

SEANKELLY

Durrant, Nancy. "The die is cast wide," *The Times*, February 24, 2010.

THE  **TIMES**

Peter Liversidge's art is a reflection of his imagination — constantly at work, Nancy Durrant finds

The Lincolnshire-born artist Peter Liversidge has "always had quite a vivid imagination. I used to get into trouble for it at school. And I remember on my fine art degree being told by my tutors that I had too many ideas, which I thought was quite amazing."

Looking around *The Thrill of it All*, Liversidge's new exhibition at Ingleby Gallery in Edinburgh, you can see their point. It can't have been easy teaching a man who for a single exhibition has made a wall drawing based on a fragment of an envelope that once held an application for a British passport; a neon sign bearing the legend "little by little"; a framed set of Polaroids depicting the same view of a bridge from a Miami penthouse; two huge pictures of bare trees made with strips of black tape; 1,500 (and counting) handmade, hand-painted dice in various colours (pictured); a lifesized photograph of a brown bear taken at Barcelona Zoo; and a floral tribute consisting of Shelley's words "Fear not for the future, weep not for the past". Among other things.

One of these other things is at the base of Liversidge's art — a set of 160 proposals for artworks, typed by him at his kitchen table on an old manual typewriter, fuelled by music and coffee. The proposals were written only once then framed, errors (Liversidge can't spell for toffee), crossings out and all, and then exhibited. They have also been made into a book to accompany the exhibition. The other works in the show are realisations of some of the proposals, but many remain unrealised, often for practical reasons (a zipwire between the gallery and Waverley Station was never going to happen). He writes a new set of proposals for each exhibition, often geographically relevant to the venue, but really just putting his current, often bizarre ideas on paper, forming a body of work that acts as a window into a very active mind. Why?

"I'm interested in the question: 'What is creativity?' " Liversidge says. "What I mean by that is, you and I could be reading the same book of proposals, be on the same page, but you bring you to it, and I bring me. If you don't see the show but you read the book you can curate your own show in your head. Not that I imagine anyone would have the time or the patience to do

that, but it's a possibility. The idea that they're descriptive, not prescriptive, is important."

Liversidge says he has always been inspired by folk art — the artist Joseph Cornell, for example, what he calls "that unthinking work" — and by his grandfathers, both of whom crafted things outside their normal working lives: furniture, stop-motion films, an entire kitchen to match a new fridge. Bert, his next-door neighbour in Lincolnshire, used to make whirligigs. Until June last year, Liversidge himself was working four to five days a week as a framer, fitting his art in around it. "I would go to work at eight, finish at five; we'd have supper together, the boys [his sons, George and Thomas] would go to bed about half seven and I'd start work at eight. I'd work until one or two in the morning."

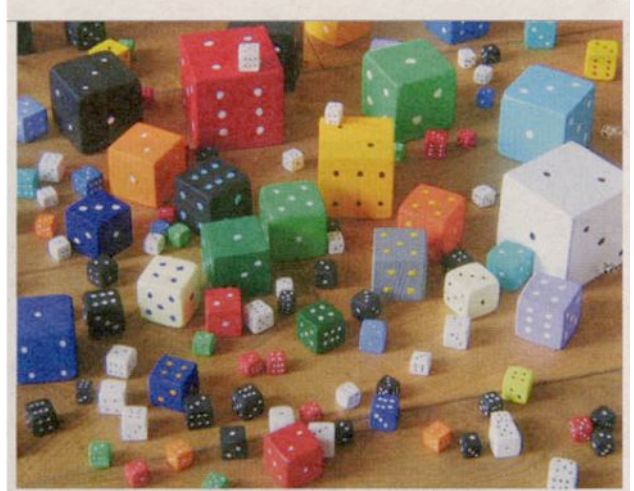
It's far from the postmodern self-reflection and self-promotion that characterises so much contemporary art. Liversidge recoils from the idea of a "signature style", preferring to let the viewer take his own flight of fancy from the starting point of his proposals. "I was reading an interview with [the painter] Alex Katz and he was saying that he wants to dominate people's minds completely. With my proposals it's the absolute opposite. I hope that people can come to it and it be their work as well as mine, in them imagining how they could be made to work." He is tickled by the reaction of my sister who, upon reading his proposal to install a volcano in the gallery space said: "I like that one. You could fill it with chocolate and everyone would come."

But what of the proposals themselves? They're an odd bunch, ranging from the simple — "I propose to install a painting to the right of this proposal" — to the delightful: "I propose to sit with my sons George and Thomas and eat biscuits". There's the poignant — "I propose to make a perfect cast of your hand and take it in mine" — and the downright silly: "I propose to build a giant version of Mel Gibson's head". And then there's my favourite, for its painful dad humour: "I propose to roam in the gloaming."

"There are deeply personal proposals in there that I was not sure about," Liversidge says. "Some of them I can't read, which is a bit silly. But they're never edited. They are an expression of where I am, I suppose."

He says he hopes that they open a door for people's own imaginations. "I don't agree with that view that everyone is an artist, but I think that everyone is creative. Some people put body kits on their cars and spend immeasurable amounts of time tuning their engine. Or they're very good at topiary. It's just how it's expressed."

Peter Liversidge: *The Thrill of it All* is at Ingleby Gallery, Calton Road, Edinburgh (0131-556 4441), until April 10



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