can be quite pessimistic, very, about wretched human beings. Yes, I can. Some of my friends have complained, saying, now, you're always drawing yourself while you're, when you're a bit down or something. I said, well, it's true that sometimes, I sometimes think, time to look at myself. Let's have a look at myself. Well, one thing you can't do is smile at yourself. Not really, not in a mirror. I mean, for a few seconds, perhaps, but you know. Sometimes what you see, you just start trying to deal with.

Speaker 2

Hockney's year in London came to an end with an exhibition of the work. The private experiment was finally going public, for the sitters and for Hockney himself. Hockney has always enjoyed taking risks. He knew he was challenging the art establishment, by radically reworking the portrait, that most conservative and British of all art forms, and by using watercolor, a medium associated with the amateur Sunday painter. The critics dealt him a mixed press, and some were outright hostile to the new experiments, calling them uneven, clumsy, unflattering, and caricatured.

Speaker 6

You're not going to take any notice of the critics.

Speaker 1

No, I never take care. It's what I think that counts, frankly, always. Time to leave here now and go isolate myself in California. Although it was very good here, I felt I could isolate myself here for a long time. I'm not very social. because of your deafness, actually, so that keeps you just in the studio better.

Speaker 2

The London studio is winding down, but the work carries on for Hockney in California. There's no end insight to the great experiment with watercolour, to the non-stop flow of images that took off over the course of one year in London. It was a year in Hockney's life that played itself out in the portraits he made of others, that saw the start of a new chapter in his career, as he continues to reinvent himself, probing and questioning the world he sees around him.

Speaker 1

Do we know what things look like? I suppose most people assume we do, actually. We know precisely what they look like, or so they think. But I'm just questioning that, do we really? Likeness. Is this like you? Or what I see? What? So was that the compass thing of it? Can I see something else? Lots of things to see, actually.