

## Podcast Transcript

### New Perspectives: Episode 1, Donald Teskey in conversation with Lenny Abrahamson

#### Introduction: (Caomhán Mac Con Iomaire)

This series of podcasts looks at new acquisitions by living artists in the national collection. We explore the motivation behind the work, how it came to be in the Gallery, and what it means for an artist to have their work in the national collection. In this episode, Donald Teskey, an internationally renowned painter, perhaps best-known for his rugged and vibrant large-scale landscape paintings, will speak to Lenny Abrahamson, a film and TV director who has been honoured here in Ireland and abroad for his work. His credits include films such as *Adam and Paul*, *Garage*, *What Richard Did* and *Room*. Most recently he was a director on the hugely successful TV series, *Normal People*. In 2018, Donald Teskey was awarded a commission to create a portrait of Lenny Abrahamson. In this podcast, Donald and Lenny discuss the portrait commission, and the process of creating artwork, both on canvas and on film.

#### Donald Teskey:

Lenny, hi.

#### Lenny Abrahamson:

Hi, Donald.

#### Donald:

It's been a couple of years, I suppose. And you've been very busy since since you sat for the portrait. I suppose.

#### Lenny:

It's amazing that it's a couple of years. But you're right. It's been pretty eventful in all sorts of ways, I suppose. yeah, I'm trying to think where things were where we were. So it was 2019. That right?

#### Donald:

It was, wasn't it, yeah. And it was around this time of year that we began. So it was winter. And the snow, I think was either about to fall or was certainly, you know, it was part of the whole conversation at the time.

#### Lenny:

Yeah. That was the biggest problem we had, I think, back then, wasn't it?

**Donald:**

Yes, I think it was, yeah. Definitely, you'd welcome if that was the biggest problem we had today.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, bring it on.

**Donald:**

Marvellous. Yeah. But it was, I found it very interesting. Because, you know, as a landscape painter, of course, or a so-called landscape painter anyway, to be to be commissioned to paint a portrait was quite a, you know, it was, it was a challenge. It was a new experience for me, particularly one, which is so significant, I think, you know. Having one of my paintings in the National Gallery, it was, you know, kind of set set, the standard, very high set, set the challenge very high for me, the bar, I suppose. And so, to begin with, I think the only way I could approach a painting like that was to paint someone who I felt very comfortable and very excited about painting. And, and so when you were proposed, it came, you know, it was a very natural choice for me. You know, I thought, yes, Lenny Abrahamson was definitely a great candidate.

**Lenny:**

And is that based on I mean, from an artist point of view, is it? Is it based on a kind of gut feeling? Or is it you know, a particular face? Or how is it that that fit? Is kind of grounded for you?

**Donald:**

Well, I think it's a, I sort of wanted to work within a certain framework. I'm not a portrait painter. So I haven't got the, we'll say, I haven't accumulated all the techniques, and we'll say tools for approaching a commission, a commission portrait. So really, for me, it was a learning very much a process of, of trying to figure out how on earth I was going to approach this. So, so having someone that I felt I could connect with, and having met you once, I think, well in fact, I hadn't met you at all before I agreed to do the portrait, so but I sort of felt I knew you anyway, to some degree, you know, having, because you're obviously already well, well, recognised. Well, covered on, on, on, either on TV or, and on the internet, and so on.

**Lenny:**

Sure.

**Donald:**

And also, because you grew up in my neighbourhood. So there was a sort of a, an affinity, I think with with you.

**Lenny:**

And you, had you met my mum? I think you might have because she lives.

**Donald:**

Yes, that's right yeah.

**Lenny:**

Round the corner from you.

**Donald:**

Well, yeah, I think that probably influenced my, my decision as well to, you know, when when the when the choice is being made, you know, I thought, you know, this sounds like, this sounds like it'll be fun. And I, and I think that was probably also one of the, the factors, you know, you gotta be able to enjoy it, you know.

**Lenny:**

I think from my point of view, it's also when it was when the Gallery got in touch, I was kind of, I did to think about it and think, well, how do I feel about having my portrait painted? Because obviously it's very flattering to be asked, but then you sort of feel, well, you know, there's a sort of self-consciousness around that, at least there was for me. And, but I thought about it - funny enough, I thought, well, it will be a nice thing for maybe for my kids and my mum as well, and I just don't know how to sort of just, you just have to go on gut on these on these things, and I had a feeling that it would be a just an interesting thing to experience apart from anything, as it proved to be. And then when we were in touch, there's just a very nice kind of i don't know, we got on very well, in a very straightforward and kind of, there was a , you know you are a very easy person to talk to, and I felt sort of comfortable immediately. So I didn't regret the decision, you know, at all at any point.

**Donald:**

Yeah, yeah. Likewise, I kind of felt, you know, there was there was a nice sort of comfortable feeling approaching it. And I think, once we met, I think that whole, that whole sort of challenge that I felt about producing something for the National Gallery sort of dissipated, you know, the fear, the anxiety, well, there wasn't anxiety as such, but there was a sort of a, you know, a need to step up. And somehow, suddenly all that fell away, and it kind of felt a very natural process just to get on with the painting and get to know each other and so on. Plus, I think it was kind of nice, you coming to my home, initially. Because right from the offset, I think, I think at the first meeting we had, you know, you came in you had your sort of winter clothes on the, and the, and the Nike, black cap.

**Lenny:**

[laughs]

**Donald:**

Which is very familiar, and I kind of thought it, you know, there's the painting there, you know, it was a it was it didn't take much.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, I mean, it, it's funny, because I did, I probably decided just to, you know, when I went to see you I just tried not to think too much about it. And so just came as myself, but I did feel, there is a

very, I mean as somebody who's mostly looking at people in what I do, and I feel quite, it's very interesting, because it's quite exposing in a way. Because I meet you and I know that you must be thinking, Well, what are we going to do with this person? And, and so the idea of being captured, puts a pressure on a person, I think, to be authentically themselves, which, of course, is a very difficult thing, even to define.

**Donald:**

Yeah

**Lenny:**

You know, what does that really mean? And so, it was quite charged in that way, but at the same time, always lovely and kindly. And that allowed me to kind of, I think, settle into the process in a more, in an easy way. And I think it could have been quite difficult otherwise.

**Donald:**

I think so. And I, I was very taken with how well you settled into the idea of being a model, you know, you're a model sitter, if you'll excuse the poor expression!

**Lenny:**

[laughs]

**Donald:**

But in that, you very naturally gave, and I think that probably comes from trying to, know being natural is in some ways the most easy, the best approach, but often it can be quite difficult.

**Lenny:**

I think, for me was to recognise in a funny way, like what actors have and what I don't have. I mean, I did a little bit of acting and things and I kind of think I understand it, as a kind of the way maybe a mechanic understands a car, but I'm not, you know I don't have that engine, but I kind of know how they work, I think, and you know for me it was kind of accepting the fact that my natural state is slightly, you know, in motion, and there's a kind of, I don't know, there's a kind of, to accept the degree of self consciousness that I have, and sometimes a kind of anxiety that I have, and to let that be there, with you, I think, that was the thing. So unlike an actor who can inhabit, I had to sort of try and be true, but not to some other character, but to my own kind of odd, you know, busy, brain, and to let that just be presented to you. And it's quite, it was really fascinating for me Actually, sitting. And I think what I found so amazing was that you, that in the portrait that came out the other end, I recognise that state, you know, I recognise myself in it, and it's not a pose. You know, I think that's amazing that you could capture that.

**Donald:**

Yeah, it took several attempts, if I remember rightly, and, but I kind of think it's a bit like pulling the blinds back all the time, you know, you're looking through this window, and, and there's layers that is suddenly, and it's not necessarily layers that you hold, but layers in the process that I have to kind

of eventually get to that window that is clean, that's clear, where I can see, see through to the subject very, very well. And so it took, if you recall, it took several paintings, I think, which none of which exists. Well, only one other exists now, I think. But the others were all part of a process of trying to find the subject, of trying to find you in there. And I, you know, I kind of enjoyed all the process, but, but I knew I wasn't getting it until I got to that final painting. And even then I wasn't sure until I got to that very final layer.

**Lenny:**

Mmmm...

**Donald:**

And then it surprised me. Or it took me by surprise, because I realised that suddenly, you know, gone beyond the glass we'll say of the window. And I think that's probably the one of the best things I can say about the portrait is that every time I see it, it surprises me.

**Lenny:**

Yeah

**Donald:**

You know -

**Lenny:**

Well, it's really interesting to me that, you know, that people listening might think, oh, there were like wildly different portraits that you tried, but you always knew like the, the orientation and the general sort of approach to to it was the same each time, but they were very different paintings. And so I'm interested in what it is at a sort of micro level of the strokes you make, and what sort of, you know, just thinking about, I'm fascinated by how people work, and that it is this kind of, you need to get into a kind of flow, don't you? And then if you do get into it, you find you, I don't know, whatever, whatever is controlling your, your hand at that time is doing something kind of different, and like, what is the difference between those paintings, because on the surface, we know, at a really quick glance, you go, okay, the same orientation to the subject, the same rough kind of scale. And yet, the last one has this truthfulness, like as you say, you sort of go through the glass or, and you feel like you're present with the person. And I'm fascinated to know how that feels from your side.

**Donald:**

It's, it's the great unknowing, I mean, I just don't really quite know that myself if was that easy. You know, if I could explain it, I, you could probably do it every time, you know, but it's, as I say, I suppose from my own point of view, because I'm not a portrait painter, I haven't built up a kind of a repertoire of, of approaches and tools and strokes and easily get to the subject and then go beyond that. I think it's almost like starting from scratch every time. But that's the same in my approach to landscape as well. It's, or in other paintings I make, it tends to be always going right back to the beginning. To start with the very basic idea. And I suppose from that point of view, the vision is what's important like, as you say, each portrait I painted of you was more or less the same in

composition and so on, but all very different in you know, in, in what they were portraying. And likewise, I suppose when, when painting any subject, there's a there's a way I start, but each time it goes in a different direction.

**Lenny:**

That's, yeah, fascinating because, you know, there is that thing of, I talk about it sometimes in, in what I tried to do as well, which is the value of not knowing things. And actually, there are all these techniques and things that you probably one in whatever field gets a facility for, but they become kind of unconscious. And then each time you kind of have to try and find yourself in that place where you're not quite sure what you're looking for, or you're, or there's a naivety in the approach, and I think the best work comes out of that, you know, whereas if you go in with a kind of sense of what you're going to execute, if that's too, if that's too procedural, and too clear, then it can lack that kind of uncertainty and openness that real things have. And I always think that the value of uncertainty and of not knowing things is underrated.

**Donald:**

I think so. And it leads to, I think, very satisfying, sometimes a rewarding result in in the surprise that it can bring both for the artist or the producer, we'll say the maker and the onlookers, you know, so I don't know, it was an exciting process. Certainly.

**Lenny:**

Yeah.

**Donald:**

And it's funny. I mean, I did have some ideas about when I, when I began it, like, I liked the idea of making that, you know, it being a square format. Because the square in a sense, is more abstract than narrative we'll say.

**Lenny:**

Definitely.

**Donald:**

When you produce a, as soon as you produce a landscape format, or a portrait format, does it kind of a narrative around that. But a square is just pure abstraction.

**Lenny:**

Yeah.

**Donald:**

And so I placing you almost like a self portrait pose, which is the type of pose which I'm most familiar with, because we all look at each other in a mirror every day or every so often. So that's the kind of a very familiar structure, very familiar composition. And, and it also harks back to the Great Masters'

self portraits like Rembrandt's very, probably one of his most famous paintings with the two circles behind him.

**Lenny:**

Yes.

**Donald:**

In his older age, a beautiful painting. And I kind of thought, you know, there's a, there's a wonderful sort of timelessness about that sort of pose.

**Lenny:**

Yes, and you also didn't see, you didn't get into that thing of kind of placing me in a representative space, you know, like, you'll see people painted in, like, in their libraries, or in their, studies or whatever, like in the classical sort of tradition, and still, up until now, you'll see that, and there are kind of there's a code and not quite a code, but in fact just a direct, like, there's lots of information in the in in more conventional portraits, which tells you the sort of person they are, you know, there's lots of focus on hands and, and sort of sitting postures, and, you know, you think about what they're in front of, whereas, you're right, there is a feeling that it's hard to locate that picture, even though there are obviously things like a baseball cap and everything which is definitely contemporary, the picture doesn't feel like it, it looks at a given, it's not about the moment, historically or something. It's it's you're right there's an abstraction to it.

**Donald:**

An abstraction and, I hope, an intensity, that kind of, you know, will, that endures I think, you know, it gets to you, it gets at you gets at the sitter with depth. That's, you know, that was that was hoping but that's what I was hoping for you know.

**Lenny:**

I certainly feel that, I do. I mean, it's I haven't been in the Gallery for a long time, but, but I do. It is such an odd feeling standing in front of a painting of oneself.

**Donald:**

Yeah. I can imagine that's -

**Lenny:**

But but but really, I think that could have been awful. You know, if I if I felt like it was capturing some fake projection of mine or, I don't know. And it doesn't it feels very honest. And you get, you very kindly gave me an early sketch that you did of it in charcoal I think isn't it? And, and I have that at home, which is lovely. Although it's hidden, it's not hidden, it's in the bedroom. Because I don't think I could live...

**Donald:**

[laughs]

**Lenny:**

I don't think I can have a picture of myself in the house that anybody else would see, because that would be sort of, I'd feel very kind of self-conscious about that. But yeah, I look forward to being able to go back into the Gallery and, and see it and, you know, again, because it's been such a gap.

**Donald:**

I was struck when visiting you in your home, you have the wonderful head of Frank. One of them anyway.

**Lenny:**

That's right.

**Donald:**

Which, which is about as close as you can get maybe to your having a, you know, sort of representation of your of your work, at home.

**Lenny:**

Yeah. It's funny, because that head itself. We spent a lot of time with this wonderful designer, Richard Bullock, working on different heads. They were all inspired by the real Frank Sidebottom's head, but they're different. And it was that that was the only one that had this kind of odd neutrality about it, which allows you to project thoughts onto it. It's so interesting, messing with different expressions and different levels of detail, and then realising how few of them had any life. And then that one with its kind of half smile, seemed to be the rich one. And there's some relevance to that probably in in just how how tiny differences make massive, have massive effects.

**Donald:**

Yeah, yeah. It's funny, we watched that. We watched Frank again recently, and I had seen it, obviously before, but it's funny seeing it in, you know, in the light of your more recent work, including Room of course. And it's, it's a it's a, it's a fantastic movie. I have to say I really enjoy Frank.

**Lenny:**

Thanks. Yeah, it's odd but -

**Donald:**

odd, but dark and uplifting at the same time.

**Lenny:**

Yeah. Thank you.

**Donald:**



Yeah, it's great. And actually, I find that very interesting, too. Because one of the one of the most joyful things about this whole our whole process was when, when we came to do the launch, the unveiling of the portrait, which was in September, something of the same year wasn't it?

**Lenny:**

Yes, I think so. Yeah.

**Donald:**

And, and this was in the National Gallery, but it coincided with the, with the premiere of The Little Stranger.

**Lenny:**

Yes, that's right.

**Donald:**

Which happened the same week, I think, in Dublin. And that was kind of serendipity, really, that was just pure coincidence, but, but for a, it just felt it just, it just brought everything to a very natural conclusion. For me anyway, I kind of felt that that all for all of a sudden, you know, was suddenly kind of thrown into the world of, you know, the National Gallery, and it's sort of aura of, you know, history and traditional stuff. And then suddenly into the, the glamour world, you might say, of, of, of the movie

**Lenny:**

Of a movie premiere with...that's right, because they all the cast came and -

**Donald:**

All the cast. Yeah.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, it was a really nice time. And it also feels like a different world. Doesn't it, now that we're in this kind of pandemic phase and all of these things that you would take for granted? I mean, I found that yeah, I, I don't know, I found that the having the picture painted very kind of ultimately quite therapeutic. And I kind of, I don't know, it was an important thing in the end, and I didn't know what I would think about it at the beginning. And I think at the beginning, probably I was my, like, concerns or thoughts about it were superficial, you know, wondering what I would seem like and would it be, how would I look and all those things and then it ended up being a much more kind of internal the effects were much more internal. And I think it was good for me actually, to have to have it done it kind of and and I found you like, you know, for it's hard to describe, but you seem in a really interesting way like you didn't, it didn't feel like you were bringing in any overt way kind of ego to it. And I think that that made it more exposing to me in a funny way. Because had you been, had you been been a different person, I think where your own work, if you've been sort of projecting a stronger I don't know, imposing yourself on me in a different way, I think I would have then adopted a sort of an orientation to you that that was kind of self protective. And, and probably not very

interesting. But because you sort of held back like a really good observer, like I try to do when I'm directing and try to be sort of, like create the space for the person to step into, it becomes, you know, that that kind of normal defensive stance is kind of undercut somehow.

**Donald:**

I think so. And I think that I, you know, for me, it just made it very, yeah, I was allowed to make mistakes, you know, I gave myself permission to try things out and to fail, and fail again, which I did. Until I until it gradually, but I suppose, you know, even the techniques that I used, I mean, I, okay, I relied on a camera. When other approaches were failing, you know, I felt, and these are the tools which all artists have available these days. And in fact, I mean, it's kind of interesting, that portraiture has always been framed by some sort of photographic or camera type device. Some sort of optical device has always been available to artists, for hundreds of years to help to help set up portraits, and other things as well. You know, just kind of a natural way of approaching things. You find, you find the right tool for the job, basically, and whatever it takes to get it down on on canvas.

**Lenny:**

I also think that by you photographing first and videoing first, it got me into the sort of process in a way that had I just sat down straightaway for long periods of sitting it would have been difficult and, but but yeah, that was all the sort of camera obscura is and the Hockney book about the use of that technique goes right back, doesn't it, I mean -

**Donald:**

Yeah. I mean, he's made the case very well. And it's, it's kind of very, it's interesting. And of course, you know, and it's kind of interesting, too, because the whole, you know, optics, even self portraits, like, only really began with the invention of the mirror -

**Lenny:**

Yes

**Donald:**

Really good mirrors. And the early mirrors were kind of prone to distortions, and so on. So and the other thing too, of course, early mirrors for self portraiture were hugely expensive items back you know, hundreds of years ago at the very beginning. So they were treasured items, I guess. But that's a that's, that's another story, I suppose, in a sense, but it's it's part of the the story of portraiture.

**Lenny:**

I was trying to remember how many times I sat for you, it was probably was it three times in your studio? Or something like that?

**Donald:**

Yeah, something like that. And in your home as well, which was interesting, actually, because the I think the sitting in your home was probably more important than sitting in my studio, even though it was necessary to be in the studio. Because the surroundings gave me a sense of the quality of the

light and texture and even some of the items which I thought about putting in the background to help the composition. And I later removed like, a photograph, you had a photograph behind you in one of my compositions that I thought I would keep in of an, of an African elephant charging.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, it's funny because, there are like spots in the house. We've actually since moved, but, having been there for a very long time, but there are spots in the house where you would imagine the portrait would have been done. Like there's upstairs there was sort of, like a nice room with bookshelves and a big window and things. But you chose probably the part of the house, which, in a way frustrated me the most for years because it was this kind of bit of an extension that we never did anything with. And it ended up as a kind of bit of a psychological thorn for me because I think, oh God, you know, I'm such a disaster. We've never really, you know, and the house never felt finished in a funny way, even though we were there for years. And but you put me in that corner, the very corner. And actually, it's true, that's really much more who I am than the bookshelves. And and, and good art that was upstairs or whatever. Much more who I am.

**Donald:**

Well, good. You know, it, it sort of worked anyway, but from a lighting point of view, and also, I think it just felt right, you know? And of course, we know you love dogs.

**Lenny:**

Absolutely. And there were a couple floating around there I think at the time.

**Donald:**

So I think all of that I was trying to kind of imbue the painting with without literally including, these items

**Lenny:**

Yes.

**Donald:**

So a sense, a sense of space, a sense of place.

**Lenny:**

Didn't you say, am I right in saying that you had you said we were chatting afterwards at some point you said you there was one of the dogs you thought might be worth painting. Am I right about that?

**Donald:**

[laughs] I might have.

**Lenny:**

[laughs] I'm going to hold you to that!

**Donald:**

Okay. Yeah yeah. Beautiful dogs. Did you have a whippet, or...?

**Lenny:**

Yeah, a lurcher. You hit the very height of his sort of new kind of traumatised state. But he's, he's chilled out a lot since then. So yeah, a very beautiful dog actually. Yeah.

**Donald:**

Very beautiful. Yeah. They're very, very, what's the word?

**Lenny:**

They're sort of regal.

**Donald:**

Yeah, yeah. And photogenic and, you know, you'd love to, and certainly have been painted. Freud, of course, painted similar.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, right back to the Egyptians, those dogs actually, were the ones that you see in the art then.

**Donald:**

I mean, I think, I think it's been well received, which I'm very happy with. But I suppose one of the things that is I found one of the things which I think is, which is worth mentioning, is how the National Gallery programme of, of adding to their collection, through portraits, contemporary portraits is hugely admirable, you know, it's well worth kind of, I think it's a fantastic programme. Because not only does it introduce obviously portraits of, of, of people who, who, you know, who have achieved great things and are being represented, but it also gives an opportunity for artists who otherwise wouldn't be able to be part of the collection through their through their paintings of, through the say for instance, the Zurich Portrait Prize which is you know, an ongoing, now it was the Hennessy portrait prize at the beginning then became Zurich. But it's really brought a fantastic attention to portraiture as has I suppose, you know, other galleries like the the RHA and and, and I think portraiture suddenly has has come back into the public domain again or into the artistic field.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, both both painting and photographic I'm friends with a photographer called Enda Bowe, who I think won the Zurich prize, I think most recently -

**Donald:**

That's right, yeah.

**Lenny:**

And he did amazing portrait work. Yeah, just, I think it is, yeah the Gallery has been amazing in how kind of actively it's, you know, sought out these to expand the collection and to build a sort of a kind of inventory of really interesting collaborations between sitters and painters. Do you think you would because as you say, you're you're obviously, extremely well known as, as a landscape painter, do you think you would paint portraits again, having done this?

**Donald:**

Yeah, yes, I would. But I wouldn't put myself out there so much to do commissions we'll say. Well, now, not gonna close the door on anything! [laughs]

**Lenny:**

Yeah, never say never! [laughs]

**Donald:**

I shouldn't say that. But, you know, it's yeah, I do find it quite difficult. So I was taking on a commission, and you know, it's the same in landscape, whether, not just landscape - whatever it is. I mean, I keep referring to myself as a landscape. But I also used to never refer to myself as a landscape painter years ago, but just as a painter, but I began painting landscapes. So gradually, I became known as a landscape painter. And then I adopted that kind of tag myself, you know, so. But I'm still just a painter of everything in a sense. So portraiture is part of, but I just don't do as many as maybe I should, if, if I wanted to kind of keep it up as a part of my, you know, repertoire of things. And, as you say, collaboration is something really interesting, that's, it's a good point to talk about, because it is something that I value hugely in my work. Because as a painter of static objects, I'm not collaborating generally. But, but when it comes to collaboration, for instance, when making prints working with somewhere like the Graphic Studio, or Stoney Road Press that I have collaborated with in the past, I've been collaborating with print makers who are masters at their craft, but I am the visual artist who is bringing the image and they are, and together, we work on something completely unique. So that is, to some extent, that's been my kind of area of collaboration. So in portraiture, this was our this was, in a way, my first collaboration with with a with somebody who wasn't an artist in the same field. And that's more interesting to me than necessarily being a portrait painter, if you know what I mean. So I like the collaboration, this, and that's the sort of thing I would chase more than necessarily going out trying to paint portraits of anybody and everybody. And I think that's, and I feel that too, when I'm, when I'm working in printmaking is the collaboration is all is is the most important thing. If you're working well with somebody, then you're really creating something that's probably greater than the sum of our parts. You know.

**Lenny:**

I can I mean, I, yeah, I, you know, that resonates with me. Again, working with an actor or with crew and with writers and it can be an incredibly exhilarating thing.

**Donald:**

Yeah, I can easi-. I mean, that's where it's coming from. From your point of view, I can obviously recognise that as being a major part of, of your craft, but for me, for somebody who usually spends,

spends my time isolated, and never more so now than these times, you know, last last year, working in isolation has been entirely in isolation is all it's quite a challenge. Actually, funny, I didn't realise that so much, you know, because I do like the collaboration, and I haven't had an opportunity in the past year. So -

**Lenny:**

Yeah, it's very, it doesn't... yeah, it's, I mean, I think just, you know, just being able to get away from yourself, even, is very important. And, and it gets harder in these circumstances to do it. Like we're supposed to be starting something. And we've had to postpone a little bit and we're kind of constantly watching the news. And I just, you know, have always taken for granted the fact that you could just gather and do your work. You know, we've all had to live with we've all had to sort of face that over the last while and, and obviously, for many people, it's much worse, but because you can still do things in our world and that's not always true. But have you, have you been painting?

**Donald:**

Oh I'm painting all the time, yeah. It's painting and staying well within, you know, the restricted range and so on, which I found also kind of interesting because restrictions sometimes allow you to focus in a way that maybe I haven't done before to the same degree anyway, you know. So, staying close to home, down by the river, my local river, the Dodder -

**Lenny:**

Which you've painted, that is it's, you know that's a theme in your, like that's a subject you return to in your work anyway, so it's kind of, yeah, within a five kilometre radius there's an infinite amount of interest really, I think -

**Donald:**

There is, there is.

**Lenny:**

Within a few hundred metres probably there is.

**Donald:**

Yeah, yeah, it's true. So, I mean there are challenges with that too, because the river has also become incredibly busy with people discovering it and walking, you know. So it's a lot, even though, you know it's almost a bit of a rural Ireland in the city suburbs, it's very popular with people, so it's not quite as -

**Lenny:**

So it's not an idyll?

**Donald:**

It's not, no.

**Lenny:**

I mean, I know the Dodder really well because I lived close to it for years, and would go down with the dogs and yeah it's an odd, like all sort of urban/suburban parks it's a funny mixture of things. It's the fact that, I find what's really interesting about your paintings of the Dodder is that within the frame, you realise that, like when you take away all those extraneous, or in a sense extraneous kinds of noises and people and traffic and stuff, like, that little slice of the bank that you paint, is sort of fully, is uncompromised in some way, you know. I find that really interesting.

**Donald:**

Yeah. Its.. that's right. And finding those little portions, little sections, little areas along the riverbank that I can revisit and revisit and rework is very exciting. And I suppose during the lockdown you do that more than ever, I suppose, in a way. I'll just have to continue doing this for a while longer yet.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, I love those paintings.

**Donald:**

Thank you. Okay. Well, I think maybe we've discussed pretty much everything.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, I think.

**Donald:**

So, it's been a pleasure Lenny, renewing our acquaintance again, after more than a year, I'd say.

**Lenny:**

Yeah, I hope maybe when things ease up we can go for a walk down by the Dodder.

**Donald:**

That'd be great actually. So, shall we leave it there, and until the next time. Thank you.

**Lenny:**

Thank you Donald, thanks so much.