

By Ros Dodd

During his first career as a barrister in Birmingham, David Mynett honed the art of painting mental pictures for judge and jury. More than 30 years on, he is enjoying a third career – painting pictures on canvas.

Following a second career as a farmer in Germany, 66-year-old David is now a successful landscape artist. His contemporary impressionist paintings have been exhibited in countries such as America and Morocco and hang in private and public art collections throughout the world. Next month (**October**) he is staging his first-ever themed show, of Venetian paintings in pastels, watercolours and gouache, at Birmingham's Number Nine The Gallery.

“During the late '60s, I was in chambers at Fountain Court in Birmingham, and being a barrister meant having to paint a picture for the judge and jury,” he recalls. “As with painting, it's about crafting your own script. Law also required discipline – as does art.”

David spent 20 years in southern Germany – the first Englishman, he believes, to farm there – where he learned further skills he would later bring to his painting.

“I love painting clouds; I suppose that's because I was a farmer,” he explains. “My experiences in farming equipped me with an understanding of the two fundamental elements in landscape painting: the weather and the lie of the land.”

During a six-week trip to the watery, romantic Italian city of Venice earlier this year, David captured its enduring appeal on canvases and in sketchbooks for his exhibition *The City in the Sea*.

“Virtually all the work for this exhibition was done right there on the spot – you can even see the rain drops on some of the finished pictures! It's sometimes said that so many great artists have painted Venice that there's no point in anyone else doing so, but I'm not sure that's right and it was certainly fun to try.

“My great passion in life is history and I find that an enormous help when I'm painting. Venetian history is very dark – the city's secret police during the Renaissance make the Gestapo look like something out of Enid Blyton! There are some paintings where I've hinted at the darkness. Venice is sometimes called the 'mask of Italy'; behind the mask is evil and cruelty and I've tried to include this in my new work.”

Shropshire-born David, now based in Oxfordshire, took up painting almost by accident, while he was farming the estate inherited by his Austrian-born wife. “I painted a little bit at school, but in about 1980 we had a portrait painter over to paint our children. One evening, I picked up the artist's curious looking pastels – and I took it up the very next day.”

It was only when he returned to live in England, after his son took over the running of the German estate, that David turned his hobby into a day job. Despite recent ill health and the darkness of history that influences some of his paintings, his artistic style remains romantic and optimistic.

“I’m not wild about pessimistic, dark pictures because I find them boring,” he says.
“Nowadays, you get so much gloomy stuff on television – so I don’t want it on my walls as well. I want my paintings to give people a lift, which I’m told they do. I once gave a picture to a lady in her late 80s; it was a picture of skies, with shadows and light on the landscape. She wrote to thank me and said, ‘the picture is very much like my life – the light and the dark’. I thought that was a lovely description.”

* David’s Venetian exhibition, *The City in the Sea*, can be seen at Number Nine The Gallery, 9 Brindleyplace, Birmingham from October 12 to November 3. Opening hours: Tues-Sat 11am-6pm, Sun 11am-5pm. Tel: 0121 643 9099 or email: lee@numbarninethegallery.com