ARTIST AND SITTER
LEARNING RESOURCE
GALLERY TOURS
Interactive and exploratory Gallery tours introduce students to key works from the collection.

Gallery tours explore particular themes, including:
• Approaches to Colour • Storytelling in Art
• Impressionism & Post-Impressionism • Materials & Processes • Landscape • Portraiture & Identity
• The Courtauld Collection Gallery Highlights.

Our tours can be individually tailored to fit with your students’ current study theme and curriculum.

DRAW & TOUR WORKSHOPS
Led by experienced artist-educators, students will investigate different ways of looking, recording, and questioning works in the Gallery and will be introduced to a variety of drawing techniques in response to what they have seen.

Draw and Tour themes include:
• Approaches to Colour • Portraiture • The Body in Art
• Impressionism & Post-Impressionism • Landscape.

Materials are provided, but we encourage students to bring their own sketchbooks.

ART & SCIENCE WORKSHOPS
This fascinating workshop combines the subjects of Art and Science to give students a greater understanding of the materials and processes used in art across the centuries. Students will learn how artists from the past created pigments, and how recent scientific developments such as infrared and x-ray can help us to better understand paintings.

OUTREACH PROJECTS
We offer a range of bespoke outreach projects for schools with a higher than average number of pupils on free school meals. A visit to The Courtauld Gallery will be the starting point for students to explore themes within our permanent collection or one of our temporary exhibitions. This is followed by a series of practical workshops in school where our artist-educators work closely with teachers to help students to extend and develop their skills.

BOOKING INFORMATION
Email: education@courtauld.ac.uk
Telephone: 020 3947 7589

Advance booking is essential. State school bookings are free of charge. Independent schools are required to pay a fee to cover the basic costs.
The idea to focus our latest Learning Resource on the Artist and Sitter was derived from the exhibition *Soutine’s Portraits: Cooks, Waiters and Bellboys* (19 October 2017 - 21 January 2018).

In the early 1920s, Chaïm Soutine became fascinated by the cooks and waiting staff of French hotels and restaurants, attired in boldly coloured uniforms. Over the next decade, these humble figures sat for Soutine in Paris and the south of France. The resource's opening chapters seek to explore what was unique about Soutine's paintings as well as speculating on his influences. The last two chapters take a step into the 21st century to assess what it is like for an artist to paint from life and conversely the experience of being a model for an artist. Throughout the text key terms have been highlighted in green and feature in the Glossary at the end of the resource.

The principle themes that feature throughout the Learning Resource Artist and Sitter are included in a PowerPoint presentation that you can access within the enclosed CD.

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To book a visit to The Gallery or to discuss any of the education projects at The Courtauld Gallery please email: education@courtauld.ac.uk or telephone: 020 3947 7589
What initiated the concept of this exhibition?

Exhibitions at The Courtauld Gallery seek to shed light on fascinating but overlooked episodes in art history. They are always driven by new research and present a tight focus on a specific group of works or on a revealing theme. They sometimes take as their starting point a masterpiece from our permanent collection, offering the opportunity to place that work in context and gain a deeper understanding of it.

In this case, The Courtauld owns one of the only two portraits by the Russian-born painter Chaïm Soutine in a public collection in the UK, *Young Woman in a White Blouse* (1923). Soutine was one of the most significant artists working in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. We wanted to showcase his work and decided to focus on his portraits (he was also a prolific still-life and landscape painter). In particular, the series of portraits of hotel and restaurant staff seemed particularly fruitful as it also incorporated a fascinating social aspect. Our painting is not included in the exhibition since it does not strictly fit the theme but visitors will be able to compare it with other portraits by Soutine, brought together for the exhibition.

Can you tell me a bit more about this portrait - *Young Woman in a White Blouse*?

The sitter is anonymous and yet Soutine has managed to render a sense of her inner life in his application of paint. His instinctive technique emphasises the features of her face while he has treated her blouse and arms in a much looser way. Soutine often pushed and stretched the forms of his sitters, to focus on particular aspects of the human body that fascinated him most. Here, the woman’s large eyes, bright red lips and dark hair are particularly striking. While this approach could border on caricature, the effect is in fact to reveal a certain vulnerability, solemnity and pathos in Soutine’s sitters.

Soutine deploys a variety of different types of brushwork, from broad stokes to fine linear detailing. This makes the viewer’s eye move around the canvas, sometimes settling on certain details that offer moments of intimacy amidst the more cursory passages of painting.

The exhibition predominantly comprises portraits of cooks, waiters and bellboys. Why is that? Was Soutine ever commissioned to paint portraits for the wealthier members of French society at the time?

Soutine was the only artist to make figures portrayed in their working uniforms a major subject of his art and this series is today considered one of his main achievements. Over the course of a long decade, from the late 1910s to the early 1930s, Soutine painted around 30 portraits of...
IMAGE 2: Chaim Soutine, Young Woman in a White Blouse (Jeune Femme à la blouse blanche), c. 1923, Oil on Canvas, 38 x 45cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London
Image 3: Chaim Soutine, Valet (Le Valet du chambret), c. 1927, Oil on canvas, 71 x 49 cm, Private Collection, courtesy of Ordovas
staff from French hotels and restaurants. This exhibition represents the first time a large group of these portraits of cooks, waiters, bellboys, valets and maids are brought together to showcase Soutine's sustained interest and how the series allowed him to test and further his powers as a painter.

Whereas most portraits in previous centuries were the result of a commission from a patron, it was no longer the case in Soutine's time. Soutine did not paint on commission but chose his sitters solely on the basis of whether they inspired him. Soutine never wrote about his art so we can only speculate as to what attracted him specifically to hotel and restaurant workers. One factor may have been their boldly coloured uniforms, of course: the whites of butchers and cooks, the reds of the bellboys and the black of the elegant costumes worn by waiters. Another was perhaps the ubiquitous nature of their professions at the time. Paris in the 1920s was an incredibly exciting place, a cultural capital. As tourism and the leisure industry boomed in France, grand hotels, fashionable restaurants, trendy nightclubs and large department stores opened to cater to this consumer society. With it came the expansion of what we call today the 'service industry', with bellboys ready to run errands, porters, lift attendants, waiters, and so on. Far from the underbelly of Paris or overlooked figures, the sitters Soutine painted were powerful symbols of the excitement offered by the Roaring Twenties in France.

Soutine himself was in contact with service and kitchen staff throughout his career. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, he moved around incessantly, staying in rented rooms and small hotels. After he became a recognised (and wealthy) artist, he frequented fashionable restaurants in Paris and grand hotels all over France. Unfortunately, we know very little about the individuals in uniform he painted, not even where they worked. Only one sitter in the series has ever been securely identified: the very first pastry cook Soutine painted, Rémi Zocchetto, was a young apprentice in the kitchen of a family-run hotel in Céret, a town on the Spanish border where Soutine lived for two years (the painting is in The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia and cannot be lent).

**Did Soutine paint from life?**

For Soutine, painting from life was paramount. He needed to have the model in front of him when he worked, whether that model was a young pastry cook in his kitchen whites, a dead chicken or an alley of trees. He never made drawings nor preparatory sketches, and started to paint directly on the canvas. Witnesses talk of him ‘attacking’ the canvas with colour. The close relationship with his subject imbued his work with a sense of directness and immediacy, qualities Soutine valued above all else in painting. Even when he was emulating the Old Masters he loved, such as Rembrandt or Chardin, he did not copy their paintings directly but recreated their compositions in his studio. His *Beef Carcass* was painted in front of a real flayed animal, obtained from the local slaughterhouse (one of his friends recalls having to appease the policemen who had been called to Soutine’s studio by understandably disgruntled neighbours, who were bothered by the smell). But it is also an homage to Soutine’s favourite
painter, Rembrandt, and his Flayed Ox in the Louvre. Soutine often visited the museum to see it.

‘Live’ models had a tougher time; we know that sitting for Soutine was not an easy experience. Studio sessions were long. As Soutine told a friend, “to do a portrait, it’s necessary to take one’s time, but the model tires quickly and assumes a stupid expression. Then it’s necessary to hurry up and that irritates me. I became unnerved. I grind my teeth, and sometimes it gets to a point where I scream, I slash the canvas, and everything goes to hell and I fall down on the floor” (Marevna, My Life with the Painters of La Ruche, London, 1972, p. 158).

Did Soutine only paint portraits?

Soutine was also a prolific landscape and still-life painter, and he worked in all these genres at the same time. He liked to paint in series, returning to a motif, whether a particular sitter, tree or piece of dead game, until he felt he had completely exhausted its aesthetic possibilities and gone to its very core.

Some of the paintings seem distorted or grotesque. Why is this?

Soutine’s landscapes and figures have sometimes been mocked in this way. However, this perceived distortion is the result of the way Soutine worked. He chose to focus on specific elements that caught his interest and lavish attention on them, to the detriment of others. Cézanne also worked in this way, continually assessing his marks against his shifting visual sensations, which can give a slightly lopsided feeling. Commenting on how he painted Cézanne said “… I couldn’t get things in proportion: a head interests me and I make it too big.” The result is that Soutine was able to go beyond surface appearance and create great emotion in his paintings, and in his portraits in particular. In scrutinising his sitters’ features and their poses, he was able in a way to capture their essence. One of his fellow painters in Paris once remarked that no one knew how to capture likeness like Soutine.

Why do you think it’s been so long since we last had a Soutine exhibition in the UK?

One factor is the fact that Soutine is not an easy painter to categorise or place within a neat narrative of art history. His bold and uncompromising style was all his own (he has sometimes been linked to the German Expressionists but there is no evidence that he had any contact with them nor knew their work). Another factor is that there are very few Soutine paintings in public collections in the UK so his work is not as well known as that of his contemporaries. Soutine himself wrote and spoke very little about his art. He was famously guarded and didn’t want anyone to see him work. There is therefore scant evidence about his artistic ambitions and even his biography.

We hope that visitors to this exhibition will be enthusiastic about discovering a new artist or seeing in a new light an artist they thought they already knew.

Why was Soutine seen as an important figure for other artists?

Soutine is truly ‘an artist’s artist’ and his legacy can be felt throughout the latter part of the 20th century. He was uncompromising in his approach, dedicated to the model and expressing his sensations in front of it; that is something any artist can easily relate to. What’s more, in their commitment to figuration in painting, celebrated British painters such as Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff cite Soutine as a key influence. Soutine was also an important figure in the development of Abstract Expressionist art; Willem de Kooning singled him out as his favourite artist. Soutine’s love of colour, direct approach on the canvas and painterliness certainly resonated with that group.

**Image 6:** Chaim Soutine, Page Boy at Maxim’s (Le Chasseur de chez Maxim’s) c. 1927, Oil on Canvas, 129.5 x 66 cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
IMAGES 7: Chaim Soutine, The Pastry Cook / Le Pâtissier, c. 1919
Oil on Canvas, 66 x 51 cm, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia
Between 1919 and 1935 Chaïm Soutine (1893-1943) painted one of the most original groups of modern portraits in mid-twentieth-century European art. As a succession of thematic works his portrayals of cooks, waiters and bellboys are both distinctive and unique; each painting has its own commanding presence. Soutine was one of the few artists to engage with such subject matter at that time, and so seriously. His paintings permit unusual and sometimes startling awareness of the characters and personalities of service workers of the era. They had become increasingly familiar figures in late-nineteenth-century society and by the time Soutine portrayed his subjects, they were established as the familiar embodiment of grand metropolitan hotel life throughout Europe. Had Soutine not chosen to make these paintings, their lives might otherwise have gone unremarked.

Soutine was twenty years old in 1913 when he left his home in the Lithuanian region of the Russian Empire and travelled to Paris to further his artistic career in the capital of all the arts. He arrived in a city that had grown quickly and excitingly in the forty years since the birth of Impressionism in 1874. The restaurants and coffee houses of Paris provided vital meeting places for groups of artists, writers and thinkers; Soutine would have been immediately aware of the working men and women who staffed them. After the First World War Paris underwent a period of energetic recovery in which new and bustling bars, restaurants and hotels employed large staffs of uniformed individuals who would soon become one of his major artistic preoccupations.

**Soutine: Education and Life in Paris**

Once in Paris Soutine enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts. He joined an international mix of impoverished artists at the low-rent Montparnasse studios known as La Ruche (‘the Beehive’), where between 1900 and 1914, in squalid conditions, several rising stars visited, lived, and worked. These included Modigliani, Chagall, Zadkine, Brancusi and Delaunay; together with Soutine and others they were important figures in what became known as the École de Paris (The School of Paris). In 1915 Soutine was introduced to Modigliani and the two became close friends. Modigliani firmly believed in Soutine and championed his work. It was Modigliani who persuaded his art dealer Léopold Zborowski to take on Soutine. In 1919 Zborowski arranged for Soutine to leave Paris for Céret in the Pyrénées where he was based for almost three years. The Céret years proved to be a period of significant development for the landscape painting for which Soutine is best known. However, and more important in this context, it was in Céret that he painted his first portrait of a worker in uniform, The Pastry Cook (image 7).

**In Focus: The Pastry Cook, 1919, Barnes Collection**

Soutine was no stranger to portraiture. Since his arrival in Paris he had made a number of portraits, and had studied Old Master portraits in the Louvre in considerable depth. The Pastry Cook was made at Céret, and at that time was unique in Soutine’s output. Undoubtedly it is a ‘modern’ painting of a member of the kitchen staff who is easily recognised by his clothing, the ‘whites’ that had become standard in all superior kitchens from the mid-nineteenth century. He is not named: for as long as Soutine painted his cooks and other servants his picture titles only ever referred to their job roles. But the portrait is complex. The Pastry Cook (image 7) is sitting on what seems to be an ornate chair, in a space that encloses the figure as the eye scans the painting: a kitchen cabinet is suggested on the left but is transformed into a patterned background on the right – perhaps wallpaper or fabric – that seems to force its way into the painting. The background colours of apricots and yellows convey a pleasant atmosphere and reappear on the pastry chef’s overalls, in his face, and as contrasts with the blues and half-tones that Soutine uses to suggest folds and creases. In this uncertain arrangement, the pastry chef inquisitively regards Soutine (and us). His oversize, misshapen right ear echoes the shape of the carved chair-back behind him. The shape of his body is lost in his kitchen whites: their creases obscure his small frame but his arms are positioned rigidly so that he seems to sit upright, holding the painting together just as one of Titian’s or Rembrandt’s sitters might have. The pastry chef’s head is the apex of a triangle, and the upward tilt of his chin conveys a sense of calm superiority that, in his lowly position, he cannot command in reality.

**Soutine’s First Workers: The Influence of Van Gogh and Cézanne**

Centuries before Soutine’s portraits of hotel and restaurant staff, household servants had appeared regularly in genre painting. In general, peasant figures can be classified as genre paintings because they depict scenes of everyday life, rather than portraits of named individuals. Soutine’s earliest portraits of pastry chefs and kitchen staff are significant departures from that convention. Their context is 1920s France and they are responses to modern life, which was an era of grand hotels and fashionable restaurants. As paintings, their organisation always acknowledges the historical traditions of portraiture. In their use of paint and their intuitive engagement with their subjects, however, they are entirely modern paintings and draw on more recent influences.

Clear connections exist between Soutine’s Céret portraits of pastry cooks in whites, Vincent van Gogh’s The Postman Joseph Roulin, 1888 (image 11) and Paul Cézanne’s peasant series, including The Courtauld’s own Man with Pipe, c. 1892-5 (image 9), and The Card-Players, also c. 1892-95. Van Gogh and Cézanne had approached their respective portraits of workers in ways that were strikingly unconventional. Both painters knew their sitters personally and this...
Image 8: Chaim Soutine, The Valet (Le Valet de chambre) c. 1927, Oil on canvas, 68.9 x 46 cm, The Lewis Collection

Image 9: Paul Cézanne, Man with a Pipe, c. 1892-96, Oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

Image 10: Amedeo Modigliani, The Little Peasant (Le Petit Paysan), c. 1918, Oil on canvas, 100 x 64.5 cm, Tate, London

Image 11: Vincent van Gogh, Postman Joseph Roulin, 1888, Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 65.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

(From top left)
opened the way for a much more honest depiction of their subjects. By seating them as they did, relaxed and dressed in their working clothes, Van Gogh and Cézanne brought them to life. Their positioning in the picture, backgrounds, choice of colours and brushwork enabled their audience to engage with every-day people on emotional and sensory levels. Such an elevation of lowly workers to the status of portraiture was a major breakthrough in modern painting and a comparison of Soutine’s figure arrangements with those of van Gogh and Cézanne conveys the extent of his debt to them.

**IN FOCUS: COMPARATIVE EXPLANATION OF COLOUR AND COMPOSITION**

In early twentieth-century art, Soutine alone consistently sought sitters from the lower levels of the hotel and leisure industries as significant subjects for portraiture. His interest in the theme remains unclear. His sitters are unidentified and though he painted some of them more than once, we can only guess at his reasons for doing so. It has been often suggested that Soutine was attracted to his subjects because he saw something of himself in them: from his arrival in Paris he had been an outsider working in France, though he was by no means unique in this respect. Whatever the case, his portraits of servants combine complex responses to contemporary life and art with a continuing engagement with the art of the past, and the determination to combine both in his own work. This is often to be found in the organisation of Soutine’s portraits where figures in space are relative to his chosen colours. Although he did not directly imitate Modigliani, whose Little Peasant (image 10) was surely an influence, and just as he chose not to follow the most extreme abstractions of Cubist painting, several of Soutine’s portraits suggest that he in no way disdained the possibilities of simplification and abstraction. The disjointed forms and airlessness in some of Soutine’s portraits of pastry chefs, page boys and other servants are held firm by colour and structure that El Greco might have appreciated.

**MODERN PORTRAITS OF MODERN SERVANTS**

Before 1914 no European artist could have been ignorant of the great sociocultural changes taking place. In Paris, painters such as Fernand Léger and Robert Delaunay had responded to the speed and dynamism of the Machine Age with heady images of man and machinery, side by side in action. Soutine’s post-war portraits would depict service industry workers in bars and hotels, organised and machine-like, cogs in an industry devoted to a new form of consumer.

In 1922, the American modern art collector Dr Albert Barnes came to Paris on a buying visit. Barnes was immediately drawn to Soutine’s work and, declaring The Pastry Cook to be “a peach”, he bought it together with another fifty paintings. Thereafter, Soutine’s reputation began to develop, and as demand for his paintings grew he was able to live with greater financial security. In the second half of the 1920s Soutine’s portraits of hotel staff began to encompass a wider range of uniformed subjects. The kitchen staff, pastry cooks and butchers of the early 1920s were gradually replaced by bellboys, waiters and valets, associated with higher status hotels, restaurants and clubs in France. These new subjects held ‘customer facing’ roles. It was a shift of interest that kept pace with Soutine’s personal life and circumstances. Whether he was painting in Paris or working away from the city, Soutine’s new affluence enabled him to witness hotel life at first hand as a visitor, observing his subjects at work.

**IN FOCUS: WHITE TO RED TO BLUE - COLOUR IN SOUTINE’S SERVANT PORTRAITS**

Soutine’s interest in and commitment to his servant subjects lasted for some sixteen years and the portraits made during that period very much reflect wider developments in his work. From around 1925, the range and variety of Soutine’s paintings of liveried staff strongly suggest fresh stimuli, new chromatic challenges, and a willingness to experiment. On the one hand, the gross scarlet Page-Boy at Maxim’s c. 1927 (image 6) is an emphatic beginning, gaining later refinement in Soutine’s several portraits of uniformed valets of the same year. The work shown, The Valet (image 3), exemplifies the excellence of Soutine’s brushwork of this time. The subtle blues, reds and flesh-tones, and the quality of the artist’s characterisation, are features that Soutine sustained in portraits of female servants of the early 1930s.

At one level, Soutine’s valets, bellboys, cooks and waiters embody a sub-culture of urban modernity in France between the wars. They are a loose grouping of uniformed representatives of a hierarchical hotel industry, depicted over several years, which suggest something of social change in the country during the 1920s and 1930s. However, viewed individually, Soutine’s portraits can also tell a different tale. His sitters mostly range in age from adolescence to their mid-twenties, and all appear anxious or worn. Although there is no indication that Soutine intended to use his hotel portraits as a form of social commentary, it is possible to conclude that they perform exactly that function.

**IN FOCUS: SOUTINE’S CHARACTERS**

Soutine’s servant portraits contain two important and related dualities. In the first, they are presented as nameless workers in uniform, though their roles are given and their status is thereby noted. However, the body language of the subjects, together with their direct and often intense facial expressions, can command a range of different responses in the viewer. Soutine’s sitters are real: their expressions have the ring of truth. Blank, exhausted faces, rough hands and deliberately distorted physical appearances implicitly suggest the relentlessness of their demanding working lives. Not even the most colourful uniform is permitted to disguise the human inside it.

Coupled with his determination to paint his portraits in studio settings, away from the workplace, Soutine’s decision not to name his sitters seems important. To keep his sitters dressed in uniform, whatever their status or position, was deliberate and a practice maintained over time, it is unsurprising that the reasons for the creation of so many cooks, waiters and bellboys remain a subject of conjecture and a cause for speculation.
Painting from life is a completely different experience to painting from a photograph. With the latter, the painter is alone with their source material and there is no time limit within which the painting needs to be resolved. Photographs, unlike sitters, do not need to break for stretches, eat or sleep. The photograph can be rotated, cropped, zoomed into, and – most of all – it has already flattened out the complexity of a three-dimensional form in light and space to a still, graphic image that has divided the subject into flat areas of colour and shape.

Soutine painted entirely from life and his models sat for gruelling lengths of time. Soutine would vary the distance at which he worked from them – coming in close to examine an ear in detail, which might then ripen as a bloated cauliflower on the side of his sitter’s head. Soutine also loved to vary brush marks and colour in his paintings: a white chef’s uniform would be his playground for painterly invention. Every colour and texture of paint might appear in what could otherwise be a uniform surface of white.

**PAINTING A COSTUME**

My painting *The Wedding Dress* is more about the clothing of the sitter than her likeness. The symbolic dress provides the context and narrative for the portrait: the painting is about a bride, seated in a room, waiting for something. In contrast to Soutine’s spattering of layered paint, I have built up the painting in one sitting, using oil on linen. I needed to work fast as it was the afternoon, and I was working from natural light. I never draw first with pencil or charcoal in my paintings – preferring to use diluted paint, wide brushes for ‘blocking in’ areas and thin brushes for ‘drawing’ the detail.

*The Wedding Dress* is built up in thin, transparent layers: the golden-yellow of the wall, the blue-grey of the floor (which shows the brush marks, and through which areas of the primed linen glimpse), and the burnt sienna of the sitter’s flesh tones. I did not mix white in the flesh – it would have made the paint more pasty, more opaque. I reserved the opaque white for the wedding dress, which billows out in thicker blooms of paint: the swish of the hems and layers in it are caught in a bleached yellow and cool blue-grey. These are the shadows I saw as the light faded in the room, and I worked fast to capture the forms before electric light would be needed.

I stood on the opposite side of the room from the model – in front of a bay window on the second floor, while she sat on a wooden chair against a bare wall at the other side. I worked at an easel – giving me the distance and angle required to represent the whole figure on a modestly sized canvas. It is critical for the painting that the pointy white shoes are caught before the bottom of the canvas, and that they echo the white veil around the hair. The tonal contrast depends on the black of the hair and eyes, the dark brown of the chair legs, set off by...
against the mid-tones of the background and bright white of the dress.

PAINTING A FIGURE
For Yaşar İsmailoğlu’s portrait, I worked in watercolour on paper. This portrait is smaller still than The Wedding Dress but packs in more detail, encompassing the background pots and plants, open door, and patterns of the sitter’s clothing. Yaşar is a Turkish-Cypriot poet. I met him to paint his portrait – I did not know him before. He was selected for me to paint as part of a project (the Hackney Transients Art Project) about Hackney and the varied personalities that live and work there. While The Wedding Dress shows a person I knew well (my wife – we had married a year previously), my portrait of Yaşar captures the experience of painting a place and a person as seen for the first time.

Yaşar stares back at me – there is an air of scrutiny in his gaze, which the viewer’s eyes also meet. As I painted him he spoke to me about places he had lived in, and poetry collections he had written. He sat with great confidence – firmly planted in his back garden, surrounded by things that grounded him. The
composition I went for crops off his legs – bringing his frame, arms and face all forwards, closer to the viewer. I did not work at an easel, but with the watercolour paper propped at an angle on my legs. I was seated, just a couple of yards away from him.

Painting someone you have just met brings a certain pressure – it becomes more like a commission. You are in no way painting a memory of a person, but rather are tasked with capturing a particular likeness in a particular place. For me, watercolour is the ideal medium for the task – it is quick, portable, and does not allow for extensive revisions or erasure. With oil painting one can repeatedly wipe off layers, or build layer after layer of increasingly thick paint (think of Frank Auerbach’s early heavily impastoed portraits). Watercolour does not tolerate indecision or changes of direction: instead you build up the piece in thin layers of paint that can only deepen in colour and tone, but not vary in composition much beyond the first marks set down on the page.

With watercolour the white in the painting is the white of the surface (unless using an opaque gouache white). Thin layers of paint mask the white ground, but the brightest areas will be bare paper peeking through washes of colour. Unlike an oil painting, where thick white paint becomes a ‘tube of light’, in watercolour the white is wherever the surface is allowed to ‘breathe’. The end of Yaşar’s nose, the face of his watch, and the gaps around the plants behind him are a play of white highlights in a complex mesh of colour, line and form.

Yaşar had chosen to dress casually – the painting is of a man at home in his clothes and surroundings. He tilts his chair towards me, relaxes his arms, and watches me paint. When painting from life I never take a photograph of the scene because I do not want subconsciously to know I have a ‘backup’ that I could always paint the scene from later. I prefer the sense of a tightrope walk: you set off with your marks on the page, with one chance to get it right.

**PAINTING A FACE**

Both *The Wedding Dress* and Yaşar were painted in the sitter’s environment (houses in Brighton and Edmonton respectively). For my painting Hamja, a friend visited me in my studio and I painted him in oils. Oil paint can be diluted to create thin veils of paint, like watercolour, or it can be used in a thick paste, adding Linseed Stand Oil to fatten the paint and make it sticky and gloopy.

In *Hamja*, I worked on a small canvas board, painting in thick paint over a discarded earlier landscape painting. Therefore, there was no white ‘ground’ through which the surface would breathe and create highlights – instead there is a light blue or brown layer of oil paint that shows through any gaps in my brush marks that create the contours of the face.

When Hamja arrived at the studio I had set up at an easel, standing on the other side of my studio, with a relatively large canvas (100 cm x 80 cm), and diluted oil paints to block in my composition. He sat facing me, and I started a relatively conventional composition, centring him in the canvas and cropping his legs. However, this painting was never completed. I took Hamja to lunch for a break, and watched him caress his face with both hands as he spoke. He looked down a lot, and was deeply absorbed in his thoughts. When I got back to the studio I abandoned the easel and sat directly in front of him on a chair. I picked up a discarded board, and went straight for thick layers of paint. Here the oiliness of the paint, *scumbled* and pushed across the surface, echoed the oiliness of skin. The blue of the ground provided a natural contrast to the burnt umber and sienna tones of his skin, and I painted his fingers in single brushstrokes of thick paint.

It probably took little more than fifteen minutes to create the oil sketch. It’s more of a record of an instant or a mood than an attempt at a likeness, but I see Hamja’s features and mannerisms in the captured moment. His eyes look down – an inward gaze that suits the hunched pose and cradled face. I felt my hand leading the paint. I did not make many decisions or build in layers. I did four swift sketches, of which this one, I felt, was the truest representation.

Paint has its own language: like a photograph it can be a thin layer of colour on a surface where the white is created from the paper, or like Old Master oil paintings (that build up in increasingly ‘fat’ paint on a dark ground) it can have a ‘body’ and weight that feels sculptural. It is the complex interaction between the psychology of the sitter, the intentions of the painter, and the play between accident and control in handling the paint that creates a painted portrait from life. Then the viewer projects their own emotions and experiences on to the scene – a third party to the intimacy created between the painter and sitter, as captured in paint.

www.matthewkrishanu.com
Interview with Jack Kettlewell by Matthew Krishanu
Jack Kettlewell moved to London after studying for an MA in Fine Art at Staffordshire University. He started off by working as a Room Warden guarding the paintings at the National Gallery. He has also worked at Dulwich Picture Gallery and Tate. Jack has worked at The Courtauld Gallery for almost six years, where he divides his time between being a Gallery Technician moving artworks and installing exhibitions, and his studio practice as an artist.

How did you come to model for David Hockney when you were working as a warden at the National Gallery?
In 2000, while working at the National, I was drawn by David Hockney – along with eleven other Room Wardens. Hockney’s series Twelve Portraits After Ingres was made for the Encounters: New Art from Old exhibition in 2000 where contemporary artists took inspiration from the Gallery’s collection of Old Masters. I remember bumping into Lucian Freud on the steps one day! There was also Howard Hodgkin and Richard Hamilton, to name but two.

Hockney chose Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. He was writing his book Secret Knowledge, and he was testing out his theories that Ingres used lenses in his work – so that’s where the camera lucida came in. It’s the pun as well – the camera lucida makes you work ‘in a uniform style’. And so he took it literally – to draw people in uniform in a uniform style. Hockney didn’t know us, and he just created this amazing likeness.

I remember one of the things Hockney was particularly interested in – he was showing me a Frans Hals portrait of a gentleman laughing – and he’d say, ‘look, it’s impossible to hold that laughing pose’ and was convinced that the artist would have used an aid – in this case a lucida. So that’s why I have a little bit of a smirk – I thought, well I’ll test this out, but gradually after about two hours, my face had dropped.

How did Hockney use the camera lucida for the drawing?
It’s interesting because he only used it for the drawing’s setup, to get actual coordinates - I mean it was less than five minutes I would say. It’s just a few lenses as far as I can gather, but you look into the instrument and you’re able to see the subject, and at the same time look at the paper. It was flat, which was interesting, because as soon as you put up a piece of paper it’s a different angle. He would just use it to get the coordinates of say the width of the face – where the eyes go and put sort of a dot on the paper – and the rest was as he called it ‘eyeballing’. He said ‘look, I could probably get this result but it would take me five or six goes. So the lucida in this case gives me the expediency of, right, I can do it in one go’.

Where did the sittings take place and how long did they take?
At his studio in South Kensington, London – a nice part of town – which he’d had since the 1970s. It was like walking into a Hockney painting circa the 1970s. What was surreal was that there were lots of people – it was quite a busy place. I went a few times and thought ‘oh that’s Gregory Evans’ or something like that. Or one of my friends went in there and there was Celia Birtwell walking into a Hockney interior surrounded by freshly cut flowers and tasteful soft furnishings. Adjoining the house was his studio. I was just amazed – ‘this is what a top artist has’ – he had a motorised pencil sharpener and I couldn’t believe how many 2B pencils he had.

The head took basically about four or five hours with breaks. When he did the body I was able to relax a bit. The colour element he did afterwards, away from the sitter.

Soutine apparently would go right up to the model and scrutinise them – that’s why an ear might be particularly large. With Hockney was there a bit of a distance?
There was a gap, his table was set up with the drawing board and things. I go through periods where my skin is pretty terrible with eczema, and back then I was going through a bad period and this was my one hang-up. More than wearing a uniform – I felt ‘I don’t really want to be looked at’ so I really fought with that. There were moments when I thought ‘he’s looking very hard at me – he’s looking at my skin’ – you get a bit self-conscious. Though less so the more I thought about it because I thought ‘actually, it’s worse having a photograph taken’. That was almost more of an invasion. I found it very easy to relax once I found a position. The mind drifted, because you were in for a long haul as it were, so I didn’t mind.
And did he talk – or was it quite a silent process?
Oh yes, once he decided to go for it he was very focused – he took his hearing aid out and that was it. I mean the phone went several times. I think I even said ‘oh the phone’s going David’. He just worked through it.

It was very quiet, and there were areas where he’d really go for it. And you could just hear the pencil. I was thinking ‘what could he possibly be working on?’ But actually it was because in the lighter areas and around the skin he’d be using a lighter pencil. And it was that I could hear. I thought ‘oh it must be a really dark area’ but in fact it wasn’t. Because I am slightly at an angle, I was very curious to look at him and see what he was doing which is why there was a slight contortion in my pose.

In relation to the Soutine exhibition, all of the portraits at The Courtauld are of uniformed pastry chefs, cooks and so on. Did you feel that people looked at you differently when you were wearing your uniform?
That’s a really interesting question – because when we see someone in uniform – a fireman, a policeman, a pastry chef or whatever, you have a view, don’t you, it’s hard not to. And I guess similarly with people coming in to the Gallery – I was a presence there. Maybe the face becomes invisible, maybe you just see the uniform – I don’t know.

After working at the National you also modelled for Humphrey Ocean, contemporary British painter and Royal Academician. How did that happen?
I left the National and went to work at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Humphrey Ocean was invited to be artist-in-residence there, and so that’s where I initially got to know him. The painting Jack, 2006 is a very early one in the series – he had a show at the National Portrait Gallery called Humphrey Ocean: A handbook of modern life in 2013, where they were exhibited. They are all in gouache, and are all the same size.

Who were the sitters?
They were friends, acquaintances and people who came into his studio which was in an old 1950s factory building in West Norwood at the time. I visited him one day to look at some work and have a studio chat and he commented how ‘the light’s fantastic’, and asked ‘do you want to sit?’ I was sat in the chair. I said where do you want me, and he said – ‘that’s good, just get comfy, I’ve got to get this’. He obviously knew about the Hockney drawings. He knows Hockney, they were both Royal Academicians. The sitting took around 40 minutes.

So it really is as spontaneous and casual as it looks?
Yes, just one shot. It was informal and obviously I knew Humphrey a little bit from working at the Dulwich Picture Gallery. He worked in silence – I can’t remember if there was any music on. There was no chatting. It was lovely watching him paint. It was interesting to see them in the flesh; I just love the way that he would do ‘a very Humphrey mark’ – there are certain tropes.

You mentioned earlier that sense of invasion – of being eyeballed when you were feeling uncomfortable about your skin. Overall how did both these experiences of sitting feel compared to having your photograph taken?
Oh I hate my photo being taken, I really hate it. Today we’re so used to seeing photographs. It’s like with my son I’ve got the camera in front of him all day. These guys are just living with selfies and things. I remember being uncomfortable with that because you just know with so many photos you think – ‘that’s not me’, ‘that doesn’t look like me’ or, ‘the camera lies’. But, of course, it doesn’t. I’ve just never been comfortable with the camera. Whereas being drawn or painted, there’s a trust element as well. In that this is Hockney – I’ve got a fair idea what he’ll do – and likewise with Humphrey.

And which of the two artworks do you see yourself more in?
I’m not just being diplomatic but I see myself in both of them. I see the artists’ hand as well. And that’s when I think that a decent portrait comes together. When you’re getting something about the sitter, and you’re being honest about your own facility, I think they’re successful. It’s interesting, because knowing the other guards Hockney drew, he has captured a real likeness. My mum and dad, and friends of family, said ‘he made that part of you look much bigger than that part – or that’s not right’. But that kind of tickled me and I’m perfectly happy with it.

And as an artist yourself, has the fact that you’ve sat for these artists in quite an interesting way affected you?
Coming down to London (from Staffordshire and the North East before that), and only having come across these people in books, and then to realise that they’re very much alive (well some of them) – that was massively interesting – and getting into their world and seeing how they operate – I’ve found that was a big privilege. Working here or at the Tate or wherever and being that close to the collection – you know people ordinarily just see these things on the wall. It’s like living history. That side of things is quite important to me. It will stay with me and was very inspiring.
5: GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST: An American post-war art movement which was developed in New York in the early 1940s by a small group of loosely affiliated artists including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, William Baziotes, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman. The Abstract Expressionists created a stylistically diverse body of work that introduced radical new directions in art, and shifted the art world’s focus. They broke away from accepted conventions in both technique and subject matter, making monumental works that stood as reflections of their individual psyches. These artists valued spontaneity and improvisation, and they accorded the highest importance to process; their imagery was primarily abstract.

FRANK AUERBACH (born 1931): Auerbach’s parents sent him to England in 1939 to escape from Nazi Germany. Interested in the physical properties of painting, his enduring technique, which is rooted in his commitment to recreating the essence and structure of his subjects, is to use extremely thick impasto. His subjects vary little, from portraits of his models and close friends to familiar urban landscapes in Camden Town, London, where he has lived and worked for 50 years.

DR ALBERT C BARNES (1872-1951): was the American art collector who turned Soutine’s fortunes around at a single stroke in 1922. Originally a medical doctor and a chemist, Barnes began collecting art around 1911 and became an authority in Post-Impressionist painting, especially that of Renoir. Barnes’ collection grew to some 4,000 works in his lifetime. www.barnesfoundation.org

CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI (1876-1957): was one of the founding figures of modern sculpture. Born and trained in Romania, he arrived in Paris in 1904. He had intended to study under Auguste Rodin, but made his own way in art and into the École de Paris. After the First World War Brancusi was a major influence on emergent talents such as Henry Moore. As a contemporary of Soutine’s he is interesting because he developed an early habit of working in thematic series. He carved directly into the medium, just as Soutine worked directly onto canvas. Like Modigliani, he shared an interest in the simplified forms of non-European art.

CAMERA LUCIDA: An optical device used as a drawing aid by artists. The camera lucida performs an optical superimposition of the subject being viewed onto the surface upon which the artist is drawing.

JEAN-BAPTISTE-SIMÉON CHARDIN (1699-1779): an 18th-century French painter. He is considered a master of still life and is also noted for his genre paintings which depict kitchen maids, children, and domestic activities.

PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-1906): was the son of a rich banker and landowner in Aix-en-Provence. He dedicated his life as an artist to painting his experience of the world around him. Cézanne learnt much from Impressionism but whilst many of his contemporaries were focusing on city life, Cézanne chose to depict the landscapes and peasant inhabitants around his home town. His Post-Impressionist paintings in oil and watercolour focused on landscapes, still life and figures.

MARC CHAGALL (1887-1985): was born in Vitebsk, now Belarus, and, after studying under Leon Bakst (1866-1924) moved to Paris in 1910. Though in essence his origins were very similar to Soutine’s, Chagall’s art and life took different directions. During his first Paris period (to 1914) he was particularly influenced by Robert and Sonia Delaunay’s ideas on colour and by the poetry and ideas of Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961). Chagall’s initial loneliness in Paris was the spur for his first series of ‘shtetl paintings’ in which he explored the Jewish themes of his early life, often combining elements of new Cubist and Orphist styles with figuration (see Delaunay).

CUBISM: one of the most influential styles of the 20th century, in which artists typically break down objects and figures into distinct, sometimes overlapping, planes and try to show more than one viewpoint at the same time. The movement evolved in Paris, c. 1909, based on the ideas of Cézanne, led by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963), together with Fernand Léger and Juan Gris (1887-1927).

ROBERT (1885-1941) and SONIA (1885-1979) DELAUNAY: were key innovators and collaborators in Parisian and European art for several decades. Robert was born in Paris and around 1906 he met Sonia, born in the Ukraine, who had arrived from Berlin. They married in 1910 and during 1912-13 they developed Orphism, or Orphic Cubism, an offshoot of Cubism, in which primary and secondary colours were matched to suggest movement (red with green, yellow with purple and orange). The couple’s influences remain strong: in their lifetimes Sonia would take Orphism furthest, starting in 1921, when she opened her own fashion store in Paris.

ÉCOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS: A famous French art school located in Paris. The school has a history spanning more than 350 years, training many of the great artists in Europe. Beaúx-Arts style was modelled on classical ‘antiquities,’ preserving these idealised forms and passing the style on to future generations.

ÉCOLE DE PARIS: the term given to art made by some of the great names of Modernism, who lived in Paris from the early years of the 20th century, and who created movements or styles in modern art, up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Key amongst them were Picasso (Cubism), Matisse (Fauvism), Brancusi, Delaunay (Orphism), Chagall and Modigliani, Mondrian and Kandinsky. Soutine was soon to join them.
GERMAN EXPRESSIONISTS: Closely associated with German and Austrian artists of the early 20th century, the term was first applied in relation to the new French art which appeared to be the opposite of Impressionism. A style characterised by distorted forms and vibrant colour depicting inner emotions, and with increasing elements of abstraction.

LUCIAN FREUD (1922-2011): Painter and draftsman Freud was born in Berlin, the son of a Jewish architect and the grandson of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. In 1933 he and his family moved to Britain to escape the Nazis. Freud specialised in figurative art, and is known as one of the foremost 20th-century portraitists.

JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES (1780-1867): French Neoclassical painter who saw his work as part of an unbroken classical tradition that stretched back to Raphael and the Renaissance. He believed firmly in drawing as the basis for all art, but was also willing to elongate forms in order to achieve greater idealisation.

EL GRECO (1541-1614): was the Spanish nickname given to Domenikos Theotokopoulos, who was born in Crete. By 1577 he had settled in Toledo, Spain, and remained there for the rest of his life. In his lifetime he was chiefly famous as a portraitist, but his work was often overlooked until the later nineteenth century, when it was re-evaluated in Paris by Impressionist painters, and later by critics who hailed its expressive qualities.

DAVID HOCKNEY (born 1937): is an English painter, draftsman, printmaker, and photographer. Hockney is considered one of the most influential British artists of the 20th century.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-18): naturally affected Paris as ‘the capital of the arts’. The city was seriously threatened by the German army twice, in August to September 1914 and in March to July 1918. Food shortages and industrial relocation and unrest made all areas of life in the city very uncertain. Many artists and writers joined the army, or the Red Cross ambulance service. At the outbreak of war, the Russian Ballet was stranded in Paris, eventually leading to the unusual 1917 collaboration Parade, written by Jean Cocteau, produced by Sergei Diaghilev, with music by Eric Satie and sets by Pablo Picasso.

IMPRESSIONISM: An art movement that was initiated in 1874 when thirty artists exhibited their artworks as the Société Anonyme in a photography studio in Paris. The term ‘Impressionism’ was coined by a critic playing upon the title of Monet’s painting Impression, Sunrise (1872). They employed rough brush strokes that appeared to give equal weight to all elements of a composition. Many chose to eliminate narrative altogether and focused instead on the sensations of light and nature.

LEON KOSSOFF (born 1926): English painter and draftsman. Like fellow student Frank Auerbach, Kossoff developed a method of painting that involved the heavy reworking of thick impasto to attempt to provide a truthful rendering of people and places he knew well.

LA RUCHE (‘the hive’ or ‘the Beehive’): was originally a three-storied, prefabricated, circular structure designed by Gustave Eiffel as a refreshment point for the Paris World’s Fair of 1900. After the Fair it was bought by Alfred Boucher (1850-1934), dismantled and re-erected in the Passage Dantzig, Montparnasse, where it served as low-maintenance and low-rent artists’ studios, with a long list of famous international inhabitants. After decades of neglect La Ruche was reconditioned in 1971 as a studio complex.

FERNAND LÉGER (1881-1955): was a French painter, sculptor and filmmaker. Chiefly associated with the Cubist movement, Léger’s work went through many changes, first in response to the dynamism of modern life and industry before 1914, and then following war service in the artillery. Léger’s painting is immediately recognisable, from the subdued colours of his early ‘cubist’ work to the bright optimism of later, high-key paintings. His 1924 film Ballet Mécanique is a fascinating synthesis of many of his ideas.

MAXIM’S: was founded as a bistro in 1893 by one of its former waiters, Maxim Gaillard. Originally decorated in the Art Nouveau style, it became one of the most popular and fashionable restaurants in Paris, and by the early 1930s catered almost exclusively for the rich and famous from every section of society, including crowned heads, film-stars and literati.

AMADEO MODIGLIANI (1884-1920): was born in Livorno, Italy, but lived mainly in Paris from 1906 until his death. A painter, draftsman and sculptor, Modigliani’s elongated, simplified forms owed much to Southeast Asian sculpture, and came to characterise much of his art: they are most evident in his drawings and sculptures. He was highly regarded in his lifetime for his figure paintings, but his female nudes proved too confrontational for conservative taste.

MONTPARNASSE: an area of Paris on the left bank of the River Seine. From c. 1910 until 1940 it was the scene of the city’s intellectual and artistic heartbeat, as the alternative to Montmartre. Here were the artists’ studios, cafés, dance-halls, bars and hotels that were such magnetic attractions for pleasure-seekers, and that contributed to the overall description of that era in Paris as ‘the Crazy Years’.

HUMPHREY OCEAN (born 1957): had his first major solo exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1984. He has since shown at the Tate Liverpool, the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London and in 2002 was artist-in-residence at Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. He was appointed Professor of Perspective at the Royal College of Art in 2002.
OSSIP ZADKINE (1890-1967): was born in Vitebsk, now Belarus. After four years in England, where he learnt basic stone carving skills alongside the language, Zadkine settled in Paris during 1909-10, and found a studio in ‘La Ruche’. By 1911 he was exhibiting at the Paris Salons, and was a member of a circle that included Brancusi, Jacques Lipchitz, Picasso and Delaunay. Before 1914 and after 1918 his work was strongly related to Cubism, but also had affinities with the sculptures of Modigliani and the Anglo-American sculptor Jacob Epstein (1880-1959).

CREDIT LIST

COVER + IMAGE 2
Chaim Soutine, Young Woman in a White Blouse (Jeune Femme à la blouse blanche), c. 1923, Oil on canvas, 34 x 45 cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
Photo credit information: © Private Collection

IMAGE 1
Chaim Soutine, The Young Pastry Cook (Le Jeune Pâtissier), c. 1927-28, Oil on board, 69.9 x 24.1 cm, Private Collection
Photo credit information: © Private Collection

IMAGE 3
Chaim Soutine, Valet (Le Valet de chambre), c. 1927, Oil on canvas, 71 x 49 cm, Private Collection, courtesy of Orlovos
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IMAGE 4
Chaim Soutine, Butcher Boy, c. 1919-20 (Le Garçon boucher), Oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm, Private collection
Photo credit information: © Private Collection

IMAGE 5
Frank Auerbach, Lucian Freud, 1981, Etching, 37 x 33.5cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

IMAGE 6
Chaim Soutine, Page Boy at Maxim’s (Le Chasseur de chez Maxim’s) c. 1927, Oil on canvas, 129.5 x 66 cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Photo credit information: © Albright-Knox Gallery Buffalo. www.albrightknox.org

IMAGE 7
Chaim Soutine, The Pastry Cook (Le Pâtissier), c. 1919, Oil on Canvas, 66 x 51 cm, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia
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IMAGE 8
Chaim Soutine, The Valet (Le Valet de chambre) c. 1927, Oil on canvas, 68.9 x 46 cm, The Lewis Collection
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IMAGE 9
Paul Cézanne, Man with a Pipe, c. 1892-96, Oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
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IMAGE 10
Amedeo Modigliani, The Little Peasant (Le Petit Paysan), c. 1918, Oil on canvas, 100 x 64.5 cm, Tate, London
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IMAGE 11
Vincent van Gogh, Postman Joseph Roulin, 1888, Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 65.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
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IMAGE 12-14 © the artist

IMAGE 15
David Hockney, Jack Kettlewell. London. 13th December 1999 from 12 Portraits after Ingres in a Uniform Style Pencil, White crayon and gouache on paper using a camera lucida (one of a 12-part work) 22 1/8 x 15” © David Hockney

IMAGE 16
Humphrey Ocean, Jack, 2006, Gouache on paper, 17 x 57cm, Courtesy of the Artist
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Stephanie Christodoulou
Programme Manager -
Gallery Learning
Courtauld Institute of Art
Somerset House, Strand
LONDON, WC2R 0RN
0203 947 7589
education@courtauld.ac.uk