

The Museum of Modern Art

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DAVID HOCKNEY ETCHINGS "THE BLUE GUITAR" ON VIEW AT MOMA

An exhibition of a portfolio of twenty etchings by the noted British artist David Hockney will be on view in the third-floor Sachs Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art, April 10 through July 3, 1979. DAVID HOCKNEY: THE BLUE GUITAR is being directed by Alexandra Schwartz, Assistant Curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books.

"This portfolio of twenty etchings by David Hockney was inspired by the Wallace Stevens poem The Man with the Blue Guitar, written in 1937," writes Ms. Schwartz in her wall label for the exhibition. "Stevens's lyric poem, which expresses the distinction between art and life, was in turn inspired by Picasso's Blue Period painting The Old Guitarist. Employing the guitar as a symbol of the imagination and the guitarist as creator of our visions, the poem deals with the never-ending conjunction between things as they are and things imagined. On the same level, using images of shadows, glass, curtains, and the stage to suggest ambiguity, Hockney wittily explores some of the problems of formally representing actual space and volume with illusionary devices. While the artist does make straightforward references to the works of the Surrealists Ernst and Magritte, most of Hockney's imagery in this series is drawn from Picasso's own oeuvre and stylistic achievements, most notably the conceptual ideas of Analytic Cubism. Appropriately, The Old Guitarist is replicated in the beginning of the portfolio, while in the final print, carefully entitled What is this Picasso?, Hockney has cleverly incorporated his own rendition of a Picasso painting from 1937, the year of Stevens's poem."

David Hockney's previous literary etchings are well known and much admired--Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm and Fourteen Poems from C.P. Cavafy. He has stated that the etchings for The Blue Guitar "were not conceived as literal illustrations for the poem but as an interpretation of its themes in visual terms." Utilizing an ingenious color-etching technique devised by Aldo Crommelynck, who printed Picasso's etching for twenty-five years and in 1973 taught Hockney the new process in Paris, the artist was able to spontaneously draw his images directly on the copper plates. In addition to the twenty etchings from the portfolio, two copper plates and five black-and-white proofs will also be included in the exhibition. The Blue Guitar was published in 1977 by the Petersburg Press.

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For further information, please contact Luisa Kreisberg, Director (212) 956-2648 or Bruce Wolmer (212) 956-7298, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019.