

Tacita Dean Collections//2000

When I was about eight years old, I went for a walk up the lane behind our family house in Kent. I was probably imagining, as I often did, that I was in a documentary, in dialogue with an invisible camera, talking about horticulture or some other such worldly subject, when I came to a lay-by beside the road. Looking down in amongst a clump of grass, I found my first four-leaf clover. Further visits to the same lay-by harvested a full eight four-leaf clovers. So I wrote to *The Guinness Book of Records*, only to receive some while later a letter with the printed signature of one of the McWhirter twins. It told me that the largest quantity of four-leaf clovers had, in fact, been found by someone in Ohio, and that the record was in the thousands. Indeed, it continued, such mutation in nature was not at all unusual.

Undeterred by the official response to my discovery, I found I had a 'facility'. Whether it was a good eye for a clover or 'good luck', I would find four-leaf clovers wherever I looked and where others couldn't. I would see one crossing a lawn or walking along a road. I would notice it, stop, pick it with care, check for others, because where there is one there is often another, then press it in my notebook. At some future point, I realized I had a collection.

Now, the problem with a collection is realizing you've started one. Recently, I have begun, quite unintentionally, to collect old postcards *thematically*. It started with finding an attractive postcard of a frozen water fountain. On finding the second frozen water fountain, I had begun a collection, although I could delay acknowledging it as such by choosing to call it a diptych, or a triptych, or a quartet. And so it is with postcards marked with crosses, by a hotel window or a table in a restaurant or a mountain climber, or postcards showing seagulls or thermal spas or four-leaf clovers. All my interests in microcosm: portable, collectible, reproducible.

I know people whose lives are dominated by their collections, ceaselessly searching in flea markets, auction houses and specialist book shops, never resolving their quest. Whether you are collecting versions of popular songs, postcards of lighthouses or votive sculptures of Our Lady of Montserrat, your collection will never let you be. You've started so you must continue, and with most collections, there is no end. Whether it is postcards of lighthouses or four-leaf clovers, there can never be the definitive collection. For what is more inert than a finished collection?

What happened to me and my clover collection was that it became an investigation into my relationship to luck. I had always courted Chance, and the

ease with which I found four-leaf clovers made me too sure of this special relationship. When I first showed my collection in 1995, for the first time in my collector's life, I became paralysed by an inability to find any more four-leaf clovers. It was as if I had turned the accidental action of finding a clover into something altogether too self-conscious. I had played an uncomfortable game with Fortune and She had shunned me for my ostentation. I suddenly searched too hard and could no longer find.

My clover collection is not a dead collection, although its constituent parts are dead. No, because I had to surrender it and let it go, and stop my obsessive searching of grassy verges and uncut paddocks, I have at last now managed to re-find something of my ability to chance discover and to find by not looking. And I can now add, from time to time, a new clover to my collection.

Tacita Dean, 'Collections', in *Tacita Dean* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2000) 76-7. The collection of clovers was published in the *Book of Leaves* (Artist's book, Bourges, 1995).

Tacita Dean Send More Cups//2008

The *lumière* [in Fischli & Weiss: *son et lumière*] you understand immediately as you watch the spiralling red and green torchlight make patterns on the wall, but it is the *son* that surprises you: the rhythmic scratching of the plastic cup on the slightly inclined turntable, lolling, as it does, back and forth, back and forth, making sounds indescribably specific to when a plastic cup moves upon a surface. The turntable is grubby and worn where the cup has shifted, and masking tape around the edge forms a lip to prevent it rolling off. It looks homemade, *hausgemacht*, like a work of art should look sometimes but rarely does: thought up and made on the spot. Utterly simple and utterly compelling. One could have pre-imagined the light but not the sound. It is the sound that must have provided the title. Once heard, it needed equal billing: sound and light; *son et lumière*.

Only *son et lumière* normally has greater pretensions: a light show projected on the watered frontage of a castle or chateau with music amplified through temporary speakers to rows of collapsible seats put out in anticipation. It is the spectacle to crown a summer, the height of refined outdoor entertainment, but which quickly can become spectacular boredom or the boredom that can often accompany the spectacular. But this confluence of