

Artist: David Hockney

Piece: We two boys together clinging

~~We two boys together clinging~~ is based on a poem by the nineteenth century American poet Walt Whitman, "We two boys together clinging", which is about the inseparable partnership of two men. This piece was produced in 1961, but it wasn't until 1967 homosexuality was made legal in the UK. The work is predominantly about the love between two men who couldn't legally be together, but couldn't not be together their love was so strong. Nevertheless, even if this painting has political undertones, ultimately its theme is that of love being triumphant. The subject matter is based on the poem, so the issue is a remembered issue; however the piece itself doesn't have much detail or form which is most likely imagined. There is definitely deliberate abstraction in the piece, as there is no detail or form in the people in the painting; the painting itself has a very childish quality to it in the style it has been painted. Hockney has also used text in the painting quoting the title of the poem and other parts of the poem, but some of these words have been painted carefully and un-childlike. This makes me think Hockney feels that the image painted isn't important, but the meaning and words behind the matter of the work are what makes the piece what it is. I feel the way the paint has been added to the board is furious and celebratory, a celebration of emotion and an ideal, so Hockney doesn't feel detail and realism is important. The subject matter to me isn't immediately apparent until the viewer has read the poem the work is based on, however the audience could get an idea as to what it is about based on the title of the piece. When I viewed the piece, I thought the piece could be based on homosexuality, but it wasn't until I read the poem on which it was based that I learned of the political influence on the work.

Hockney's painting has two rectangular shapes in the centre of the board representing the "two boys", with their faces separate above the two figures. Text also runs around the two figures stating the title of the piece, with small sections of the poem added to different parts of the board. There isn't much of a colour scheme used in the piece, but the most dominant colours are pastel shades of blue, grey and pink. There are also dark bold shades of black, purple and red which builds large contrasts between the dark shades "boys" and the lightly coloured background, however all the colours work well together as a whole. There are many different lines and shapes within the piece all inter-relating together. The main shape is that of the "two boys", the shape being rectangular, with other lines and shapes working around these two main shapes. The work appears to have many textures, looking quite rough in parts due to the rough style in which it has been painted; however the background has been painted smoothly, thus creating more contrast between the "boys" and the background. These contrasts between the two is almost like a way to say that because these two boys were homosexual, they felt and were treated like they were different to the rest of society, and needed to be made rough and bold to stand out. I feel the piece is unsatisfactory based on its aesthetic quality, as the piece is painted in a rough childish way, with no real form or detail which I like in a painting however based on the subject matter it is more satisfactory as the style in which it is painted matches the subject.

This piece was painted on board using oil paints. Hockney will have had some practice and training in oil paints, but he may have used stencils when painting in the numbers and texts on this piece. Hockney will have commenced his work in his studio, where he may have produced supporting studies like sketches and paintings to help in choosing a colour scheme and composition of the piece. He also may have produced the stencils to help painting the text and numbers, along with smaller pieces where he may have tested these stencils. The final piece itself is quite large, so the piece may have taken some time to paint, but there isn't a lot of detail in the work so I feel the work will have been executed quite rapidly.

The work makes me think about homosexuality, and how it was illegal in the UK not too long ago, and how it is still frowned upon by many people in today's society. However, being homosexual myself I can feel glad that it was made legal, and lucky that I didn't live in a time when it wasn't. The painting captures a mood of love, happiness, and triumph, which I feel a lot of us have already experienced, allowing us to feel some form of empathy with the piece. When Hockney produced this piece, homosexuality was still illegal, so I think he wouldn't feel happy, but think about how unfair it is that two people can't be together, but now he can the piece and feel a sense of victory. The piece is quiet and quite sad, as at the time they were unable to be together, but if the piece was made now it would be a much happier piece of work. For me, I feel I am directly affected by the piece as it makes me think about what it would be like if homosexuality was still illegal and how it would feel having to live with that and be in a relationship, but it makes me feel relieved and happy that it isn't the case. I feel there aren't qualities in the piece itself that have affected me, but the meaning and the meaning behind the poem it is based on, making perhaps the poem just as personal to me as the painting itself.