

# SEANKELLY

Rodney, Seph. "A Playful Artist Insists Gallery Staff Take a Nap." *Hyperallergic*, October 12, 2016.

## HYPERALLERGIC

### A Playful Artist Insists Gallery Staff Take a Nap

PROPOSAL FOR SEAN KELLY AT THE SEAN KELLY GALLERY,  
475 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10018, U.S.A.  
FOR THE EXHIBITION: Twofold.  
10th September - 22nd October 2016.

I propose to drop two hundred and fifty thousand 1 cent coins on the floor of the main gallery space. The coins will come directly from the U.S. Mint, so that when they are released from their paper packaging and fall to the floor, it is then that they enter public circulation.  
Once the exhibition closes to the public on October 22nd the coins should be collected and returned to the U.S. Mint for re-circulation.

Peter Liversidge.

Peter Liversidge, "Proposals for the exhibition Twofold at the Sean Kelly Gallery" (2016) (all photos courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York unless otherwise noted, © Peter Liversidge) (click to enlarge)

Work becomes play in Peter Liversidge's Twofold installation, though its proposals read so formally: "I propose to drop two hundred and fifty thousand 1 cent coins on the floor of the main gallery space." What? I walk into the main gallery space at Sean Kelly, New York and yes, I'm walking on shiny, copper coins that are all over the floor, everywhere as far as I can see. So, the London-based artist is to blame for all this. His proposals, seemingly produced on an antediluvian manual typewriter, are primly framed on the wall adjacent to the gallery space. They contain phrases couched in that inimitable British voice that at once sounds pleasant and dictatorial: "the coins will come directly from the U.S. Mint, ..."  
Liversidge is a mischief-maker; perhaps he's done his reading on the power of the artist to declare a thing and thereby make it so — like the works of Sol LeWitt and Yoko Ono. It works because we play along, I mean we get to play along — Liversidge presents us with an opportunity to imagine being the imp who stretches or corrupts the rules of the white cube. He wanted a cannonball shot into the west wall of the gallery. I walk over to it and sure enough, it's there, a small, steel sphere embedded in the plaster, at the height of my waist. at the Sean Kelly Gallery" (2016) (all photos courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York unless otherwise noted, © Peter Liversidge)

While there I see someone walk into the main space, lay down and curl up like she was at home. Liversidge got the gallery's workers to take daily naps in whatever part of the gallery they wanted, but they had to be taken, according to his instructions, "for a minimum of two hours during gallery opening hours." I asked Director of Communications Christine McMonagle whether senior members of staff would also participate, and she said that the owner Sean Kelly said he would do it, and yes, senior personnel would follow. There wasn't a great deal more of Liversidge's work that visually enticed me — there are some Polaroid diptychs and lit-up sculptures — but these did not interest me nearly as much as the rascally gesture of getting gallery employees to play hooky on the artist's dime.

What makes us love art? Technical skill, yes, is always part of the answer — command of a medium, form, and technique. Then there are incandescent ideas, or course. But also, there's the incantatory act, the strange witchery of saying something to make it so. That power of contemporary art lets us off the hook, lets us play where there is serious work to be done and money to be made, makes us spendthrift and silly, implausible, immortal, and free. How can we have more of this?



Installation view of Peter Liversidge's 'Twofold' at Sean Kelly, New York (photo by Jason Wyche)



A gallery worker at Sean Kelly follows one of Peter Liversidge's directives and naps in the gallery (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)