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## In my mind I know what I think, but that's only based on my experience

**Andrew Liversidge**

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Text: Mark Feary



Value. Intrinsic value. Proffered value. Forecasted value. Andrew Liversidge's recent project confronts, questions and irks aspects of art's problematically symbiotic relationship to value economies. Estranged from the presentation of something produced, this is a gesture of something borrowed. It indicates risk, in terms of the financial liability invested in the initial production of the work, coupled with the risk of maintaining the integrity of what is arguably a fragile assemblage. Yet ironically it also denotes an element of risk aversion, through the effective

cost neutrality of the work in terms of its ready propensity for liquidity.

The proposition in simple terms is a ten thousand dollar bank loan taken out by the artist to produce an art project; a work featuring a formal cube composed of ten thousand dollar coins. The resultant project is then exhibited for a period of three weeks at an artist-run space situated in an alleyway replete with junkies and sex shops. The choice of space is fitting not only in terms of its straight-forward cube-like architecture, but also, and pertinently,

in relation to the name of the space. What better context within which to present the mechanism and objective of the financial sector than a space titled TCB (Taking Care of Business)?

The formal structure of this 'sculpture' belies the complexity of the issues posited within the work and more widely within artistic praxis. What does one invest in a practice, financially and temporally? And how do such returns weigh in against expenditure? To clarify the situation further, this is not a Koonsesque work by an ex-stockbroker

or the like, for whom the financial investment required to produce the work would pose little economic concern. To be certain, this is a relatively significant sum of money for one unaccustomed to stashing a backpack containing a bounty of gold under the mattress.

The project renders abstractly the limits of production values within market speculative contemporary art, wherein the often banal requisites of finish and attention to detail, regardless of how superficial, infer intrinsic, perpetual and cumulative

fiscal value and potential. Where within this permeating realm does the value of concept, gesture, or defiance lie? Indeed, what could be considered the liability of a product that maintains a cost neutrality in its material form?

This project is a gesture toward the performative, albeit one that dispenses with the performer. Yet it is also one that dispenses with the object, insofar as post-exhibition the project retains no physical form, in that the material can be readily and expediently exchanged. This transference however, elicits neither waste nor remnant; it is merely converted into a more convenient form of legal tender. Unlike much of the canon of minimalism, the object retains no innate form, no physical legacy, however simple the construction may be, either made or appropriated by the artist. Through this, Liversidge confronts the idea of gesture as object, and the paraphernalia such acts often elicit. Perhaps more akin to a Tino Sehgal performance, the stack assumes the role of an actor, fully complicit during the course of the exhibition, yet entirely liberated upon its conclusion, a performative gesture seeking to evade the pervasive capital value systems commonplace within the visual arts.

The project nods to René Descartes, yet it tempers such homage with doubt, indeed almost inadequacy. It recognises the tribute, but is careful not to advance beyond it, observing the philosophical propositions suggested by Descartes while imbuing them with an existentialist inadequacy that waivers under the legacy of Descartes' almost incontestable intellectuality. Descartes' quote of 1637 'Je pense donc je suis'<sup>1</sup> is the reference from which the project's title derives, replacing the oft cited *I think, therefore I am*, as it has most commonly been interpreted through its translation into English, with the infinitely more reticent *In my mind I know what I think, but that's only based on my experience*. Furthermore, the very constellation of Liversidge's project draws upon some of the philosopher's elaborations on the concept of abstraction. Descartes suggested that any quantity beyond ten thousand enters into the realm of pure abstraction, and as such is beyond the parameters of the human imagination in a readily tangible sense. In so doing the work is positioned at the precipice of the comprehensible and theoretical, manifesting as a kind of physical representation of abstraction.

This show concludes like the aftermath of a performance by an impotent Vito Acconci; with the absence of any trace or physical form, yet leaving you sure that someone has somehow just tried to fuck with you. Herein lies the gravity of the gesture, a performance without the performative, an object that retains no form, and an investment that poses no financial liability.

Mark Feary is a Melbourne-based curator and writer.

#### Endnotes

- 1 René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, 1637. This book was originally published in French. The widely quoted 'Cogito ergo sum' first appeared in the later *Principles of Philosophy*, 1644.
- 2 *Ibid.*

