

SEANKELLY

Jeffrey, Moira. "Dream On," *Scotland on Sunday*, February 28, 2010.

SCOTLAND *on* SUNDAY

Dream on

Moira Jeffrey finds a collection of proposals - ranging from the simple to the surreal

Peter Liversidge: The Thrill Of It All
Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh

THERE'S an argument that art, or some kinds of art at least, is really a set of propositions. It's a notion that has been made literal by a whole number of artists over the past century, whose work has consisted of manifestos, instructions, codes, lists, notes, documents and memos as much as material things.

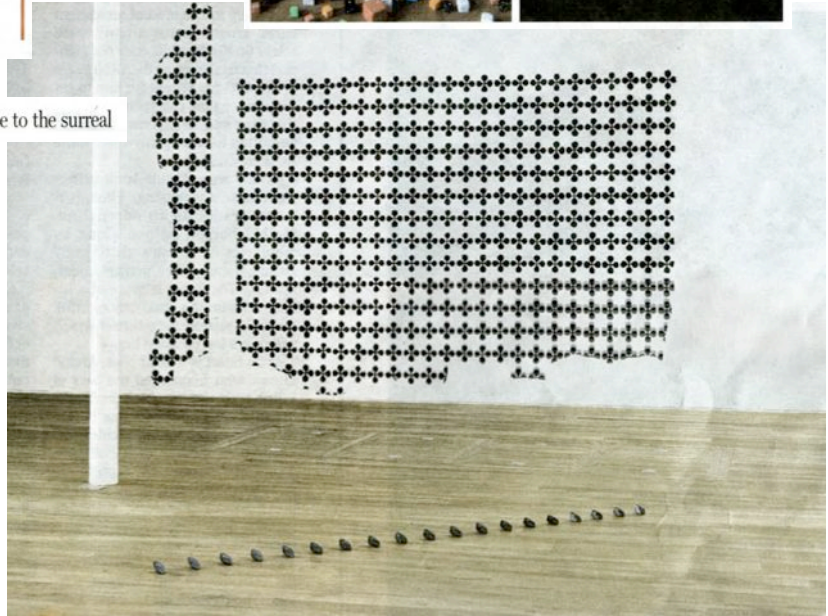
And on a practical note for many artists working in the mixed economy of public and private support, many long-cherished projects, dreams and schemes exist only on paper. Artists spend a huge proportion of their working lives at their computer with spreadsheets and budgets, constructing imaginary art works that, through economic necessity, bureaucratic imperatives or simply thinking the better of it, will never actually come to fruition.

London artist Peter Liversidge has turned all of this into an art in itself, with a body of work that does include photographs, sculpture, paintings and drawings, text work and ideas, but is all encapsulated in the idea of proposals: ideas dreamt up and typed up on a vintage typewriter at his kitchen table, sent to the gallery he is working with in the weeks running up to his show and published in book format as a catalogue.

"I propose to write a group of Proposals..." begins his current book *Ingleby Proposals*, and the subsequent texts promise a range of activities from "keeping it simple" to getting extremely complicated. There are straightforward proposals - cooking lunch for the gallery staff, arranging a gig by a favourite band - and there are deeply impractical ones, such as visiting every Scottish island or running a zip wire from Edinburgh Castle to Waverley Station.

Working with Liversidge must be like being gently bombarded by a persistent English eccentric. You know the type - the serial

Clockwise from main picture: an installation by Peter Liversidge at the Ingleby Gallery; Proposal No 64, 1,229 hand-painted dice; neon work Little By Little; Winter Drawing 9vs11, black masking tape on paper



"It's not always clear which of his proposals will actually materialise"

complainer, the "green ink" scribe who plagues a newspaper letters page or the "vexatious litigant" who can't help but issue pointless writs. At its best, it's a kind of charming excess and an affectionate parody of the creative act. At its worst, it can be a little annoying.

Last week, the Ingleby Gallery let me in early to see the show just hours before it was finalised. The idea that art is, indeed, a matter of propositions was attested to by more than the typewritten notices that run all along the gallery walls (each proposal, still showing the folds where it was stuffed into an envelope and sent to gallery proprietors Richard and Florence Ingleby, is framed and exhibited).

Liversidge was in the gallery being filmed for a website which would later record him placing a piece of found flint in the centre of the city. When I visited, the flint was sitting on the reception desk, a plump anthropomorphic bit of stone that was so seductive I still have half a mind to search it out in the city centre.

Part of the charm - and equally the irksomeness - of Liversidge's method is that it's not always clear which of his proposals will actually materialise and when they might take place. Some are set in stone already: there will be free gin and a motivational speech to an invited audience of business leaders on 11 March, and a cello performance at Edinburgh College of Art on 26 March. Many others are uncertain.

In 2006, during his show *Festival Proposals*, Ingleby Gallery staff succumbed to the proposal that they dress in furry animal costume for a



day. There's a picture of a rather fetching giant squirrel to prove it.

When I was in the gallery last week Richard Ingleby revealed that this time round the artist was insisting the gallery execute his proposal that Richard and Florence swap clothes for a day.

Liversidge's executed works vary from the weak to the strong. A light piece, *THE THRILL OF IT ALL*, on the gallery's façade, and other texts in neon and funeral wreaths, feel familiar. There are works in a similar vein by Martin Creed and Nathan Coley currently on display in Edinburgh. Creed, in particular, is an artist who has utilised the technique of turning the simplest of propositions into art with the slightest of means.

Yet the proposals make a lovely book in themselves and it is possibly the interest in short and unexpected narratives they reveal are the artist's strongest suit. Last midsummer, Liversidge arranged a snowstorm at Jupiter Artland, the large private sculpture park on the fringes of Edinburgh. I didn't make it to the event but the photographs, with the vibrant green foliage peeking from beneath the layer of snow and the purple June rhododendrons gilded with white, are stunning. A one-liner here was turned into something special: the briefest text of the artist's proposal turned out to be true fairy tale. ♦

Until 10 April
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