



#stepsandmarches

Brussels 9.7 - 10.28.2017
London 9.21 - 11.14.2017

Marcin Dudek

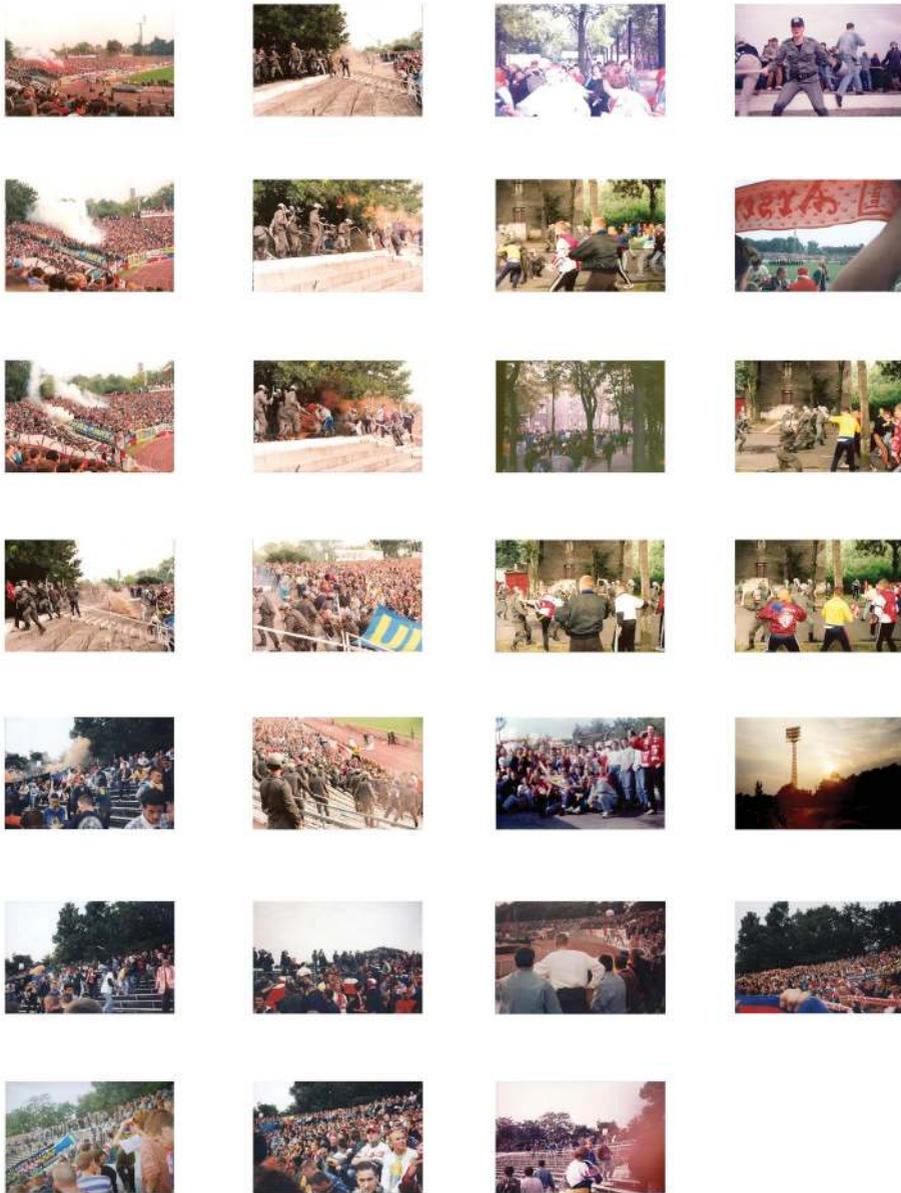
Steps and Marches

September 7th - October 28th, 2017

HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS

46 Rue jean d'ardenne, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
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Marcin Dudek

Steps and Marches

During the 10th edition of the Brussels Gallery Weekend, Harlan Levey Projects is pleased to present our 3rd solo exhibition with Marcin Dudek, “Steps & Marches.” This is a collaborative exhibition with Chapter I taking place in Brussels and Chapter II in London at Edel Assanti Gallery. Similar to his 2013 exhibition “Too Close for Comfort,” each chapter begins with the artist retracing his steps as a teenage member of the Cracovia football fan club. Thumbnail-sized photographs from Dudek’s personal archive discretely share a 27-frame sequence, which traces events on the way to and from the stadium to watch an EC qualifying match between Poland and Romania in 1995.

Works in both exhibitions extend beyond personal narrative to explore the materials, messages and political contexts of the stadium in an ongoing investigation of group behavior, crowd control, violence and spectacle. Questions raised in Brussels are further explored in London as focus shifts from individuals entering a crowd, to the force of the crowd as a single body.

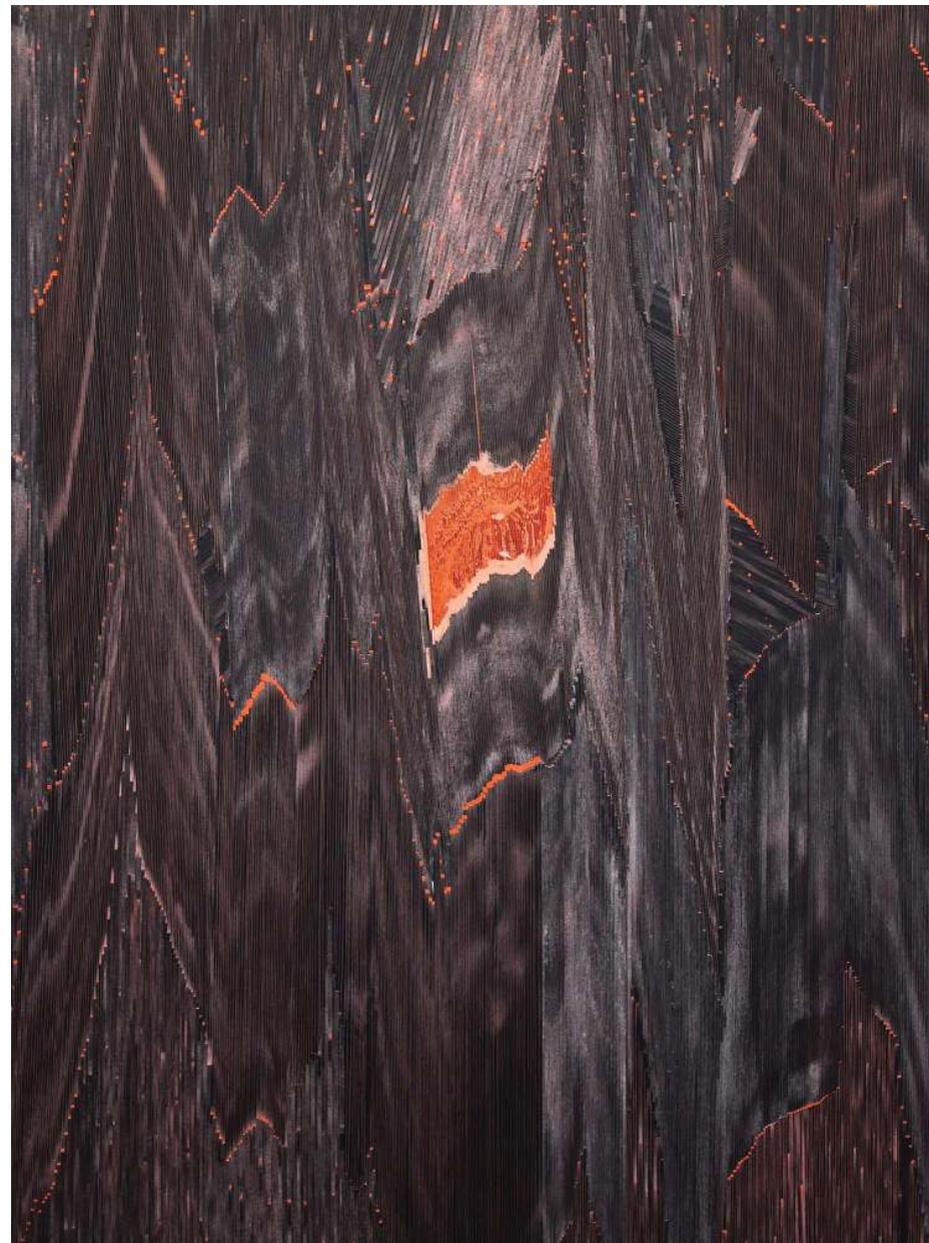


Installation View "Steps and Marches" Chapter I

Entering Harlan Levey Projects, the intimate photos from 1995 are juxtaposed by a larger than life image of "the kick that started a war" (credit: Renato Brandjolica / AP). Isolated from its historical context, the image provides a rather absurd scene, which beckons visitors into the stadium to reflect on the distinction between how things unfold and how they are remembered.

When we speak about hooliganism, many imagine this is something invented in Margaret Thatcher's Britain, but similar stories date back as far as a 59 A.D. during gladiatorial games in Pompeii. To punish the Pompeians, the senate banned all gladiatorial combat for ten years, dissolved private clubs and trade associations and exiled those responsible for the disorder. What do authorities have to do with the violence of spectacle, its collapse and legacy? What does KS Cracovia have to do with the coliseum?

Marcin Dudek
The Detachment Frame
cloth tape, acrylic paint, image transfer, UV varnish on wood, 161x122cm, 2017



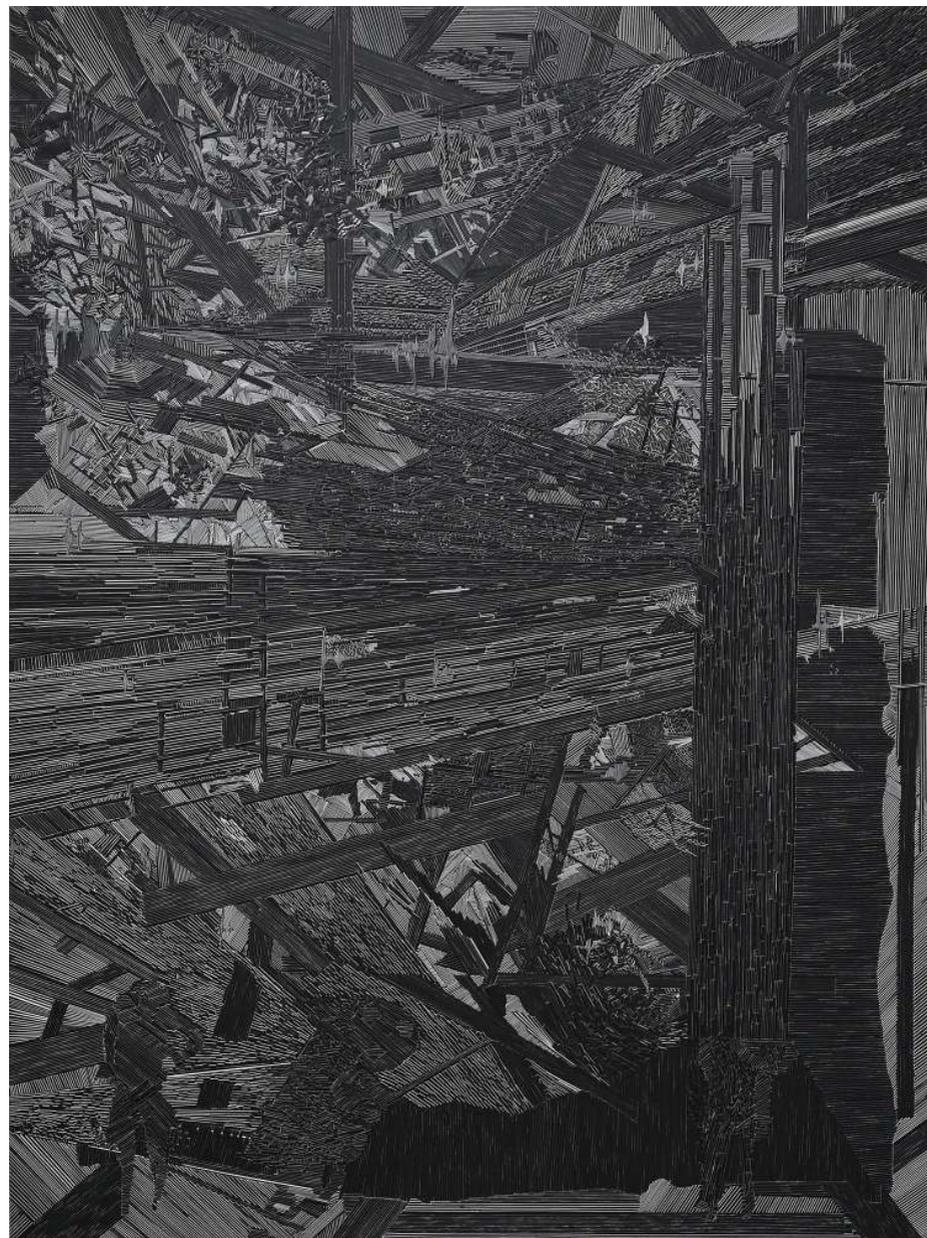


The line of questioning travels from Pompeii to Rome to the European capital, turning to the Heysel disaster of 1985. In the aftermath of this event, a group of fans were found guilty and jailed while clear white-collar culprits who created conditions leading to the catastrophe went unpunished. For a second, ancient Rome is not so far away. Through media, the event was witnessed and felt all across Europe. “Going Heysel” became an expression of berserker violence in post-communist Polish slang.

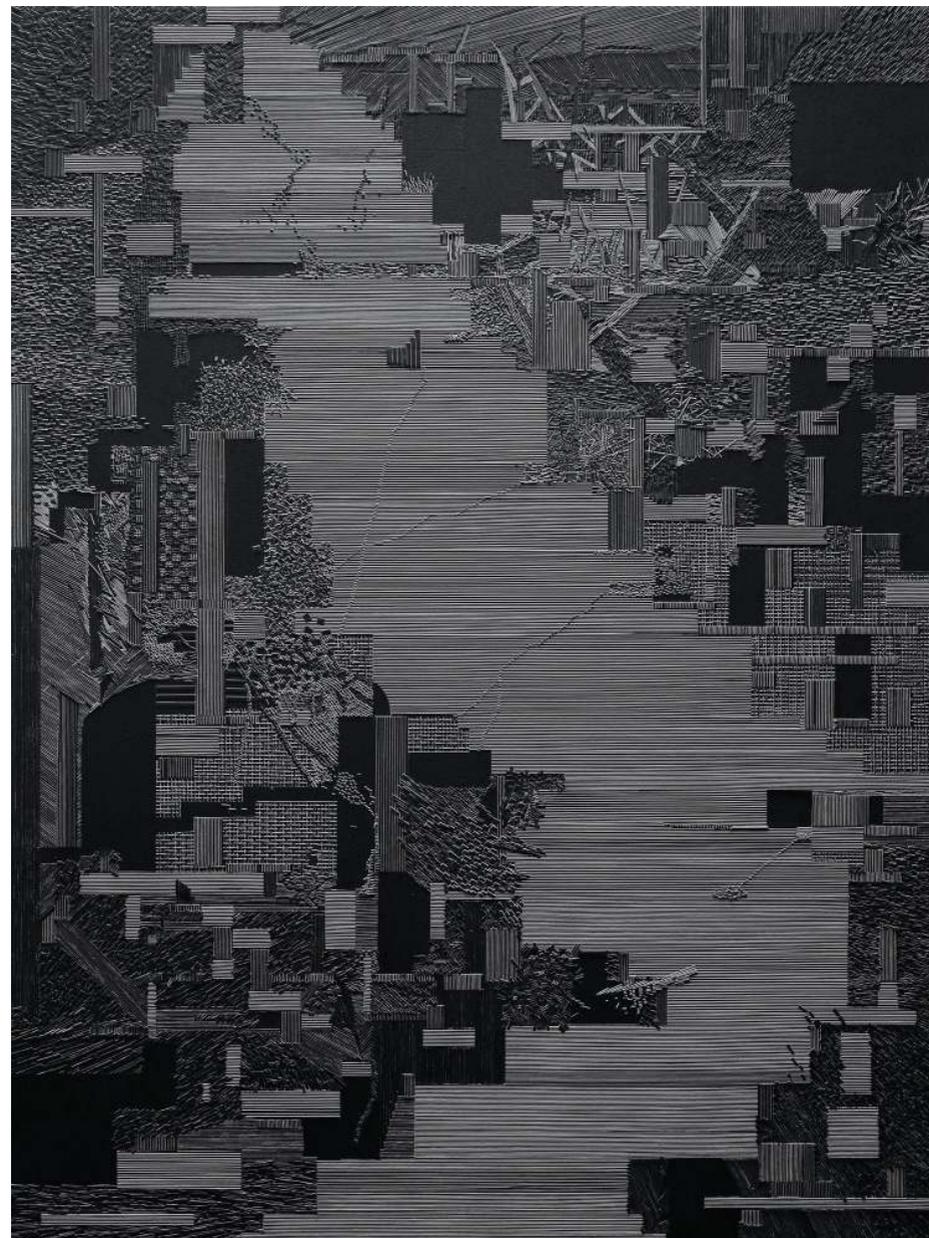
The diptych “You Only Sing When You’re Winning,” offers traces of Dudek’s Heysel inspired performance “Saved by an Unseen Crack” (2015). This is one of many tragic events Dudek illustrated for “Steps and Marches.” The Luzhniki disaster (1982), Hillsborough (1989), a vicious stampede at a stadium in Ghana (2001), and others are also portrayed in a series of complex collages.

Images from artist’s personal archive and his performance “Saved by an Unseen Crack” at Harlan Levey Projects in 2015.

Marcin Dudek
The Meaning of Collusion
cloth tape, UV varnish on wood, 161x121cm, 2017



Marcin Dudek
The Stone Steps of East Sector
cloth tape, UV varnish on wood, 161x122cm, 2017





(Left to right)

“Cage Branding is Less Exciting,” in the exhibition “Too Close for Comfort” (Harlan Levey Projects 2013)

“Cage Branding was Less Exciting,” in the exhibition “Head in the Sand” (Leto Gallery 2015)

“Offal” paper, glue, steel, 136 × 83 × 42 cm, 2017

Detail “Offal”

In comparison with such events, how could that day in 1995 have ended differently? Where does Dudek place himself in all of this? What is the distinction between an individual and a group? His position is one of forward momentum, critical reflection and playfully informed labor as illustrated in the sculpture “Offal”. This sculpture has been evolving since the 2013 exhibition “Too Close for Comfort.” Initially displayed as an almost human punching bag, constructed out of two leather jackets (worn after matches by his teenage friends), it was later sliced open at Leto Gallery (Warsaw, Poland) in the 2015 exhibition “Head in the Sand” where the entrails of the beaten body spilled out onto the floor; information that fed the young artist like bits of KS Cracovia game day tickets, catalogues and other memorabilia mixed with torn pages of copied paintings by the likes of Roger van der Weyden, the Master of the Life of the Virgin, Italian Futurists and others mimicking a heap of guts. The third and final incarnation of the work, “Offal,” reclaims the spilt meat and organs, sculpting them into an archeologically twisted torso composed of sophisticated primitivism.



Installation View "Steps and Marches" Chapter I

Inside the stadium, the concrete terrace is as cold, well crafted, humorous and haunted as the first four works in the exhibition. Casts of burnt, broken and twisted seats populate the concrete rows while the ghosts of diehard fans wave colors in the wind. When sat, spectators are confronted with the towering image of Zvonimir Boban's outstretched leg, a kick for which the former AC Milan midfielder was both suspended from sport and paraded as a national hero. To the left the three stripes on the footballer's boot are being scraped into the wall by a kinetic steel portrait struggling to escape the stands.



The last work in the exhibition is a video, which places individuals appearing in Dudek's research back into the center of the spectacle. This is a digital work made through analogue collaging, bridging mediated experience with autographical detail and connecting dots as it jumps to different people and points of history. What are the links between Margaret Thatcher, Boban, Gustave LeBon and Marcin Dudek or his father for that matter? How do individuals shape mass experiences like those in ancient Pompei, the French Third Republic or an EC qualifier in 1995? They are the leaders, the police, the players, the fans, the analysts, activists, industrialists and so on that construct conditions and create the architecture of an event. Dudek uses football matches to confirm how politically charged an event always is and how in the marking (and making) of an event, individuals get lost in the crowd. They are not represented, but later presented like actors in a play or players on a pitch, sacrificed towards the political truth of the historic transgression. While Dudek begins by thinking about the role of his father, his friends and himself in all this, what he brings forward has a relevancy that stretches beyond the stadium. Today it isn't just the physical being together that creates a crowd; ideas and issues are used to build consensus of opinion, which gives the crowd agency before it slips into action.

TO BE CONTINUED AFTER A SHORT HALF-TIME BREAK.

Chapter II opens at Edel Assanti Gallery on September 21st, 2017.

Edel Assanti
September 21th - November 4th, 2017
74A Newman St, Fitzrovia, London W1T 3DB, UK
www.edelassanti.com

Marcin Dudek studied at the University of Art Mozarteum, Salzburg, and Central Saint Martins, London, graduating in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Dudek has exhibited internationally at venues including Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Kunsterhaus, Salzburg, the Arad Art Museum, the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna and the Goethe Institute, Kiev. His installation “The Cathedral of Human Labor”, 2013, is on permanent view at the Verbeke Foundation in Antwerp, and his work is currently included in Solstices at the BWA Contemporary Art Gallery in Katowice and will be shown at the Trafo Center for Contemporary Art in December 2017.

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