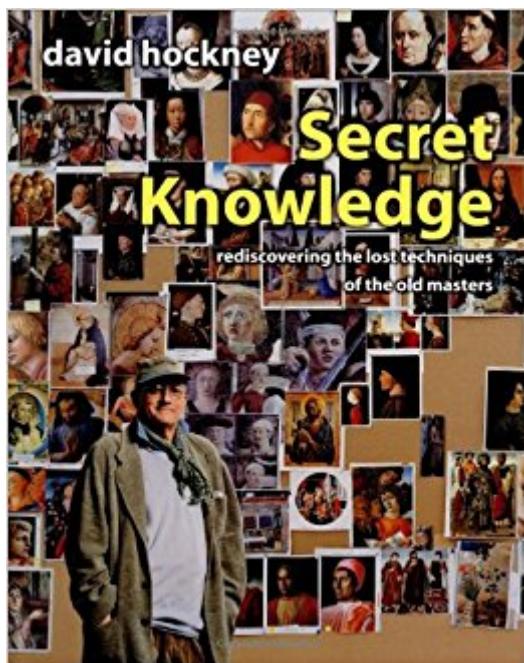


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# Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering The Lost Techniques Of The Old Masters



## Synopsis

Recently, David Hockney, often described as the "world's most popular artist," has made headlines not with his own work but with his sensational and controversial theories about how some of Western art's famous masterpieces—paintings by artists such as da Vinci, Caravaggio, Velázquez, and Van Eyck—were actually created. A chance observation of a drawing in London's National Gallery led Hockney to ask, "How was this done?" His answer led to fascinating insights into the history of art: that many of the world's most revered artists used mirrors and various optical devices—such as the camera obscura—to project images onto their canvases and then "traced" the scenes. Hockney's radical speculations have prompted both astonishment and outrage from prominent art historians and museum directors worldwide. The debate aside, *Secret Knowledge* offers readers the exhilarating opportunity to see the Old Masters afresh—through the eyes of a living master. In *Secret Knowledge*, hundreds of paintings are reproduced in stunning color plates, and many are discussed in close and accessible detail. Hockney's own drawings and photographs illustrate how artists would have used the technology available to them in rendering their subjects. Extracts from historical and modern documents provide further evidence while correspondence between Hockney and an impressive array of international art historians, curators, and scientists details both the evolution of his theory and the furor that has erupted over it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

British painter David Hockney, well known for his cool and lovely paintings of California pools, has

taken on the new role of detective. For two years Hockney seriously investigated the painting techniques of the old masters, and like any admirable sleuth, compiled substantial evidence to support his revolutionary theory. *Secret Knowledge* is the fruit of this labor, an exhaustive treatise in pictures revealing clues that some of the world's most famous painters, Ingres, Velázquez, Caravaggio (just to mention a few) utilized optics and lenses in creating their masterpieces. Hockney's fascination with the subject is contagious, and the book feels almost like a game with each analysis a "How'd they do that?" instead of a whodunit. While some may find the technical revelation a disappointment in terms of the idea of genius, Hockney is quick to point out that the use of optics does not diminish the immensity of artistic achievement. He reminds the reader that a tool is just a tool, and it is still the artist's hand and creative vision that produce a work of art. (296 pages, 460 illustrations, 402 in color.) --J.P. Cohen

When looking at pictures, one can have no more stimulating and provocative companion than Hockney. (The Times Literary Supplement, London) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a fascinating book and bravo to David Hockney for writing it, in spite of the controversy stirred up. He makes a good case for the use of optical devices to aid in some of the most celebrating paintings in history. I personally appreciate his explaining how some limbs in some works seemed to be out of proportion to other parts of the work or at an awkward angle, when the artist is clearly a good draftsman. This book solved that mystery for me. It also, comfortingly, gave me a bit of a laugh when I realized that, even in the 1600s, artists were experimenting and sometimes had some odd results. Thank you, Mr. Hockney!

Reveals how the tricks employed by modern artists (projectors and transfers) and considered "cheating" by closeted academics have, in fact, existed for six hundred years and have been employed (often in secret) by the very artists our teachers have unjustly deified. This book is an eye-opener, explaining how photographic realism suddenly appeared in paintings of the early 15th century, and it is an unflinching, pragmatic explanation that flies in the face of lies and misinformation many academics continue to spread and force upon students to this day. These untruths, to my mind, are reminiscent of the early church's death grip on power and influence, allowing less-talented academics to act as gateways and toll booths, setting themselves up as masters of their craft, sole proprietors of method and knowledge, able to take advantage of and

money from students chasing after fables and fairy tales.

Interesting ideas and opinions I found this study interesting and the photos excellent. I enjoyed the read. A big book with much to study

Great looking book arrived in fine condition and at the time promised. Many thanks for this copy. Mary

Excellent and so informative. I learned so much. The photographs of the paintings are excellent and Hockney is very persuasive about the use of optics by the masters.

After reading the book and looking at his evidence, I think David Hockney is right in his rather controversial assertion. It would only make sense that artists would take advantage of new technology to improve their paintings and you can see where the "perspective" in art changed.

Hockney makes a very interesting argument that cannot and should not be ignored. The images in this book are of the highest quality. A great read for anyone interested in the arts.

This book is great. It really explains through time how artists' skill were able to transition so quickly. The pictures are super helpful and large. While I don't like the size of the book (coffee table size book) because it is hard to take with me, but knowing it's that large for the pictures-- makes sense.

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