

David Hockney, *Grimms' Fairy Tales*

17 January – 11 February 2005

An exhibition illustrating etchings by David Hockney, of six fairy tales from the Brothers Grimm comes to Harlow in January. David Hockney's *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, a National Touring Exhibition from the Hayward Gallery, first opened in 1993 and continues to tour extensively.

Hockney has given each fairy tale his own interpretation. Rather than illustrating the stories literally, he has chosen vivid images to encapsulate a mood or detail. Some of the tales are familiar, like *Rapunzel* and *Rumpelstilzchen*; others, such as *Old Rinkrank*, *Fundevogel* and the *Little Sea Hare* are little known.

The tales are drawn from centuries of folklore. As Hockney points out: "The stories weren't written by the Brothers Grimm....they came across this woman called Catherina Dorothea Viehmann, who told 20 stories to them in this simple language, and they were so moved by them that they wrote them down word for word as she spoke."

His contemporary and often humorous approach to the tales is reflected in the quirky nature of the images. Of *Rapunzel* he says "...the stories really are quite mad, when you think of it, and quite strange. In modern times, it's like the story of a couple moving into a house, and in the next door's garden they see this lettuce growing: and the wife develops this craving for the lettuce that she just must have and climbs over to pinch it, and the old woman who lives in the house next door says well, you can have the lettuce if you give me your child, and they agree to it. And if you put it into terms like this and imagine them in their semi-detached house agreeing to it all, it seems incredible."

The 39 etchings were drawn directly onto copper plates by Hockney between May and November 1969. It was a decade in which etching featured strongly for Hockney. As well as *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, he made two other important series: *A Rake's Progress 1961-3* and *Illustrations for Thirteen Poems for CP Cavafy 1966*.

Reflecting the historical aspect of the folk-tales, Hockney has based some of the etchings on images by Old Masters: the head of an old cook in *Fundevogel* is based on a Leonardo da Vinci; the figures in *Rapunzel* are inspired by Breughel, Hieronymus Bosch and Uccello; and a Carpaccio painting is the source for an illustration in the story of *The Boy who left home to learn Fear*.

Born in Bradford in 1937, Hockney is one of the most popular British artists today. Major exhibitions of his work have been held all over the world. His work has included stage designs, photography and every kind of graphic medium. He has lived in California since the early 1970s.

*Grimms' Fairy Tales* is one of an extensive range of exhibitions in the programme of National Touring Exhibitions from the Hayward Gallery. National Touring Exhibitions helps to bring the highest quality art within reach of communities throughout Britain, striving to open new doors and enable even more people to experience and appreciate art.