

Graham Short – My life as a Micro Artist



Graham Short is a micro-artist, living and working in Birmingham. Known for producing miniature pieces of art, he has spent over 50 years going to physical and mental extremes to produce the highest-quality hand engravings ever seen. Appearing in news features internationally and the subject of many television programmes, Graham is now considered to be one of the most talented living micro- artists in the world. His achievements include engraving The Lord's Prayer on the head of a gold pin measuring just 2mm across and the words "Nothing is Impossible" engraved along the cutting edge of a traditional razor blade alongside the Jane Austin & Harry Kane engraved bank notes.

His Life

At the age of 15 I left school without any qualifications, totally unprepared for working life. I walked through the school gates on the Friday, and Monday morning started a six-year apprenticeship learning how to engrave copper plates and steel dies for the printing trade - Letterheads, business cards and wedding invitations.

When my apprenticeship ended I couldn't get away fast enough! I rented a small room in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter and started my own one-man engraving business. I went to London, armed with samples of embossed stationery. I knocked on the door of Gieves & Hawkes, No 1 Savile Row, outfitters to the Royal Family.

I showed the samples to the buyer and asked if I could supply their letterheads. The buyer said it looked expensive. I told him I would supply two reams of hand-engraved letterheads free of charge. The engraving of the printing plates would cost me only my time, then I found a printer to stamp the paper.

When I delivered the two boxes of letterheads, I visited other shops in Savile Row and showed them Gieves & Hawkes stationery, Five of them said, "If you supply Gieves and Hawkes, you can supply us too."

Armed with the samples of Savile Row's finest shops I pushed my luck and knocked on more doors! I secured orders from Harrods, Fortnum & Mason, James Purdey (Gunmakers) and nearly every investment bank in the City; Barings, Goldman Sachs, Warburgs and Morgan Stanley.

Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Balmoral and Sandringham followed. During the 1980s I supplied 10 Downing Street and The House of Commons.

Over the years I have engraved business cards for ZaZa Gabor, Richard Attenborough, Andrew Lloyd-Webber, Richard Branson, actors, David Niven, Ronnie Barker and Hattie Jacques. One interesting order for business cards in the style of luncheon vouchers came from the 'provider of services' to MPs, vicars and peers of the realm... Cynthia Payne