

## WEEK FOUR - INGRES

Thursday, 20 February 2024, 12:45 - 2:15 PM EST.  
Harvard Art Museums, Art Study Center

JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES (1780-1867) studied in the French neoclassical school with Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), the preeminent painter of grand history and narrative works. But Ingres was also one of the best draftsmen with graphite and paper of any era. The Hockney thesis was born in 1999, when Hockney happened to visit a major exhibition of Ingres's portraits at the National Gallery in London, both drawings and paintings, assembled from international loans<sup>5</sup>. Hockney marveled at the drawings, seeing photographic precision with unerring lines in some parts and loose sketching in other parts. His hunch was that the assured and definite lines had been traced. Hockney guessed that Ingres sometimes used a tool like a camera lucida and sometimes drew freehand with "eyeball". At Harvard, we can study many of these drawings up close with the largest Ingres collection outside France.

In 1811, Ingres was crushed when his *Jupiter and Thetis*, submitted for a final student project to the French Academy, was poorly received. Why *Jupiter and Thetis* was ridiculed whereas David's *Oath of the Horatii* was revered is beyond our scope (Figs. 75, 76). For us, this marked a turning point for Ingres. Ingres did not return to France until 1824. He stayed in Italy to lick his wounds, indulging in the self-pity of misunderstood artist who had to suffer. To support himself, he turned to portraits. "Cursed portraits! They always keep me from undertaking important things." Portraits were the important things.



Figure 74: *Self-Portrait* by Ingres (1859).  
[Link to painting at Harvard](#)



Figure 75: *Jupiter and Thetis* by Ingres (1811), [Link to painting at Google Arts and Culture](#)

Figure 76: *Oath of the Horatii* by David (1784), [Link to painting at Wikipedia](#)

<sup>5</sup> Portraits by Ingres : image of an epoch. Metropolitan Museum of Art : Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1999. ISBN 0870998900

IN FRENCH-OCCUPIED ITALY, Ingres was able to support himself with commissions, thanks to tourists who wanted pencil portraits. In these ‘starving artist’ years, Ingres estimated he made three hundred portrait drawings, earning about \$32,000 in today’s dollars. Before photography, if you wanted a fully-realized likeness of yourself beyond the contours of a silhouette, a pencil portrait by a draftsman as good as Ingres was the quickest and cheapest way to get an photo-realistic image. Sitters reported that Ingres would deliver a drawing within days. Sometimes he drew sitters alone (Figs. 77, 78). Sometimes he drew families (Fig. 79). Many drawings exhibited exquisitely drawn faces amid loosely drawn backgrounds. A tourist seeking a pencil portraits perhaps sought a form of visual “non-fiction” that they could take home, analogous to a modern photobooth, as opposed to seeking a self-transformation of their visage into high art.



Figure 77: *Portrait of Count Adolphe de Colombet de Landos* by Ingres, 1812 [Link to drawing](#)



Figure 78: *Portrait of Madame Charles Hayard* by Ingres, 1812 [Link to drawing](#)

Figure 79: *Portrait of Mrs. George Vesey and Her Daughter Elizabeth Vesey* by Ingres, 1816. [Link to drawing](#)

WHEN IN ROME, Ingres also executed a new painting that is now in Harvard's collection, *Raphael and the Fornarina* (Fig. 83). Near the end of his life, Ingres would rank this painting as his fourth most imaginative work (after three grand history paintings). Harvard has the first version of the painting, which Ingres would repeat and revise in several other versions. Ingres did not paint a woman sitting in his studio, but copied the woman in Raphael's *La Fornarina*. This Fornarina (Italian for baker) was thought to be Raphael's mistress (and the cause of his death through excessive love-making according to Vasari, his first biographer). La Fornarina is also thought to be the subject for the Virgin in his *Madonna of the Chair* that leans on the back wall in Ingres's depiction. Ingres's Raphael resembles the Raphael of his self-portrait (Fig. 82).



Figure 80: *La Fornarina* by Raphael, 1518/1519 [Link to painting](#)



Figure 81: *Madonna della Seggiola* by Raphael, 1513/1514 [Link to painting](#)



Figure 82: *Self-Portrait* by Raphael, 1504/1506 [Link to painting](#)

Figure 83: *Raphael and La Fornarina* by Ingres, 1814 [Link to painting](#)

THE CHARACTERS IN RAPHAEL AND THE FORNARINA are fictional, and presumably not drawn with an optical tool. Interestingly, the study for the painting in the Harvard Art Museums is the drawn visage of the Fornarina that has the same qualities that convinced Hockney that Ingres used a camera lucida tool to draw real sitters (Fig. 86). Ingres self-drawn self-portrait also has these very same qualities of photographic quality and unerring lines (Fig. 85). It is hard to see how Ingres could have used a camera lucida to draw himself. Ingres drawing of his wife is also photographic in quality. A husband would perhaps be unwise to draw his wife with every blemish captured with photographic accuracy. If Ingres used a camera lucida, he did so selectively, not for every picture and not for every detail.



Figure 84: *Delphine Ingres* by Ingres, 1855 [Link to painting](#)



Figure 85: *Self-portrait* by Ingres, 1822 [Link to drawing](#)

Figure 86: *Study for La Fornarina* by Ingres [Link to drawing](#)

#### HOCKNEY ALSO MARVELED AT INGRES PORTRAIT PAINTINGS.

Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, seen by the public in the Louvre after 1797, would inspire a cult following. High-society women subscribed to the mythology of the subject transformed into a timeless work of art. In his paintings of these women who sought Ingres to effect their transformation, Ingres would lavish as much attention on their expensive clothing and accessories as the subjects themselves. Hockney could not believe that the complexity of the folds and crumples of intricately patterned fabric could be captured without help from an optical device. Hockney, an extraordinarily prolific and busy artist, would expect any artist would take shortcuts, if they could.

Ingres's portrait painting was as much fantasy as reality. The seated portrait of Madame Paul-Sigisbert Moitessier is an apotheosis of his subject – whom he didn't originally want to paint until he met her and saw what she looked like – giving her the posture of the Arcadian goddess in a fresco in Naples and an impassive regal gaze (Figs. 88, 89). Was Ingres in a hurry? Ingres spent 12 years on this painting that underwent multiple revisions including erasing her daughter and changing her dress to keep up with trending fashion.



Figure 87: *Madame Jacques-Louis Leblanc* by Ingres, 1823 [Link to painting](#)



Figure 88: *Madame Moitessier* by Ingres, 1844-1856 [Link to painting](#)



Figure 89: Fresco depicting Hercules finding his son Telephus in Arcadia, from Basilica of Ercolano, Naples province, Italy

PICASSO ADMIRED INGRES. In his painting of Marie-Thérèse Walter, he mimics the pose of Madame Moitessier – head on hand, fan not book, and mirror reflecting her face from the side.



Figure 90: *Woman with a Book* by Picasso, 1932. [Link to Painting](#)

HOCKNEY DID MASTER THE USE OF THE CAMERA LUCIDA, and used it to draw hundreds of pictures of his friends. In Hockney's own portrait exhibition at the National Gallery in London he responded to Ingres with a series of portrait drawings of the gallery guards, a visual pun, drawing the men and women who watch the men and women who look at the drawings. The uniformity of the uniformed guards allows the viewer to focus on their differences, the keenly observed differences in posture, body language, and human nature that makes these images truer than photographs.

When Hockney realized he could achieve the same effects as Ingres when drawing others, he became convinced that Ingres also wielded a tool like a camera lucida, easily achieving a scientific precision that would have taken more time and effort to achieve without the device. Hockney was not the first person to observe "scientific" disinterest in Ingres's drawings. Charles Blanc, the first professor of art history at the College de France, also marveled at the lifelike quality of Ingres's portrait drawings, writing "art is, when it wants to be, more exact than science, more precise than mathematics... more sensitive than collodion, more subtle than chloride, more clear-sighted than light... truer, at last, than truth itself." The prism of the artist's mind is more revealing than the prism of the camera lucida.

In the end, Hockney is an artist, not a mechanic. This is revealed in his own process when using a camera lucida, from a letter to Martin Kemp.

Los Angeles, 1999

Dear Martin,

As I keep repeating, the use of optics does not necessarily mean that fantastic clear images (like a projected slide) are needed. We are talking about imaginative clever artists, just as I used the camera lucida for two minutes (you can't really trace a living face) and then worked hard for two hours, so with others. A good artist doesn't need that much help from them and would know how to use the deficiencies, they have imagination after all....

As ever,

DH

Notably, when Hockney drew himself, he used a mirror, not a camera lucida – like the artist in Honoré Daumier's *A French Painter Paints Himself* – and he would need more than one mirror to see himself from the side.



Figure 91: *Self Portrait* by Hockney, 1983



Figure 92: *Self Portrait Using Three Mirrors* by Hockney, 2003



Figure 93: *A French Painter Paints Himself* by Daumier, 1823



Figure 94: *Twelve Portraits after Ingres in a Uniform Style* by Hockney, 1999

DOES A WORK OF ART cease to be a work of art if a tool was deceptively used in its execution? Immanuel Kant thought about this.

"But it is the indispensable requisite of the interest which we here take in beauty, that the beauty should be that of nature, and it vanishes completely as soon as we are conscious of having been deceived, and that it is only the work of art – so completely that even taste can then no longer find in it anything beautiful nor sight anything attractive. What do poets set more store on than the nightingale's bewitching and beautiful note, in a lonely thicket on a still summer evening by the soft light of the moon? And yet we have instances of how, where no such songster was to be found, a jovial host has played a trick on the guests with him on a visit to enjoy the country air, and has done so to their huge satisfaction, by biding in a thicket a rogue of a youth who (with a reed or rush in his mouth) knew how to reproduce this note so as to hit off nature to perfection. But the instant one realizes that it is all a fraud no one will long endure listening to this song that before was regarded as so attractive."

Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*

John Constable, the British landscape artist, considered himself a scientist.<sup>6</sup>

"Painting is a science," Constable said, "and should be pursued as an inquiry into the laws of nature. Why, then, may not landscape painting be considered as a branch of natural philosophy, of which pictures are but the experiments?"

HARVARD HAS A DRAWING BY CONSTABLE that we know was made using a transparent plane. Leonard da Vinci's sketchbooks describe the use of a transparent plane to sketch a scene: fix viewpoint; sketch the scene before you onto an intervening transparent plane; copy sketch onto paper. This is what Constable did, a study of perspective for architecture in a painting *Church Porch, East Bergholt* (Figs. 95, 96).



Figure 95: *The Church Porch, East Bergholt* by John Constable [Link to painting at the Tate](#)



Figure 96: *Drawing of the Church Porch, East Bergholt* by John Constable.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst Gombrich. *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Princeton University Press, 2000. ISBN 0691070008

HARVARD HAS OTHER DRAWINGS that were made with optical tools. Cornelius Varley invented a patent graphic telescope, the most sophisticated drawing aid of his time, described in his *Treatise on Optical Drawing Instruments* in 1845<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 98). The Graphic Telescope, a combination of a telescope and camera obscura, allows the artist to simultaneously look forward at the subject and down on the drawing surface, so that drawn image can be matched to seen image. We can directly compare these drawings, known to have been made with optical tools, to drawings whose methods we can only speculate about.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Kemp. *The Science of Art*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1990. ISBN 0-300-04337-6



Figure 97: *At Parton Hall, Staffordshire, 1820* by Cornelius Varley. Made with graphic telescope.

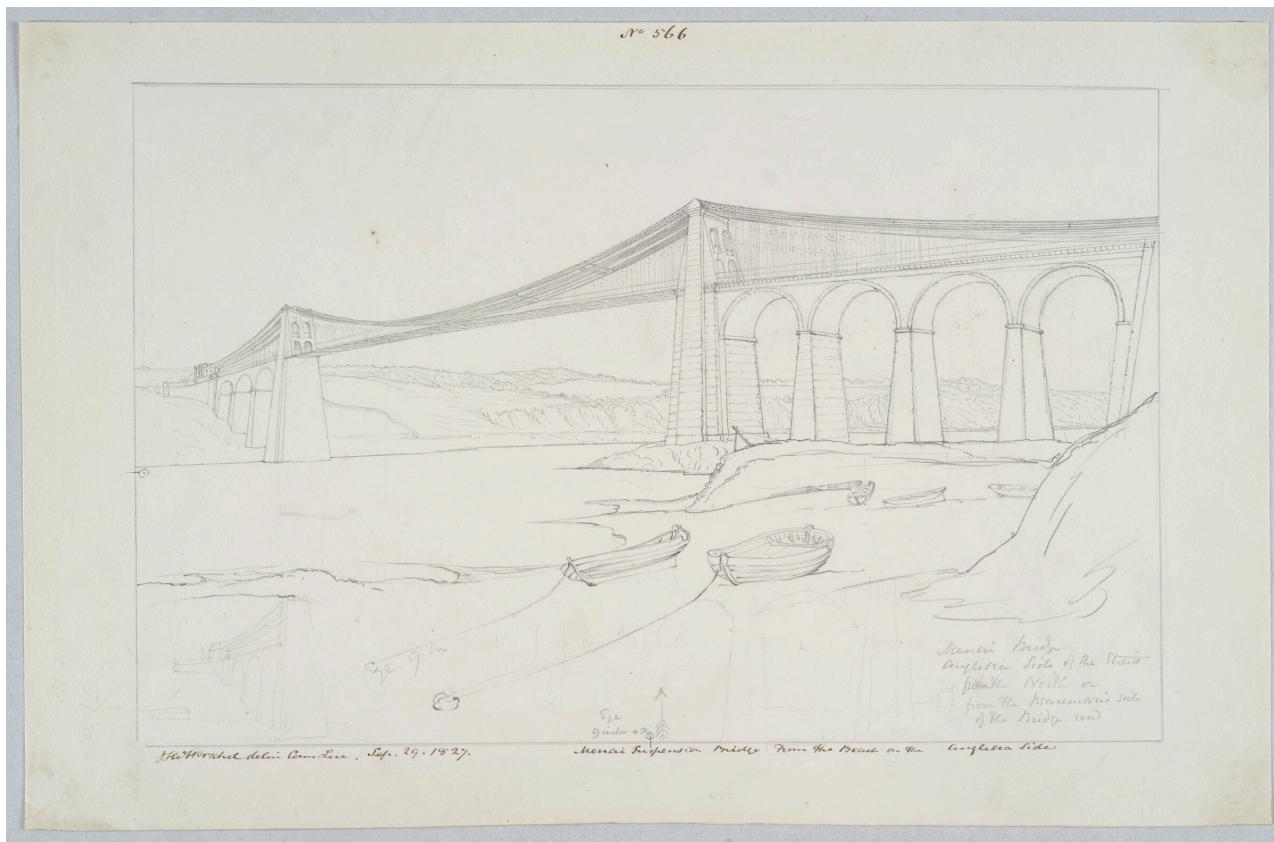


Figure 98: *Menai Suspension Bridge From the Beach on the Anglesea Side* by John Herschel, 1827. Made with camera lucida.

## WRITING

Read the Rosenblum article. This article describes the Ingres Portrait exhibit that originally inspired Hockney toward his theory. There is much in the Rosenblum article about photographic realism in Ingres, but Rosenblum doesn't dwell on the "how" of Ingres painting, but on the "what" and the "why". Read the article and comment about what you discover – both from the article and from looking at some of Ingres portraits of high-society women on the internet – about Ingres's dedication to optical realism in his paintings. Focus on a painting or two, and see if you now notice more than you might have noticed before.

## READING

- Martin Kemp. Lucid Looking: David Hockney's drawings using the camera lucida. *Nature*, 400:524, 1999 [Download paper](#)
- 'Ingres's Portraits and their Muses' by Robert Rosenblum In: *Portraits by Ingres : image of an epoch*. Metropolitan Museum of Art : Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1999. ISBN 0870998900 [Download paper](#)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Susan Siegfried. *Ingres: Painting Reimagined*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2009. ISBN 978-0-300-14883-1
- *Portraits by Ingres : image of an epoch*. Metropolitan Museum of Art : Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1999. ISBN 0870998900
- *Hockney's eye : the art and technology of depiction*. Paul Holberton Publishing Ltd., London, 2022. ISBN 1913645126
- Ernst Gombrich. *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Princeton University Press, 2000. ISBN 0691070008
- Martin Kemp. *The Science of Art*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1990. ISBN 0-300-04337-6

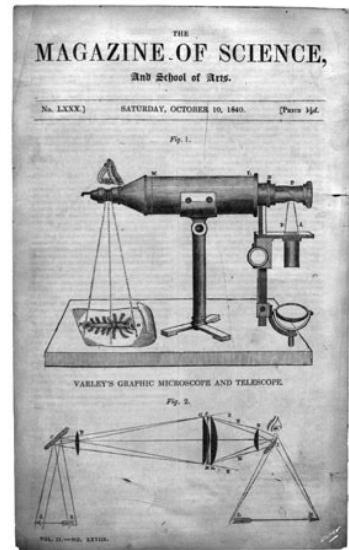


Figure 99: Illustration of the graphic telescope and its optical principles. From the Magazine of Science, and School of Arts, 1840.