

# THIS HERE NOW

Marker Plates by Dan Walker

28 rue Petrelle  
75009 Paris



## Dan Walker

Born in London in 1964, Dan Walker trained and worked as an entertainment lawyer before moving to film and television production. He has drawn and made collages from an early age and more recently has been involved in various design and art projects. In November 2011, he had his first solo exhibition at the Galerie d'Architecture in Paris.

## **THIS WAS THEN THAT WAS NOW**

Six years ago on the morning of Good Friday, an Englishman, having just walked across the Ponte dell'Accademia in Venice, spotted a small, rusted object on the ground near the Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti. It looked to him like a key, but not to a door or a lock – to an old mechanism, perhaps. He bent over, picked it up, and slipped it in his pocket.

Two years later, while strolling with a friend past a fleet of boats a day's walk south of Oslo, a snarl of fishnet caught his eye. It was a cold January morning. He was 43 years old and precisely seven metres closer to sea level than he had been in Venice in 2006.

When he was 33, and 57 metres higher, and roughly 12 latitudinal degrees to the south, he was momentarily distracted by a circular object with a braided green rope attached to one end – an old fob watch, perhaps, missing its insides and face. He made a note of the time and the date of its discovery – 11:42 on the morn of All Hallow's Eve, 1997. Outside, he could hear the wind in the trees and a lone car on the road and, just beyond, the faint murmur of the river, flowing north and west to meet the Seine. With the index finger of his right hand, he followed the water's movement away from its source. He knew then that he was precisely where he wanted to be. He knew also that this feeling would not last. He could feel it changing already.

He had been living in France for almost seven years. The following May, in a barn in the Auvergne, he found what appeared to be an old latch. He would remember this moment: the fading light, the sense of calm. Would he remember it always? He had just made a decision of central importance. He had chosen a passage and opened a door. He was caught among, or between, the consequences of these choices.

What had been and what will be.

*What might have been and what has been point to one end, which is always present. He remembered this from his schooldays. Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future. Something like that.*

Nine years hence, during a sightseeing trip to Japan, he visited a 400-year-old Buddhist temple in Kyoto. It was mid-March; the cherry trees were not yet in blossom. What did he see? A window of enlightenment and a window of suffering. A beautiful, blissfully peaceful garden. A few tourists. A ceiling made from the bloodstained floorboards of a nearby castle. A tree-like bundle of wire. This last item he put in his pocket. Again, he noted the time. Later, using technology bundled with his telephone, he registered the object's exact global position, and later still, he wrote, "I think it was just a piece of electrical wire discarded by an overworked electrician fixing a streetlamp. Or maybe it was a symbolic offering placed before the temple."

Four days later and 132 degrees to the west, he was surprised by a somewhat corresponding find, this time on a busy street near the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, a few steps away from a statue of the highest capital of Europe's most enduring civic symbol — a black bear standing on its hind legs to reach the berries of a strawberry tree. This, here, now, he thought. That, there, then. What was he in-between now? He did not speak Spanish. Or Japanese. If he had, different deictic distinctions would have been available to him — this object, that object near you, and that object over there, away from both of us. He spoke French — he had been living in Paris since 1990 and, whenever possible, in the old chateau near the Ource. Like his mother tongue, French is limited to a two-way distinction — *cette chose-ci* and *cette chose-là*.

His mother tongue. One day, while walking on Hampstead Heath near the Iveagh Bequest, he was stopped in his tracks by an incongruous object lying in the garden of the orangery. It was a piece of electrical wire - but he thought it looked like a letter as soon as he saw it. It reminded him also of his mother. He did not tell her this. She was

walking with him at the time.

*Who is the third who walks always beside you?  
When I count, there are only you and I together  
But when I look ahead up the white road  
There is always another one walking beside you  
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded  
I do not know whether a man or a woman  
—But who is that on the other side of you?<sup>1</sup>*

In Milton's day, English had a third term - "Him that yon soars on golden wing." This thing, that thing, yon thing. Other echoes inhabiting the temple garden. Like the moment in the trees when the wind blew, like the moment in the castle when the soldiers killed themselves, like the long-extinct bear and berries of Madrid, yon thing is now lost to us forever.

"I am not here now." This nonsensical message once played on the man's answering machine in Paris. The recording also said, "*Je ne suis pas là*", which in French means, "I am not there." The here and now recorded were not this now, here, at the place and time that the man recorded it. Nor was it there, 'là', either. These were projected, like the man's absence here and presence there, into the future, to a different location, to be applied to any time that anybody called.

This - what followed - is somewhat that. The discovering man always at the center. Central time always the time of discovery. Central place always the man's location at the time of discovery.

*Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.<sup>2</sup>*

He remembers something that his maternal grandfather once told him, about the transmigration of a soul requiring passage through an amnesic sea overseen by a divine being, an Angel of Forgetfulness. The angel washes away memory, but sometimes he forgets to do this. Sometimes memories from anterior existences remain. Footfalls echo in the memory.

He writes these thoughts down on a marker plate - a rectangle of old, discarded zinc roofing from the chateau. He paints a picture of the angel above them. He attaches the old Venetian key to its left. It is early spring. He is at latitude 48 degrees, longitude 2 degrees. He is 35 metres above sea level.

This is where he lives and works.

Soon, however, he will be moving.

These things will thus be left to echo elsewhere.

Christopher Mooney  
Contributing Editor, Art Review

I collected up all my spare time  
and put it in a house between a  
forest and a river. A place to hide.  
A place to seek.





01/12 (Big) 31/10/97 11:42

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

The light was fading but it wasn't  
too late to change my mind.  
Between the end of what had  
been and what was to come.



02/12 (Big) 07/05/97 07:15

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

A house overlooking the Seine comes with a workshop built into the cliff. A first floor atelier with no visible access. A haven.



03/12 (Big) 01/12/02 11:42

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

The Angel of Forgetfulness sometimes forgets to remove from our memories the records of the former world; and then our senses are haunted by fragmentary recollections of another life. They drift like torn clouds above the hills and valleys of the mind, and weave themselves into the incidents of our current existence.



I remembered things I never knew.  
Blood on the ceiling from battles  
fought long before.





05/12 (Big) 19/03/07 15:24

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

Warm water colours. Fragments  
of other people's stories.



06/12 (Big) 23/11/07 10:07

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

Northern sky.

Northern Sea.

Empty beach.

I know this isn't working.



07/12 (Big) 04/01/08 11:50

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

Discarded amid freshly-minted  
glass towers where even the  
old is newly manufactured.  
Time hiding in the shadows.

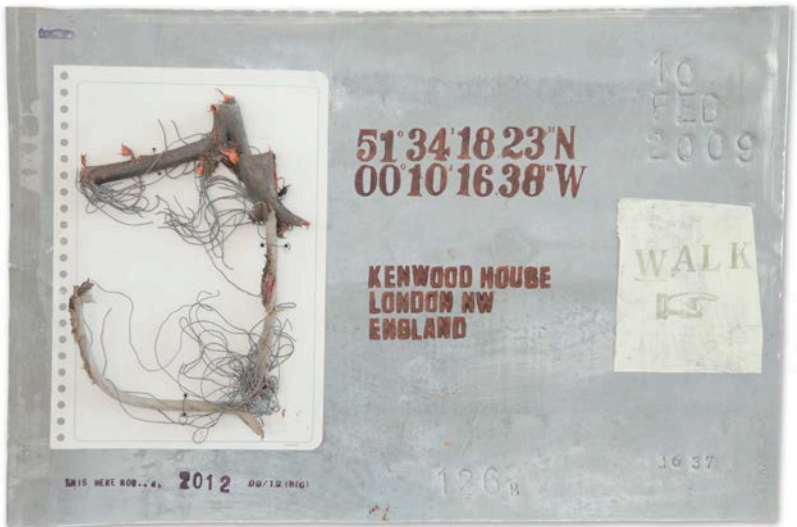


08/12 (Big) 14/04/08 19:16

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

A walk can cure the worst  
ills. Almost. A flayed and  
tattered letter waiting to be read.





09/12 (Big) 10/02/09 16:37

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

Ideas beckoning from every corner.  
This can't go on.



**10/12 (Big) 30/10/10 17:32**

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

Holding hands.

Broad brush and thin colours.

A greying morning tinged with gold.



11/12 (Big) 05/03/12 10:22

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

Off the road before the river.  
I found a beautiful sign and  
carried it home.



12/12 (Big) 18/03/12 15:58

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012







01/06 (Small) 24/03/07 12:53

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012





**02/06 (Small) 17/06/07 17:08**

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012

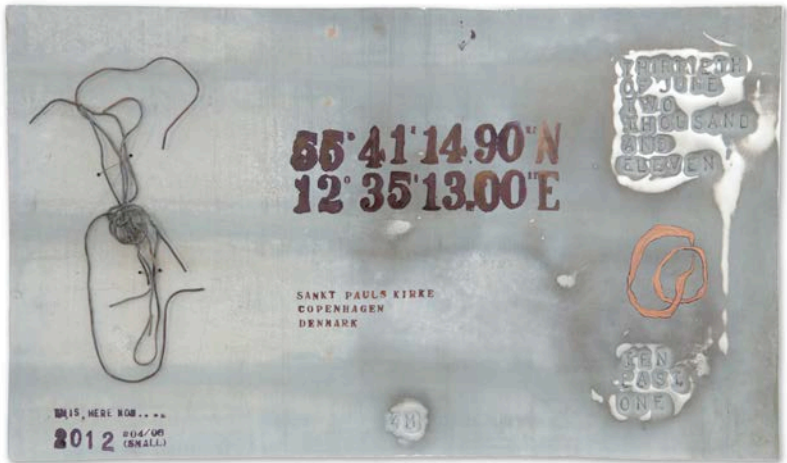




**03/06 (Small) 16/06/11 12:52**

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012



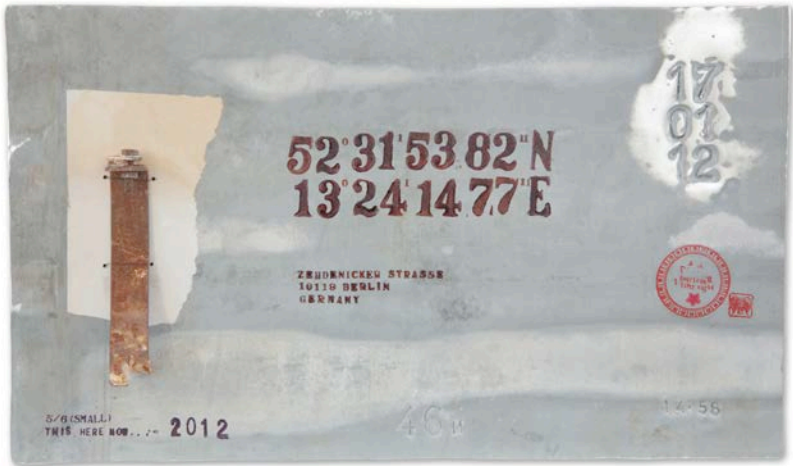


04/06 (Small) 30/06/11 13:10

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012







**05/06 (Small) 17/01/12 14:58**

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012





**06/06 (Small) 13/04/12 13:06**

Mixed Media on Zinc, 2012



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