

FrameWork 3/13:2

Patrick Howlett on Simple Present Future Anterior

I made two works for *Simple Present Future Anterior*. One is called *you can always come back (but you can't come back all the way)*.



The title comes from the last verse of a song by Bob Dylan called *Mississippi*. It's a looking back-travel song, with a litany of mistakes and troublesome observations balanced with a defiant and brazen will to press on. Paradox is built into each verse:

*Well my ship's been split to splinters and it's sinkin' fast
I'm drownin' in the poison, got no future, got no past
But my heart is not weary, it's light and it's free
I've got nothin' but affection for all those who've sailed with me*

and later

*Well, the emptiness is endless, cold as the clay
You can always come back, but you can't come back all the way
Only one thing I did wrong
Stayed in Mississippi a day too long*

You can always come back from where? What is time to a work of art?

FrameWork 3/13:2

Time is a subject Dylan tackles with dogged attention and it tends to be more interesting when approached from multiple perspectives. I read somewhere that he developed a non-linear approach to narrative from a painter, allowing images and moments culled from very different situations and places to exist simultaneously, or at least unfold in the moment created by a single song. The song, the work, the art, the performance, is the place where time tangles with the present. That is to say, one foot is in the past and one foot is in the future.

the future for me is already a thing of the past



is the name of my other painting in the show which takes its title from the song *Bye and Bye*, also from Dylan's 2001 album *Love and Theft*. One thing that amazes me with Dylan's later work is that it is possible to imagine the singer singing to a lover, or to his current self, or to a younger self, all at the same time. The expressive power becomes exponential and it manages a reflection on the past that is completely alive, resisting nostalgia even while revisiting traditional musical forms and styles (as *Bye and Bye* does).

I am beginning to be impressed with how quickly time is moving.

The paintings are not about the Dylan songs, but they are about having one foot in the past and one foot in the future.