

# Sandy Mallet

maps and stones





**Sandy Mallet** maps and stones



Copyright 2010 by the author of this book: Sandy Mallet. The author retains sole copyright to his contributions to this book.

The Blurb-provided layout designs and graphic elements are copyright Blurb Inc., 2009. This book was created using the Blurb creative publishing service. The book author retains sole copyright to his or her contributions to this book.









# Sandy Mallet

## maps and stones

Two years ago, sitting at my desk in London, I wrote a newspaper article about how I longed to move out west. The article was ludicrously specific. It had to be a rickety farmhouse down a long drive, tucked away in a hidden valley, surrounded by a rare breed of cattle. And with a big barn for a studio. Somewhere, moreover, in that small patch of west Dorset I'd passed through and stayed in and found to be as pretty much close to heaven as you can get.

Not more than a week later I got an email. 'I may have just the thing. Not far from Eggardon Hill – down a long drive (4 x 4 suggested) with a small herd of White Park cattle for company'. Miraculously, bizarrely, everything on my list was there. And three months later, complete with brushes, knives and easels, I moved in.

My life as a painter in London had been getting too calm. After a successful one man show I was wallowing, trying this direction and that. Looking for a torrent to bear me away. Arriving in Dorset was like a storm. Suddenly I was able to reach all those rural touchstones – the wildness and immediacy of the weather, the breathtaking view from the top of the hill, the stinging wind walking on the beach, and – with the help of my mother's flower books – the pride of learning to spot and name the plants in the wood.

I had started out my life in northern Scotland, and this was some sort of return. An acknowledgement that living in wild country meant grabbing hold of sweet and profound things. And as an artist I was swamped with subject matter, with a new chapter to begin.



## maps



Landscape has been a primary theme in my work. From early aerial views, such as the series of paintings derived from the Pembrokeshire coast (above left), to experiments in compiling land shapes and textures (below left).

A sense of mapping has developed out of this work. I have always been addicted to maps as objects, and they provide such a rich reservoir of ideas to do with scale and surface and representation.

The Dorset map pictures initially sprang from day-long walks that I took around Eggardon Hill. Marking different routes and looking out for paths and contours and field systems.

The resultant studies became springing off points for a compositional response to the country - for paintings that used landscape as working material just as much as subject matter. Making pictures from the land.



Other map pieces stand out as a more urban response. A group of paintings of Dorset towns (Dorchester and Bridport). And a series of small square map pictures, each focusing on a particular city address (in Tokyo and London). These were created as commissions, to be new versions of the grand idea of having a portrait of your own house.



Above: *Map Picture - Broom's to Askerswell* (35 x 35 ins)

Above right: *Map Picture - Five Mile Walk Orange* (24 x 30 ins)

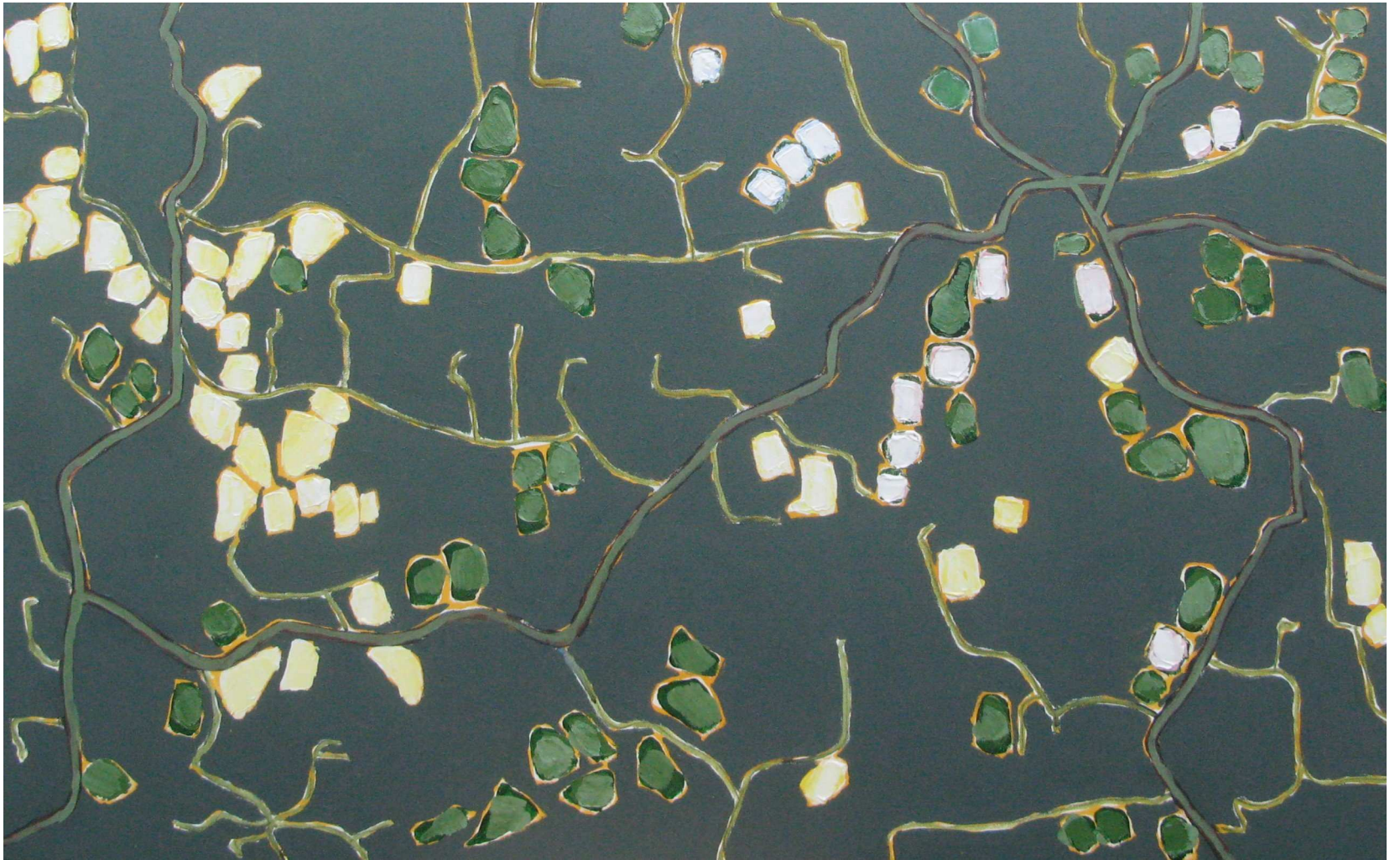
Centre right: *Map Picture - Eggardon Hill Red* (13 x 18 ins)

Opposite above: *Port Clais, nr. St David's* (18 x 18 ins)

Opposite below: *Cornwall Green, Parishes* (24 x 24 ins)







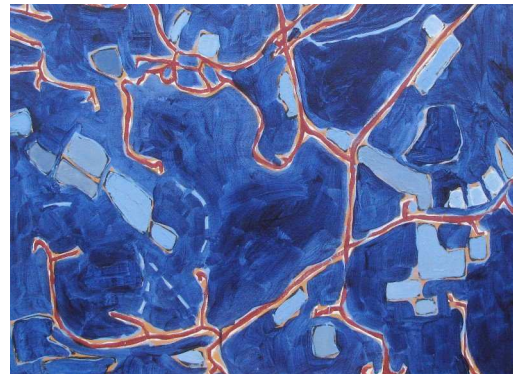




Above: *Map Picture - To Bettiscombe, Blue* (30 x 48 ins)

Right: *Map Picture - Five Mile Walk Blue* (24 x 30 ins)

Opposite: *Map Picture - To Bettiscombe, Green* (30 x 48 ins)





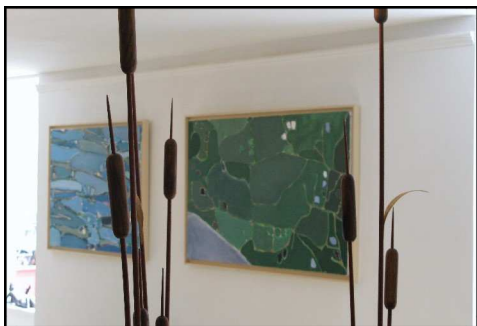
Above: *South to Spyway, Blue* (24 x 30 ins)

Right: *South to Spyway, Green* (24 x 30 ins)

Opposite: *Broom's Landscape* (30 x 30 ins)









Above: *Map Picture - Dorchester, Blue* (39 x 47 ins)

Opposite: *Map Picture - Dorchester, Brown* (39 x 47 ins)

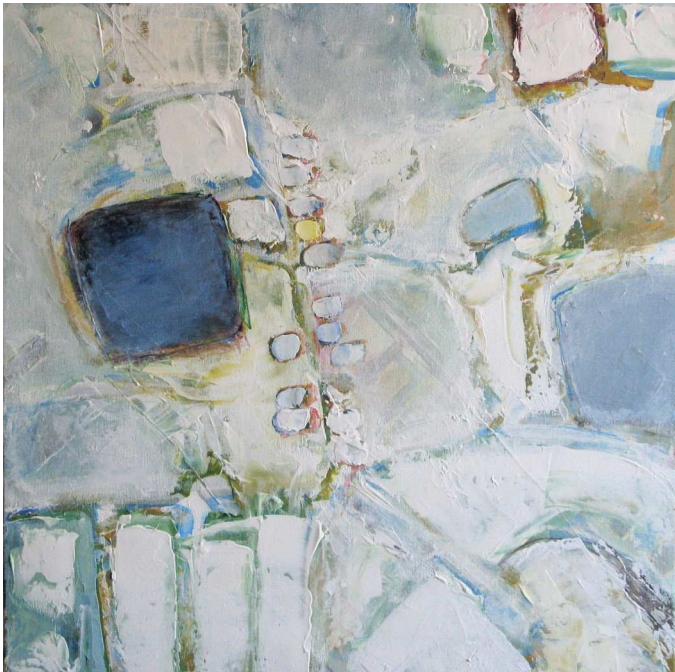












Above: *Okegawa, Tokyo* (20 x 20 ins)

Left: *Muswell Hill, London* (20 x 20 ins)

Opposite top: *Map Picture - Bridport* (30 x 48 ins)

Opposite below left: *Map Picture - Hidcote* (24 x 30 ins)

Opposite below right: *Map Picture - Polesden Lacy* (24 x 24 ins)



# stones

It is a temptation living near the coast, and it's too easy to head off and spend a morning walking the shore or swimming in the sea. My favourite beach here is at Eype, where - towards the western end - there are rising piles of smooth boulders and coloured pebbles. Here I started to build towers of stones, balancing them to the point of toppling. Sometimes on their own, sometimes families and forests of them.

A series of paintings followed, of towers of stones. And at the same time various friends came back from trips to Orkney and to northern India, each with stories and photos of amazing stone monuments.

The monumental aspect captured me first. How a simple pile of stones could be so mighty and so grand, so full of notions of stability. And then the stones in the paintings started to topple, to have their dignity endangered. All the time, of course, being invested with human characteristics - protectiveness, youthfulness, pride. And then inter-related with each other. So that they started to evolve into families.

While it seems so obvious that these stone towers have all too human personalities, what you see in the paintings is still just a pile of stones. One thing suggesting another. And for me this is a very simple kind of art, one that merely says out loud - this inanimate object stands for something, something of life and character.







Above: *Three Towers - One* (24 x 36 ins)

Right: *Two Towers - Three* (39 x 39 ins)

Opposite: *Two Towers - One* (20 x 30 ins)







Right: *Two Towers - Two* (39 x 47 ins)

Below: *Three Towers - Two* (39 x 47 ins)

Opposite: *Five Towers - One* (40 x 60 ins)









Right: *Haytor Towers - One* (31 x 39 ins)

Below: *Two Towers - Five* (39 x 39 ins)

Below right: *Haytor Towers - Two* (20 x 30 ins)

Opposite: *Five Towers - Three* (48 x 60 ins)





Right: *Four Towers - Blue* (39 x 47 ins)







# Sandy Mallet



Exhibitions of Sandy Mallet's work have been rare events. A number of key London shows, from 2004 onwards, have established his name amongst a small group of significant private collectors, and his work may now be found in collections in the United States, Switzerland, France, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

As well as painting in his Dorset studio, the artist works as a writer and arts journalist, and is a respected exhibitions curator, collaborating with a considerable body of contemporary artists, galleries and museums. His writing includes works on post-war British abstract art, and twentieth-century landscape painting.

[www.sandymallet.com](http://www.sandymallet.com)    [sandy@sandymallet.com](mailto:sandy@sandymallet.com)    07780 607 014

## Sandy Mallet - Map Pictures    by Danielle Fox

Since 2004, Sandy Mallet has been generating a body of abstract paintings that investigate notions of community, environment, nature, narrative, music, and art. His paintings form loose groupings with names like *Square Dancing*, *Trees and Land*, *Houses and Stories*, and more recently, *Map Pictures*.

Inspiration for the *Map Pictures* came directly from maps, and brings their inherently abstract and flattening perspective to bear on a key investigation of Modernist painting: namely, just how abstract and flat can painting become, while still retaining a meaningful sense of figuration? And furthermore, how does one communicate this tension in a work that is both content-rich and visually compelling?



Mallet's inquiry is embodied in the work's constantly shifting perspective – spatially from vertical to horizontal, and artistically from figurative to abstract – as the viewer looks at the images first as maps (representational, with an aerial perspective), and then as paintings (abstract patches of paint on canvas, meant to be viewed on the wall). Mallet practices this shift in perspective quite literally in his artistic process, as he paints largely on the ground, with the canvas flat on the studio floor, only periodically bringing pieces to the easel for review and additional work. Painting in acrylics, he uses knives, tools, rags, and brushes, to create a sensual surface as richly layered and textured as the landscape itself.

It bears noting that the countryside that features in Mallet's paintings has been sculpted by geological forces, but it is not wilderness. It is a landscape marked, chopped, divided – dare one say even composed – by centuries of ownership boundaries, hedgerows, cow paths, walking paths, settlements, and roads. The *Map Pictures* are therefore topographical not only in their format, but in their capacity to record a specific time and place, a small fragment of the living skin of our earth which is, due to both natural and human forces, in a constant state of change. The pictures may be of a moment in time, but as such they are also pictures of time passing.

Sandy Mallet was born in 1961 in Caithness, Scotland, and has developed a career as a curator, writer, and artist for over the last 20 years. He lives and works on a farm in Dorset, England.

Danielle Fox, PhD., Director, SLATE Gallery, Oakland, California







