

# THE TIMES



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## Artist who stands the test of time

**F**or six decades Philip Pearlstein has stood up to paint his naked men and women. Now 93, he may need a younger person to stretch his canvases, but the rest he can still do himself (David Sanderson writes).

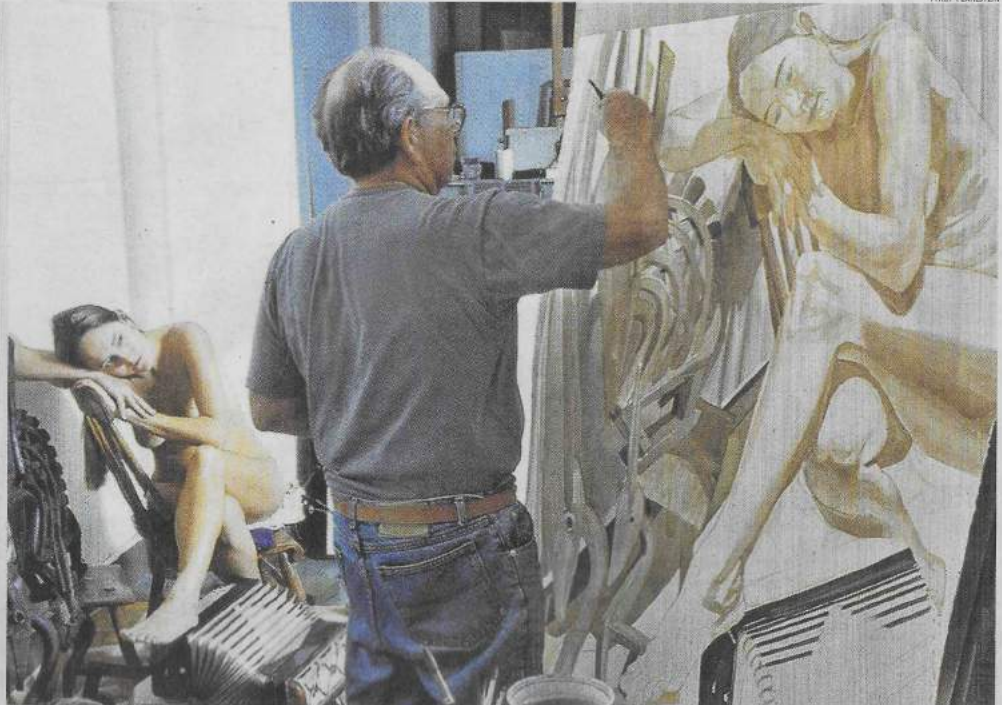
"I don't know what the secret is," the artist said of his longevity. "I have always painted standing up. It is easier to move around."

The American, credited as the chief reviver of late 20th-century realism and its leading figure painter, is perhaps the oldest artist still producing exhibition-quality work.

An exhibition of his paintings from 1990 to last year opens today at the Saatchi Gallery in London. Pearlstein says his work has improved with his age.

"They have gotten much better, the designs, the overall compositions have become much more complex," he said.

Pearlstein's advocacy for his upright working posture comes as more companies invest in "standing desks" to help their employees'



Philip Pearlstein is known for his customary standing pose; David Hockney is famously devoted to cigarettes



health. The artist admits that his work has offended "a lot of people". "America is very prudish and I would

mix up the races, white men, black women. The reaction was really very negative," he said.

After the Saatchi Gallery show Pearlstein has two more in New York and Paris this year.

"I just coast along," he said. "I am old. Nobody works on the painting except me but at this point I need somebody [a studio

assistant] who can lift the thing. I have always painted standing up, constantly moving."

He credits his Second World War experience as having instilled good habits.

"In the army I learnt what not to do, so no alcohol," he said. "I never started smoking. Most of my generation were killed by smoking ultimately."

● A video by the artist Tacita Dean of David Hockney smoking five cigarettes in 16 minutes has been bought jointly by the Royal Academy and the National Portrait Gallery. The two institutions plus the National Gallery will open three exhibitions focusing on Dean's work this year. Leading article, page 31



## Stand Up! Stand Up!

And run ten marathons a year

One of the drawbacks to being active and 93 is that you will be questioned Father William-style on the secret of your longevity. So the American artist Philip Pearlstein, an exhibition of whose paintings opens today in London, was duly asked. He replied that one explanation might be that "I have always painted standing up".

Pearlstein is not the only artist who has stayed upright. Michelangelo, far from lying on his back to paint the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, stood for the entire process and would write poems complaining about the resulting pain in his neck. The novelist Ernest Hemingway had his

typewriter on the top of a chest-high bookshelf in his bedroom and would bash away, according to a visitor, "in a pair of his oversized loafers, on the worn skin of a lesser kudu".

Pearlstein has a point. Standing up is good for you and sitting down is not. The Australian Diabetes, Obesity, and Lifestyle Study followed 700 adults at work, rest and play and discovered that the sedentary position increased weight, waist size, blood sugar and cholesterol. One of the lead researchers estimated that 12 months spent standing for three hours a day rather than sitting created the equivalent in burned calories of

running ten marathons a year. Ten. Much kinder on the knees, too.

The obvious conclusion is to stand up right now. Join the standing news anchors who have moved out from behind their desks and stay on your feet. Stand at work and stand during lunch. Premier League football clubs should rip out their seating and reinstate spectator standing. More theatre should be promenade. Smart restaurants could sell their chairs and raise their tables. We will know that we are winning when polite passengers on public transport offer to sit down so that old and unfit people have a place to stand.