

STEALING APPLES

Paintings by Donald Grayson



Garden Court Chambers
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Nearest underground station: Holborn
Please phone 020 7993 7600 for information about opening times

Donald Grayson

Other pressures and pursuits frustrated Donald Grayson's early creative ambitions, but three years ago he received a lengthy custodial sentence and took up art again. Encouraged by sympathetic tutors in his prison art class, a vocation developed, shaped by the challenging circumstances life had now bestowed. Prison could be lonely, crowded, noisy, boring, traumatic, but it could also be funny.

Donald responded with brightly coloured paintings featuring storybook characters from English folklore, their narratives suggesting sitcoms or soaps, pub scenes from *The Rover's Return* or *The Queen Vic*. Other paintings are more poignant; one showing Mr. Punch hanging himself in a prison cell upset some. Others found his colour garish. He was encouraged by these reactions - they suggested he was onto something.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, despite its apparently autobiographical references, he is reluctant to discuss the content of his artwork; he is after all in a place where you don't usually say why you're there. He talks more about colour, its personal value and - in the drab prison world he inhabits – its unrestricted freedom and power.

Donald knows his satirical and sometimes caustic vision is a peculiarly English one, naming Rowlandson and Hogarth as precedents, but is cautious about his own more limited scope; it is early days. His recent move to another prison meant a break from painting of several months because he had no materials and no art class to go to, but he's painting again now. "I'm making pictures to cheer me up, poke sticks at society's sensitivity and bring a chortle and grin to others".