

# In Conversation with Mark Cazalet

Professor Frances Spalding

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*Mark Cazalet, born 1964, trained at the Chelsea and then Falmouth Schools of Art, after which he held scholarships in Paris and India. He works in a variety of media, including engraved glass, paint, prints, mosaics, and graphic media. He has taught in several art institutions and has been a Senior Member of Faculty at The Royal Drawing School since 2012. Travel has always played an important role in his art. Through the experience of his journeys, he has opened up rich colloquy between contemporary and traditional arts, between classical and folk forms. Architecture, film, fiction, and theology have all played a role in his creative evolution.*

*Professor Frances Spalding, CBE, FRSL, PhD, is an art historian and biographer. After studying History of Art at the University of Nottingham, she became a specialist in twentieth-century British art. Following the publication of her British Art Since 1900, in the Thames & Hudson 'World of Art' series, she was commissioned by the Tate to write its centenary history. She has also produced five biographies of artists as well as one on the poet Stevie Smith. She taught at Newcastle University 2000–15, becoming Professor of Art History. In 2014 she guest-curated the exhibition 'Virginia Woolf: Art, Life and Vision' for the National Portrait Gallery. During the year 2015–16 she acted as Editor of The Burlington Magazine and became a Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge.*

*This conversation took place at Clare Hall, Cambridge, on 25 February 2021.*

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**Professor Frances Spalding:** Our guest this evening is Mark Cazalet. Mark is an artist who has pursued a very wide-ranging career. He could be described as a latter-day John Piper, for, like Piper, he has worked in a variety of media, received major public commissions, has a strong sense of place and has travelled widely. Both Piper and Cazalet remind me of Beethoven's remark, 'Art demands of us that we do not stand still', a challenging statement that refers to much more than travel. Travel, however, is something which many of us have greatly missed during the COVID crisis. Some years back I heard a speaker at a conference in Cambridge say, 'The most radical thing you can do today is to stay at home.' This was with reference to ecology, but today we understand this command in relation to COVID, as well as in relation to our carbon footprint. Yet the fact that a common swift can stay in the air for ten months without touching ground shows how innate within the natural world, including within us, is the need to move, to migrate, to travel. Friedrich Nietzsche advised, 'Never trust a thought that didn't come by walking.' And I want to suggest that the current interest in reviving a habit that began seven hundred years ago, namely that of pilgrimage, is further evidence of our need to locate ourselves in place and time, and to realise that remembrance is key to the continuing of life.

This evening Mark Cazalet will deliver a presentation on his work and travels, and the understanding he has gained from the latter. So, over to you, Mark.

**Mark Cazalet:** Frances wrote the first important essay on my work back in 1994, and since then has put her finger on the pressure points in my work, consistently, sparingly but fiercely. This opportunity to present the role that travel has had in my work has made me aware

that my creativity has been subject to two forces: a centrifugal force, and a gravitational force. Since the seventies, the opportunity to propel ourselves out into the far corners of the world has been an exciting liberation. But it has come at a cost. I think we are now beginning to ask ourselves why we are travelling such big distances. What do we really learn from these travels? And how might—in this present time and after the pandemic—our notions of *significant* travel change? That is what I call the gravitational aspect—what matters to us here and now and within our environment, and which calls on our need to stay still, the alternative to travel.

Because I will start by showing you some of my early work, which I'm frankly terrified to see again, I thought I'd jump ahead in this first slide to a recent work from my Kyoto Zen gardens series which I'm pleased with and excited by (fig 1). But I want to compare it with work from my degree show (such as fig 2). The comparison makes me aware that, as an artist, you don't travel forward in a linear way, but are endlessly bumping into old iterations of yourself. With creative work you travel cyclically. Things you thought you had dealt with come up again. While studying at Falmouth, in Cornwall, I imagined myself as another Peter Lanyon, in a glider, flying over the countryside and becoming a Cornish abstract painter. As so often happens on long journeys, you end up doing the very opposite thing you thought you would do. I ended up as a student hunting in charity shops collecting detritus and creating strange, theatrical, *mise-en-scène*, dark cityscapes.

The following year I was awarded a marvellous opportunity to study in Paris by the French Government. As a Boursier du Monde, I had a studio at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and another in the Cité Internationale des Arts. One great attribute of this latter French



Fig 1. The stillness the dancing, Kyoto Zen garden collage (Mark Cazalet 2020, collage papers, inks, MT tape, pencils, and oil pastels, 46 x 130cm).



Fig 2. The apparition begins (Mark Cazalet 1986, oil on canvas, 153 x 92cm).

institution is that it brings together artists from around the world and puts them in a block on the Seine to work together. Not only was the Australian writer Tim Winton my neighbour, but I had chance meetings with Belgian ceramicists, Polish opera singers, and others, and so I gained a real taste of what it is like to mix with other minds from around the world. That image (fig 3) is a view from my studio inside the Cité Internationale des Arts. It connects with something that my professor Christian Boltanski, a playful conceptual installation artist, said to me, which at the time I perhaps didn't fully understand. He said: 'You're not really painting a view of Paris, you're painting postcards of Paris to send back.' This caused a very interesting

moment of youthful self-reflection: suddenly I was made aware that in your work you are not actually talking about the landscape in front of you but about an inner quest for the self. Marcel Proust wrote: 'The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is.' This ability to develop 'other eyes' or at least to imagine how other people see the universe and to sense the proliferation of imaginations out there in the world, is, I think, one of the gifts of travel.

I was lucky to have early on two marvellous professors: Christian Boltanski in Paris, and Professor Ghulam Mohammed Sheikh in India, where I undertook further postgraduate study. Sheikhbhai drew my attention to an unexpected connection. A lot of Indian students felt that I was working in an idiomatic way that was familiar to them. This was because I was then employing a style much influenced by Italian *quattrocento* painting, a late-medieval or early-Renaissance method in which the picture plane becomes this flat surface onto which narratives are placed and which, as in Indian art, there are overarching meta-mythologies (fig 4). This made India a welcoming place in which to make connections between two cultures, in a way that I had not predicted. But I think travel often offers these unexpected moments of serendipity.



Fig 3. Sunny day: view from 50 Rue De L'Hotel de Ville (Mark Cazalet 1986, compressed charcoal on paper, 45 x 65cm).

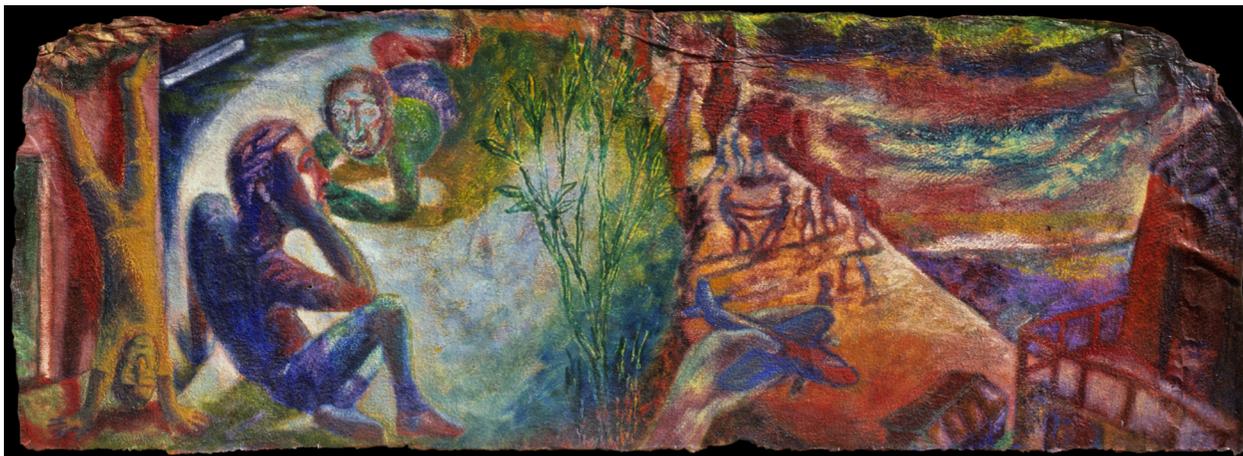


Fig 4. Schooldays (Mark Cazalet 1989, oil on paper, 42 x 118cm).

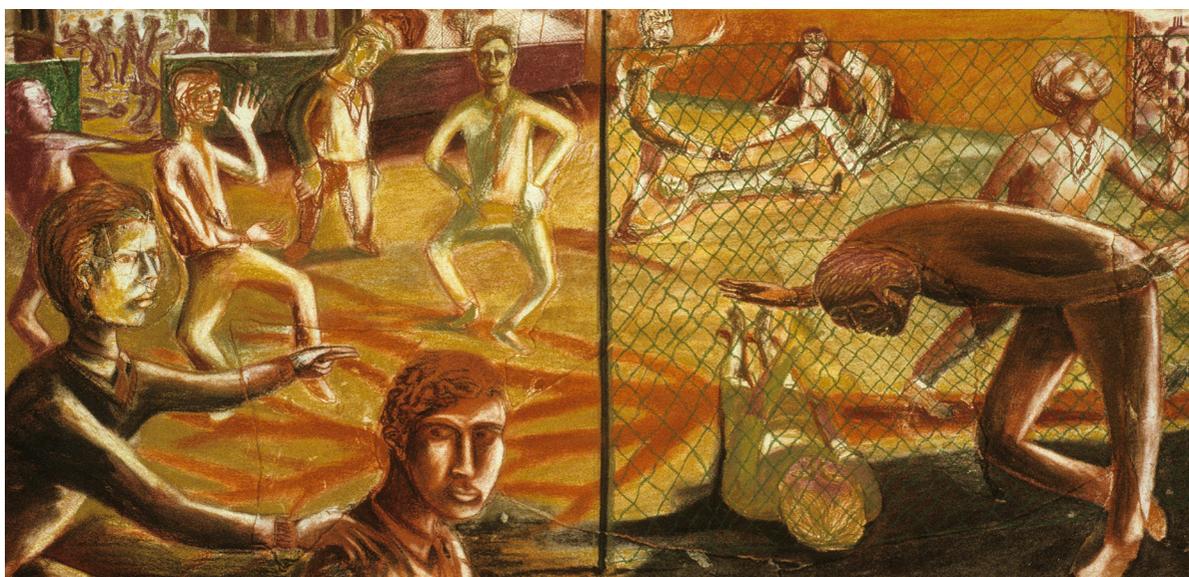


Fig 5. Playtime 3 (Mark Cazalet 1992, conte pastel on paper, 45 x 92cm).



Fig 6. half light (Mark Cazalet 1993, oil on canvas, 25 x 40cm).

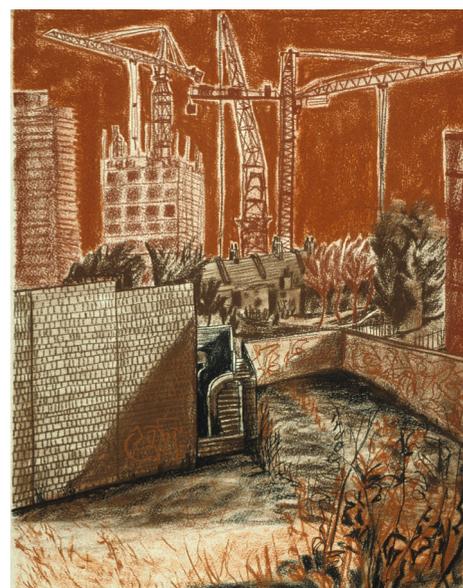


Fig 7. Sixth hour (Mark Cazalet 1994, conte pastel on paper, 57 x 38cm).

When I returned to London, my mother, who is listening, said quite rightly, 'You need to leave home and get a job'. I went and worked, like many artists, in a school (fig 5). I had ten years of working with children, and this too was a profound journey during which I learnt that adulthood is not a state of closing down but of rediscovering, a kind of Blake-ian journey back into a childhood immediacy. One of the great writers on play is Donald Woods Winnicott, whom many of you will know. He wrote in *Playing and Reality*: 'It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.' Maybe this is the real journey, this discovery of the self through creative play.

Back in London, like many travellers who have spent some time abroad, you suffer from cultural estrangement. You're not sure of where you are, and you get these after-images from the places where you've lived. To cope with this I started walking West London during the night and during the day, with Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin as my invisible companions, engaging like them with the habits of the flâneur (figs 6 and 7). The aim is to walk anonymously but with your eyes open, waiting to be astonished. I think that opening yourself to the possibility of astonishment, which I will mention later in connection with Mary Oliver's poetry,

is one of the hallmarks of the traveller. You realise constantly that you have come to the end of your own knowledge and the place you are in is propelling you into a new dimension.

I have learnt, as an artist, from Michael Samuelson, one of my most supportive patrons, who commissioned a series of paintings depicting the gasometers of London. Under the title 'The Cathedrals of Industry', these were exhibited in 1998 at The Museum of London. Michael ran a film industry lighting company. As a cameraman he famously filmed the Mexico Olympics by digging a track alongside the sprinting track, so that the camera could travel at the level of the ankles of the athletes. You may think I am wandering from my travel theme, but what Michael alerted me to was the importance of mise-en-scène: that in order to communicate your travels, you have to give the viewer a position that is unexpected and new. The gasometer series gave me the opportunity to explore his advice, as can be seen in this painting (fig 8) based on the great gasometer at Kensal Green, known as 'the General'. I portrayed this gasometer not only at four different times of day, but also from different viewpoints, so the eye or the eye of the camera moves to catch the changing perspective. Now as I cannot fly, I did what the artist often must do, which is to mimic different forms of journeying, be it the flight of a bird or the passage of a fish. I think this imaginative travelling through space is made easier by the experience of journeying and the business of moving between different worlds.

If you walk out of your home or studio and you draw, as I do in the metropolis of London most days, there is the danger that you begin to fall into habits, into a rut. There is nothing sadder than overhearing a traveller who complains that back home they don't do it like this or like that. I remember meeting a traveller complaining loudly about the queues in India, unaware that he himself was standing in the wrong one.

While travelling I have often turned to or lent on poetry, with its remarkable ability to transfigure the familiar. It can alter your awareness of things around you, and this is a gift, making one feel a kind of world citizen of the arts. TS Eliot wrote the *Four Quartets* in the lead-up to and during the cataclysm of the Second World War. The familiar is repeatedly transfigured. In a famous passage from *The Dry Salvages*, the third *Quartet*, he states: 'I do



Fig 8. Kensal Green Gasholders, Midnight  
(Mark Cazalet 1996, oil on canvas, 112 x 76cm).



Fig 9. The river runs through us  
(Mark Cazalet 2000, oil on canvas, 122 x 153cm).



Figs 10 and 11. Ghana drawing book and Burkina Faso drawing book (Mark Cazalet 1991, watercolour on paper, 26.5 x 31cm).

not know much about gods; but I think that the river / Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed, and intractable, / Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier; / Useful, untrustworthy ... Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder / Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated / By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.’ That is a very prescient ecological message, but I think Eliot was also talking about us as individuals—the great river that runs through us, and how it could break its banks at any stage, I painted it as the Thames (fig 9). Although we throw bridges across our more perilous psychic aspects, we are also subject to the great ebbs and flows that each of us experiences. It is a different understanding of travelling, but one that aligns self-development with place.

When I met my wife Harriet, we travelled to Ghana as a kind of test for our early relationship. Now, I’m not sure that I recommend Burkina Faso and Ghana as the ideal test for an early relationship. But when you travel in company, for some unexplained reason, you find yourself more open to what Cartier-Bresson called the ‘decisive moment’. This is when you have an apprehension that in front of you something is about to happen. If you draw while travelling, you begin to look for these decisive moments, the sudden movement-crossing events that all the time are around you. These concertina books were records of such events (figs 10 and 11).

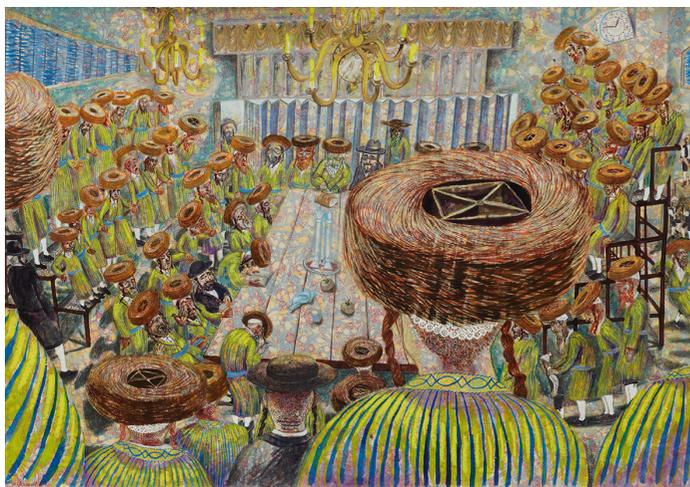


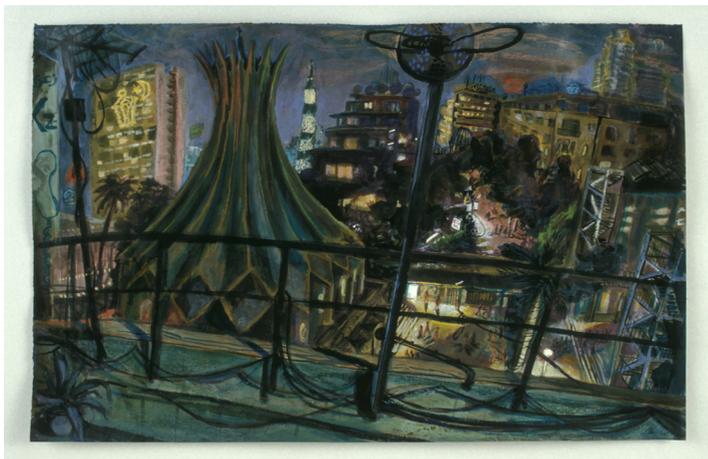
Fig 12. Toldos Aron, Shabbat Tisch (Mark Cazalet 2004, inks on marbled paper, 63 x 44cm).

Further travel was made possible by two periods as artist-in-residence with an organisation called Bible Lands. Both trips involved a mix of tourism with challenging objectives involving charitable, medical institutions. There were moments when I witnessed stark scenes for which I was unprepared. But one of the things I managed to record was Toldos Aharon (fig 12), a devout, insular, fervently anti-Zionist Hasidic movement. Again, in one of those serendipities, while I waited for the rabbi to come in to celebrate the Shabbat *Tisch*, the Shabbat evening meal, all the men sang psalms together on these rickety stands. It was an extraordinary event. Then of course the Rabbi arrived, broke bread and gave wine, which was a further shock for me, as a Christian, to realise something that I should have known very well in terms of the historic roots of belief.

You will realise that this was obviously a drawing I could not make on site, so it is the first of a series of memory drawings. I think the link between travel and memory is an interesting subject, and I’m sure there are academics who have written theses on this subject. But drawing is a very powerful aid to memory. Leonardo stressed its primacy to research, for when you draw you record far more than the literal subject or event. You record an understanding. Drawing is a definite aid to seeing. Here we have two scenes of Zamalek—that’s the Anglican cathedral on the island in Cairo (figs 13 and 14). At night you are offered the typical traveller’s view, owing to the seductive effects of artificial light. In the morning light you see a completely different scene, more ragged in all its details. When traveling through places quickly, very often you do no more than skim them.

Cartography was one of the earliest and most necessary reasons to employ a draughtsman, when there was of course no photography or video. Even today, when you are travelling ad hoc and perhaps surreptitiously recording, spy-like, the city in front of you, you keep an eye on your route and make sense of a district, its scale and atmosphere, through whatever means you have. Virginia Woolf wrote tellingly when she said: ‘It is always an adventure to enter a new room for the lives and characters of its owners have distilled their atmosphere into it, and directly we enter it we breast some new wave of emotion.’ I’d like to suggest that breasting new waves of emotion can even be done in an armchair, for when map-reading a city we also travel through streets and around buildings, imbibing all the details and the happenstance of life.

Permit me a small anecdote, connected with a roof terrace in Baroda. Wonderful friends had invited me back to Gujarat, 15 years after I’d

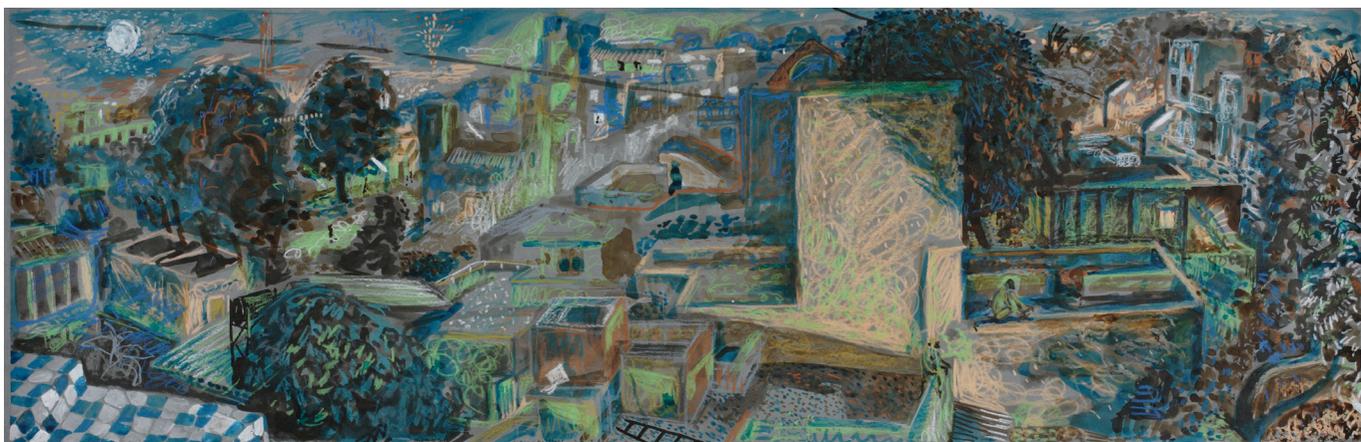


*Figs 13 and 14. Zamalek Island, Ramadan, evening and dawn (Mark Cazalet 2004, mixed media, 48 x 63cm and 48 x 55cm respectively).*

left as a postgraduate, and given me a residency. While drawing on this roof terrace, I became aware of a very fast movement of large creatures. It was a pack of baboons. They had climbed up three storeys of the building I was on and taken hold of my coloured pencils. That was quite a moment. One of them got hold of all the pink pencils. That's a big no-no for me, so we had a standoff, until I was dragged away from facing up this large male baboon in possession of my pink pencils, thinking, 'Only in India could this happen.' It's marvellous and it's ridiculous. He kept one Caran d'Ache pencil, so I rather hope that somewhere out there, there are beautiful pink baboon drawings being made (figs 15 and 16).

Often, while travelling, you need to adjust your *modus operandi*. It is often not possible to set up an easel. This image, from a series of Senegalese drawings, was made during a visit to Casamance in south Senegal. I was accompanied by my wife and our children, Felix and Freya, and it was unfortunately an instance of how travellers can bumble into difficult situations. I don't think we'd really thought through what it means, on the ground, to visit a country that had a few years before been engaged in a civil war (figs 15 and 16).

A lot of the drawing had to be ad hoc, improvised and done fast in a very short space of time. I started using felt tip pens, which stain the



*Figs 15 and 16. Supranika kite festival and Supranika monkey nights (Mark Cazalet 2009, coloured pencils on paper, 48 x 118cm).*

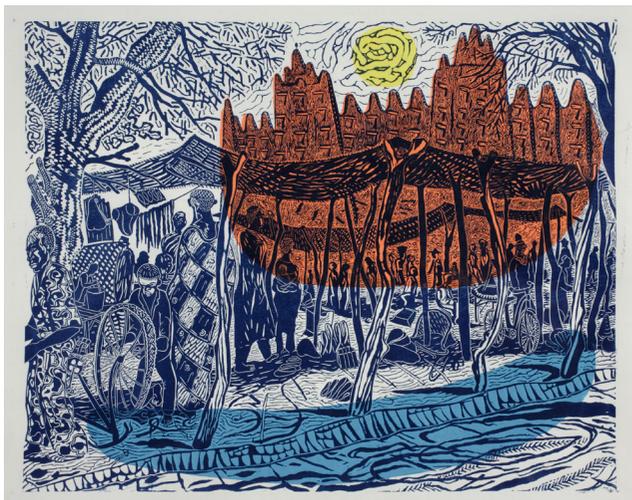


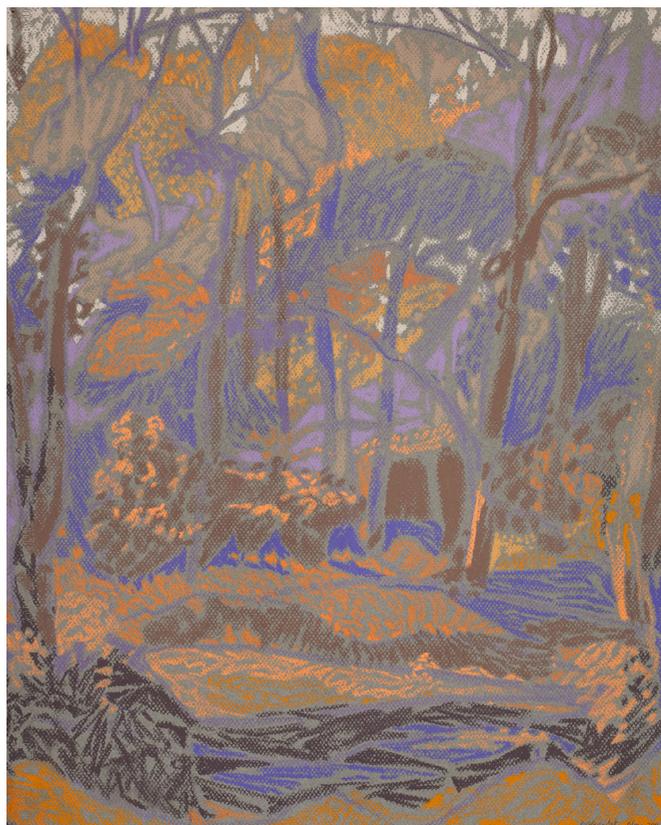
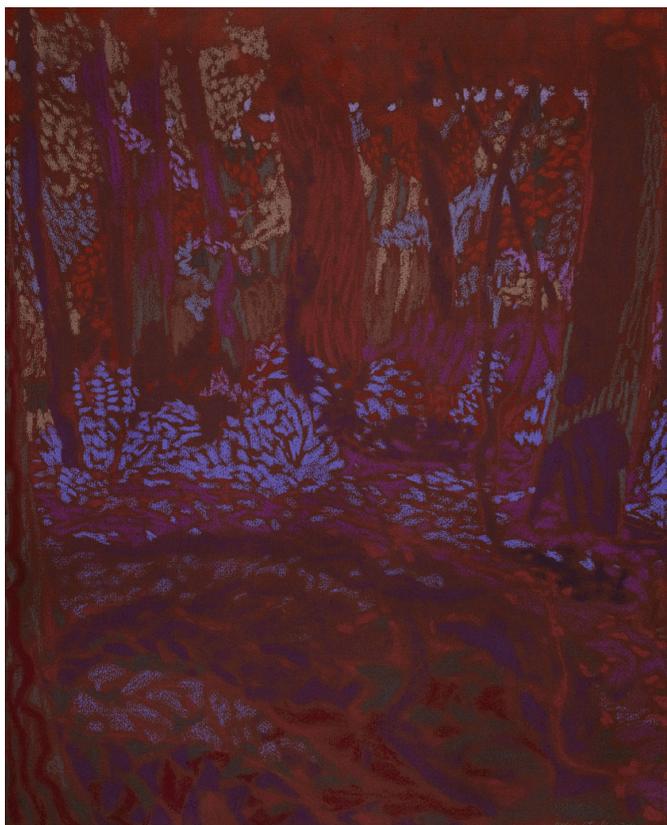
Fig 17. Djenne mosque, Mali  
(Mark Cazalet 2010, linocut print on paper, 44 x 56cm).

paper and are indelible. You might like to think about your travels, and those moments when significant incidents happen. The brain, spongelike, sucks them up, and what goes into the brain doesn't always come out. When you travel, some instances do change you. They actually alter how you see the world (fig 17).

So, having spun us out to the far corners of the world, I'm now going to draw us back, quite rapidly, into the last sequence of drawings. They are about staying still and not travelling at all. Mary Oliver puts this very beautifully in her poem *The Messenger*. I think that poem has an aspect of prayer about it, of meditative absorption. Likewise, in

my recent drawings I have striven for a letting go of the self, and have placed less emphasis on narrative, myth, detail, some of the engaging things which had previously interested me. Instead, I have tried to return to raw basics in drawings which act as 'screens for meditation', a phrase Barnett Newman is said to have used. Drawings, such as these, were intended for people to lose themselves in (figs 18 and 19).

It seems relevant to mention here that another set of meditative drawings were made during a residency at the Albers Foundation. As is well known, Joseph and Annie Albers were leading figures in the Bauhaus, and afterwards at Black Mountain College and then Yale. As Modernists, they emphasised simplicity of means, economy of form, and the need to let the material itself speak. One of the most extraordinary events for me during these two residencies in Connecticut took place in the woods (figs 20 and 21). I developed a habit of running out in the middle of the night, then getting into a canoe and drawing the darkness. That may sound strange for a visual artist, but I wanted to get profoundly lost. This drawing (fig 22) shows reflections on the water. When you work in the dark, after about 20 minutes the pupils expand and you realise that the retina is generating the most marvellous patterns from its input of information. Here too, in this diptych, of night-time drawings remembered in the daytime, I was powerfully moved by the poem *The Night* by Henry Vaughan, a beautiful Welsh visionary poet of the seventeenth century (fig 23). The poem ends with these words: 'There is in God, some say, / A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here / Say it is late and dusky, because they / See not all clear. / O for that night! where I in him / Might live invisible and dim!' That idea of inverting our dependence on illumined sight with the reassurance of a different quality of vision, released my nocturnal graphic investigations. We think of the blind Milton writing *Paradise Lost*, that extraordinary gift that came with losing his senses.



Figs 18 and 19. Suffolk Summer 3 and Suffolk Summer 12 (Mark Cazalet 2011, chalk pastel on paper, 54 x 43 cm).



Figs 20 and 21. Moonlit rhythms and Bethany (Mark Cazalet 2012, chalk pastels on paper, 42 x 52cm).



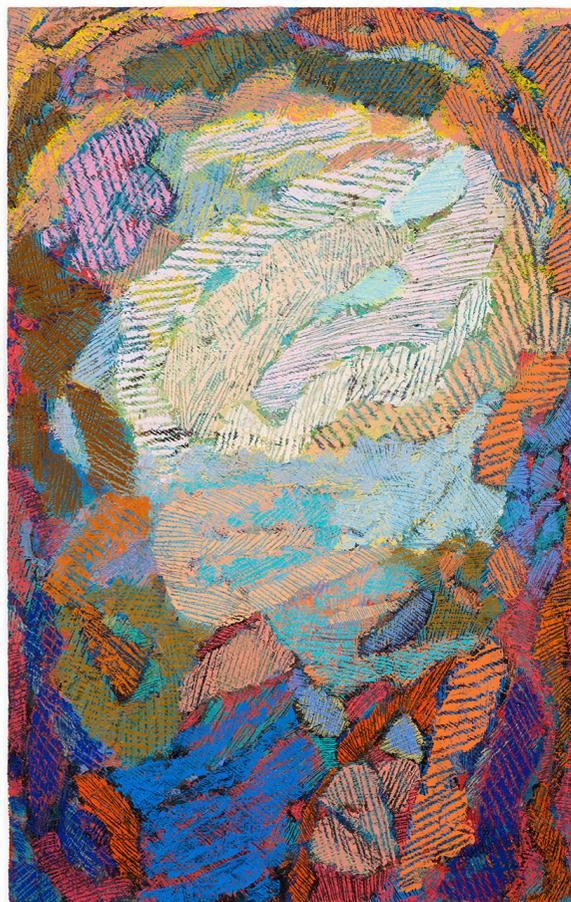
Fig 22. Night shift 1 and Night shift 5 (Mark Cazalet 2014, gold/bronze/copper markers, oil pastels, and pencils on coloured paper, 25 x 50cm).



Fig 23. Dazzling Darkness (Mark Cazalet 2014, diptychs, oil on board, 32 x 48cm).



Fig 24. LB Summer 4 (Mark Cazalet 2016, oil pastel on paper, 35 x 70cm).



Figs 25 and 26. Dazzling darkness and Radiant light (Mark Cazalet 2017, oil on board, 63 x 38cm).

Most travellers prefer the challenge of the new to the known and loved. But familiarity can be a great gift. You begin to believe that you belong to the landscape. You recognise the smells, the birdsong, the quality of light, that wetness that comes on at the beginning of a damp day, or maybe the building up of barometric pressure before a thunderstorm. You begin to belong. So here is a work made in Provence (fig 24), where I've worked for a number of years in the summer with friends, teaching. My pattern is to go out early in the morning and record the first light of the day, sort of setting the *garrigue* on fire—not literally but metaphorically. The day then awakens. In contrast, I always think about the evening as the *nunc dimittis*, the letting go of the light of day. The birthing and, if you like, the dying of the day. The same is true of my regular visits to Suffolk—to a very scruffy little wood and a tiny pond in front of the cottage which my family and I share

with my brother (figs 25 and 26). Familiarity at times allows you to forego looking, so as to concentrate on the abstract core of the experience, the relational side.

In October 2019, I decided, again centrifugally, to spin out to Kyoto and to look at 40 or so zen gardens. Ironically, as always, the first thing that happens is what you don't expect. Once inside a great garden, I started to draw, and was told, 'No, no, no. No drawing here, no art', which tipped me into a terrible pit of anxiety. Well, what am I doing here? In the next garden I went to, a monk came up to me and said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm trying to make contact. I'm trying to get lost and make contact with everything that is not me.' He smiled and said, 'How long will you be?' I said, 'Well, it could be three hours, it might be a month, and it could be a lifetime.' He smiled and went away, which was very nice, as it meant



Figs 27 and 28. Kyoto Zen garden drawing books, 1–4 (Mark Cazalet 2019, ink pens, pastels, marker pens, and pencils, double pages 23 x 57cm, closed 24 x 29cm).



Fig 29. The stillness the dancing, Bathhouse (Mark Cazalet 2020, collage papers, inks, MT tape, pencils, and oil pastels, 52 x 125cm).

I was welcomed. So these are the drawing books that I made in the gardens (figs 27 and 28). Each page is really a performance, not a recording of topography.

One of the great texts—which, again, some of you may know—by Shunryū Suzuki is *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, published in 1970. Suzuki stresses that we have to keep holding onto the beginning. As soon as you believe you have achieved or attained, you are lost. The whole pedagogic 'search for knowledge' process is over. As Pascal suggested, the more you believe you know, the greater are the points of contact with the unknown. These little Buddhas at the bottom of a garden remind me of TS Eliot's reference to 'the stillness, the dancing', and the idea that to find the dancing, the vital and energetic, you have to be very centred and very still, and understand this balance, if you will. In Japan, for me, another balance was achieved by spending time in the aestheticised, very thinly oxygenated, rarefied environment of the zen gardens during the day, and then in the evenings enjoying a much more corporeal experience, spending time with naked Japanese men in the bathhouse. They are super-discreet. There is no conversation. It's a kind of joy, a rather masculine joy, probably, just to sort of sit

in hot water in silence at the end of the day with people who are not at all interested in you whatsoever but companionable. A kind of Japanese clubhouse, I suppose (fig 29).

I want to end by mentioning the place where I am at the moment and with which I feel happy. I remain dependent on the observational engagement of nature (figs 30 and 31), but the natural scene is once again translated into a landscape where I am in search of self. I'm indebted to an anonymous monk in Ryu, a Zen garden in Kyoto, who advised me: 'Don't get obsessed about the age of our stones. Please don't get obsessed by the symbolism and the raking and how we thin out the pine needles from our trees. We have made everything for you as a model that you can take away, and when



Fig 30. Drawing books from Les Bassacs 2020 (Mark Cazalet 2020, inks, coloured pencils, and crayons, open 30 x 42cm, closed 30 x 21cm).



Fig 31. LB 2021, 3 & 7 (Mark Cazalet 2021, collaged papers, monoprint tissues, pencils, and crayons, 60 x 60cm).

later you meditate, you will remember the quality of this garden. That is what it's for, when you leave.' I think this explains why one travels and makes art.

**FS:** Mark, thank you very much indeed. Let me point to some of the things I particularly liked. I enjoyed Christian Boltanski's perceptive remark that you were sending postcards from Paris in your drawings. And then your mention of the flâneur, whom we associate with Baudelaire's famous essay calling for a 'painter of modern life'. One of the great things about being a flâneur in Paris in the nineteenth century must have been the ability to be part of the crowd, mingling with people and yet retaining a kind of anonymity, and therefore being able to examine dispassionately everyday life. To be there, and yet not there—it's a curious position, that of a flâneur. It must be extremely difficult to be one in a foreign country. Crucial to Baudelaire's flâneur is intimate knowledge of Paris and being part of a scene. In your position, as an Englishman in a foreign country, it must have been more difficult to achieve the necessary detachment. Would you like to comment on that?

**MC:** Yes, I'd love to. The last trip we made to Mali will probably be the last I ever make to a society surviving perilously on the edge. I became very uncomfortable with what I was doing, and with my privileged position, looking in on lives very often hanging by a thread. I stayed with a wonderful medic called Kaita, who explained to me the blood diseases that were prevalent in the society and why people looked so tired. It peeled back the skin, not of misunderstandings but of things I'd completely missed. My ability to walk in and buy food anywhere or buy somebody a drink actually had a rather unpleasant edge of patronisation, although I didn't mean it to. I was welcomed, and people were very pleased I was there spending money, but the transaction was in fact very one-way. This became very apparent when some small children threw stones at me. I said to Kaita, 'What do I do?', and he said, 'Well, how hard did you hit the child?' And I looked horrified and said, 'I would never do that.' And he said, 'That's the trouble with you people. You come here and you don't understand. You should've hit the child really hard. Then you take the child to its mother who hits the child really hard. Then the father comes home and really hits the child. And this is how it learns.' And I thought, I've exacerbated the situation. I'm the typical kind of liberal who doesn't want to cause offence and instead gets it wrong.

**FS:** A perfect example there of what you call being keen to know more, of realising that travel actually leaves you needing to know still more than what you have already learned.

**MC:** Such interaction can disturb the balance of things. We know that global travel can do this. I think that the presence of the flâneur, or the voyeur maybe, has unwanted consequences.

**FS:** I was fascinated, and I'm sure others were too, by this notion of going out into the night and drawing in the darkness, until patterns begin to emerge in a way that perhaps they don't in daylight. That wonderful quote from Henry Vaughan on 'dazzling darkness' reminded me how Rembrandt cheated in his painting of *The Presentation in the Temple* by making Simeon blind, a fact not mentioned in Luke's Gospel. This is made apparent by the way he puts his arms out like rods for the Christ child, and when the child is placed upon them, Simeon does not look at the child, as he can't see, but continues to look straight ahead while saying that famous line, 'My eyes have seen your salvation'. I wonder if Rembrandt invented the blindness to suggest another way of seeing or understanding that goes beyond normal sight?

**MC:** That story is also about waiting. Simeon and Anna wait a long time in the temple, maybe even their whole lives. One of the sad facts about modern travel is that we travel so far to have so little time in each place, because our busy agendas make us rush on. Even with 40 days in Kyoto, I was still far too rushed. The pandemic has not been a gift, but it has brought us into contact with these ideas of temporality and of slowing down. I think they are for our betterment, or certainly could be.

**FS:** I want finally to ask you about the importance of return. I heard somebody recently talking about a new pilgrimage path, the Cuckmere pilgrimage path in Sussex. It links up seven churches in a very beautiful part of the South Downs, either side of the Cuckmere River. But it's a circular pilgrimage path, so that, as the speaker pointed out, when you think you're setting out and going forward, you are already on the return. With our journeys to other countries, it often happens, usually after a longish trip, that anticipation builds up around our return—that is, if we are fortunate enough to be able to return to somewhere where we belong, be it a home or college, a job or place. That finishing of the journey seems important to our understanding of what the journey was about. Might you agree?

**MC:** Yes. I think there is a parabola when you travel. There's this sort of anticipation—trying to prepare yourself, learning the key smattering of phrases—and then that sense of being profoundly unsure when you get to a distant place, and having to think on your feet very quickly. Then, often before you know it, the journey is beginning to end. The emotional pull attached to distant journeying has put me off wanting to take these exceptional journeys. I now find it far more empathetic to be stiller, and travel in a smaller radius.