

Indrisek, Scott. "Reviews: Peter Liversidge," *Modern Painters*, April 2012.

MODERNPAINTERS

NEW YORK

Peter Liversidge

Sean Kelly Gallery // December 9, 2011–January 28, 2012

THE BRITISH ARTIST Peter Liversidge might not be present himself in the gallery, but this highly personal and occasionally interactive show—consisting primarily of proposals and exhibition ideas, some of which are tangibly realized throughout the space—creates the illusion of personal presence. In the first room, the artist's single-page proposals are framed and displayed as art objects in their own right. Some are implausible: "I propose to open a blood bank in the exhibition spaces." Others are poetic: "I propose to search for an answer." Still others are generous: The artist offers a work on paper to the first person who reads the proposal and contacts the gallery staff. The wall itself is painted gray—per Liversidge's proposal. In the corner are a few cords of wood and log shavings, the aftermath of the gallery owner, Sean Kelly, and the artist chopping wood with axes in the space, by another request.

There is a haunting quality to "Where We Begin," and it has to do with the aforementioned paradox of the artist's semblance of direct interpersonal interaction despite his physical absence. Liversidge's framed proposals document a network of control, however benevolent: He's pulling strings from off-stage, as when he proposes that "the staff of the Sean Kelly Gallery dress as each other" or that his artist photograph on the gallery's

Peter Liversidge
Will History Be Kind, 2011.
Powder-coated steel, bulbs,
1 ft 3½ in x
21 ft 4 in.

Web site be changed on a monthly basis until 2013. Occasionally, Liversidge utilizes intermediaries to accomplish his directives, as was the case on the af-

ternoon of my visit: As a performance piece, the New York-based artist William Brovelli manned a photocopy machine for two hours, producing facsimiles of a Liversidge proposal that in turn became original artworks in a large-size edition. Liversidge also mailed rulers and other objects to the gallery and then proposed that "post woman Dana Giro be responsible for curating their display. Liversidge's mailed-in proposals create a self-generating process that is able to propagate art even after the artist has left the building. One proposal states that gallery visitors can bring a single dollar bill to the front desk and have it imprinted with the sentence "Our errors are our portals," a purposeful mangling of a James Joyce quotation.

The exhibition does include works in which Liversidge proposed a task and completed it himself. These include two fantastic text-based pieces in powder-coated steel and lightbulbs. One, in the gallery's office, reads "am/pm"—either half is illuminated, depending on the hour. The second, affixed to the exterior of the building, reads "Will history be kind." In the gallery's back room is a wall-filling collection of signs that the artist found in upstate New York, all advertising something being offered for "free." (Liversidge replaced each borrowed or stolen sign with one of his own design.)

Overall, "Where We Begin" is a bighearted body of work that proposes a refreshing idea: the artist as a benevolent, behind-the-scenes bureaucrat, delineating rules and distributing tasks for no reason other than delight, a labor of whimsy. —SI

