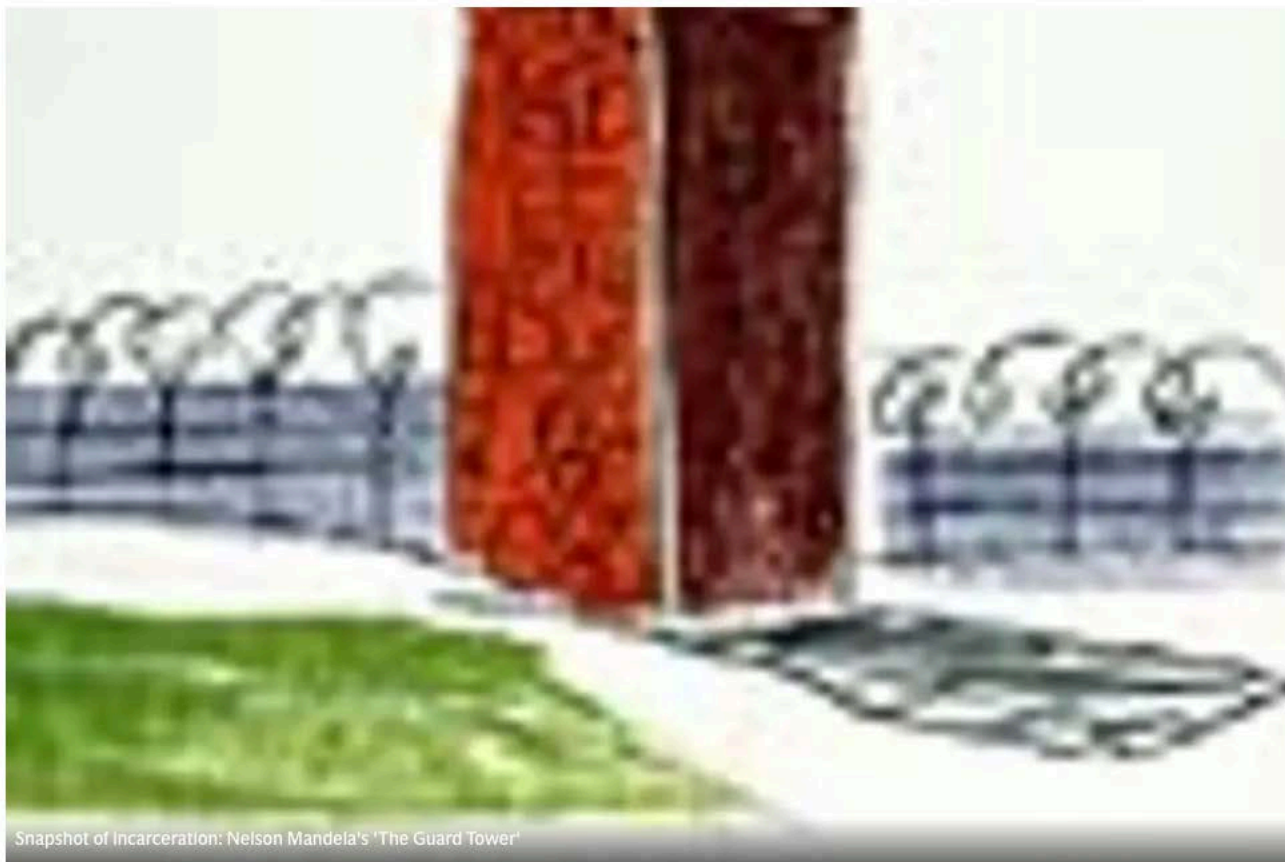


Mandela's prison visions



Snapshot of Incarceration: Nelson Mandela's 'The Guard Tower'

By [Nick Hackworth](#) [Evening Standard](#) | 05 April 2012



EXHIBITION REVIEW: Reflections on Robben Island Belgravia Gallery, SW1

Nelson Mandela, forever associated in our collective consciousness with peace, forgiveness and the countless crap student bars that were renamed in the Eighties by earnest Lefties, is busy taking the art world by storm.

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Reflections on Robben Island is the second set of lithographs released by the former South African president.

Like the first, produced last year, it focuses on the infamous prison where he spent 18 of the 27 years that he was incarcerated by the apartheid regime.

Mandela has never been artistically inclined but created the prints to raise funds for his charity, which fights Aids in Africa, when someone pointed out that he could do no worse than John Lennon's expensive and rubbish artwork.

This set of work is a collection of five triptychs. They deal with different bits of the jail, such as The Guard Tower or The Ward, and each one comprises a printed coloured drawing of that place by Mandela, a black-and-white photo of the identical location and a text by Mandela explaining its significance.

While he should not give up the day job, Mandela has done extremely well.

His bold, simple and sparingly coloured drawings are emotive but restrained and far outstrip not only Lennon's efforts but also Paul McCartney's execrable abstract paintings and Ronnie Wood's feeble figurative work.

Better still, the tripartate format he employs echoes a seminal conceptual work from the Sixties, One and Three Chairs by Joseph Kosuth. It consists of a wooden chair, a large black-and-white photo of the chair and the dictionary definition of "chair" printed as a text piece, highlighting, as Mandela has done with drawing, photo and text, the particular properties of differing forms of representation.

With the combination of his stature and such theoretical awareness it is surely only a matter of time before Mandela is nominated for the Turner Prize

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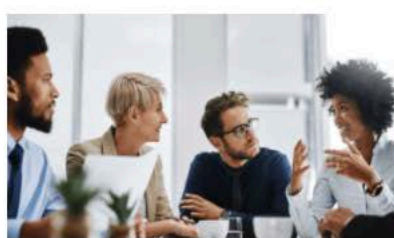
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