David HOCKNEY (Bradford Born 1937)

Portrait of Michael Horovitz

Red and blue-green ink.
Inscribed by the artist, signed and dated Micheal [sic] Horovitz / Drawn by David Hockney / on June 22Nd 1978. in red ink, and in 17 Powis Terrace, / W.11. in blue-green ink at the lower left.
355 x 433 mm. (14 x 17 in.)

Two years older than his friend Hockney, Michael Horovitz (b.1935) is a jazz poet, literary editor and artist who is best known as the founder of the poetry magazine New Departures in 1959. Hockney contributed illustrations to several issues of New Departures, as did such contemporaries as Peter Blake and R. B. Kitaj. In 1969 Horovitz appeared at the International Poetry Incarnation at the Royal Albert Hall in London, alongside Allen Ginsberg, and launched the Poetry Olympics in 1980. More recently, in December 2004, Hockney and Horovitz collaborated on the design of a greeting card intended to publicize and challenge the closure of a West London post office.

The present portrait was drawn, as Hockney notes on the sheet, in June 1978 in the artist's studio at 17 Powis Terrace in Notting Hill, West London. Hockney moved into a first-floor flat there in 1962, and was to live there for almost twenty years, eventually coming to own the whole house. A later portrait drawing of Michael Horovitz by Hockney, dated August 5th, 1980 and dedicated to the poet, was used for the cover of Horovitz's book Wordsounds and Sightlines, published in 1984. The drawing, in ink and wax crayon and of similar dimensions to the present sheet, later appeared at auction in London in 2004.

The medium of coloured ink was one that Hockney seems only occasionally to have used for drawings in this period of his career, though he was to return to the technique in a series of portrait drawings made in 2002, using red and black ink applied with extensive shading and crosshatching.

Provenance:

Presented by the artist to Michael Horovitz, London and Bisley, Gloucestershire
Fosse Gallery, Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, in 1988
Private collection, Ledbury, Herefordshire
By descent to a private collection.

Literature:

Michael Horovitz, Growing Up: Selected Poems and Pictures 1951-'79, London, 1979, illustrated in colour on the cover.

Artist description:

Long recognized as one of the finest draughtsmen of his generation, David Hockney began drawing from a very early age and continued to do so throughout his long career. Indeed, it may be argued that drawing was always his primary medium, lying as it did at the heart of his artistic process. As he has once stated, 'It is the most immediate thing you can do as an artist. It is direct. Drawing gives you a confidence and it opens your eyes.'

The American art critic and curator Gene Baro, in an early account of the artist's work on paper, noted

that, ‘A Hockney drawing discovers its attitudes in process of being made; such ambiguity as it may possess is all of a piece and belongs to the person and the occasion. In short, Hockney does not impose a way of seeing upon what he sees; the drawings are, in effect, dialogues, rather than monologues…The drawings in colour…are more playful – and more wasteful, however charming. Usually, they are coloured drawings and not drawings in colour. The linear forms, patterns, and graphic energies are in no inevitable relationship to the hues. Colour serves rather as a gloss upon or support of the meaning as sheer line or pattern…But even at its most arbitrary or decorative Hockney’s colour will beguile the eye.’