

PETER LIVERSIDGE  
*an echo*

8<sup>th</sup> October – 17<sup>th</sup> December 2022



Peter Liversidge, *Boston Shadow*, 2013, pair of unique Fuji FP-100C photographs, 33.5 x 29.5 cm, 13 1/4 x 11 5/8 in (framed, each part)

Peter Liversidge's exhibition *an echo*, opening at Ingleby in Edinburgh this autumn, explores a theme that has concerned his work for nearly 20 years. It's an idea that is currently under the spotlight in *The Double*, a compelling exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, which includes Liversidge's work alongside a rollcall of artists (including Albers, Celmins, Duchamp, Rauschenberg and Warhol) for whom the double image has provided a means of understanding and exploring themes of identity and difference. As the exhibition's curator James Meyer describes in the accompanying book:

*'The art of doubling splays and divides vision. Looking at doubled images or shapes, we are able to see ourselves seeing.... Works of doubling explore questions of identity – how we distinguish one form, or object, or person from another: how we perceive likeness and unlikeness, resemblance, and difference.'*

And of course, it is difference, rather than similarity, that we are drawn to make sense of when faced with two apparently identical images. Liversidge's *Polaroid Pairs / Fuji FP 100C pairs*, such as those on show in Washington and here in Edinburgh, are amongst the purest expressions of the idea. They present a photographic diptych - captured on a Fuji FP-100C instant camera - in which the artist takes a photo and then waits, rooted to the spot, for the chemistry to coalesce into an image. He then lifts his camera again and attempts to take a second image replicating the first (which is impossible, especially given his predilection for pointing his camera at shifting shadows, flickering flames or the sun-dappled surface of water). In both halves of the diptych time is frozen for a microsecond, divided only by the minutes in between, but although the image on the left came first, it is neither truer nor more real than the one on the right. They are simply one thing, and another thing, separated by time, inviting us to look a little closer.

Inevitably, shadows and reflections loom large in the iconography of *doubling* - symbols of the divided self in a post-psychoanalytical world. As Meyer notes, the invention of photography, and in particular the widening access to photography that came with the handheld camera in the 1880s, opened the possibilities for ordinary folk to 'see' that metaphor for themselves. Filmmakers (including Warhol) have also played with doubling across the format of two screens and Liversidge does so too, using an i-phone (the present-day equivalent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's new photographic technologies) to film, and then replicate, a ghostly sequence of a plastic bag in the wind on the streets

of London. The first film was made in mid-winter, the second, in exactly the same place, in late summer, the bag transposed from one film to the other seemingly suspended across the intervening months.

The materials of film and photography provide Liversidge with a very immediate means and method of inviting us to look harder at everyday things, but so too does the possibility of the found object and its fabricated twin. This is rich territory for Liversidge, following Duchamp's lead in the direction of the readymade and the remake. Among the sculptures exhibited here are pairs of found stones and terracotta tiles in which the artist is at pains to ensure that the lovingly made second version is *not* an exact copy of the first - as if to suggest that the double can never be a true and a perfect replica of the original, and nor is the original any more unique than the re-make.

A larger sculptural work *Doppelgänger (Black) 2005-2022* takes this a step further presenting two shelves covered by an apparently random selection of black objects, originals on the left, copies on the right. These too are carefully, even endearingly, made in all manner of materials from clay and card to polystyrene and foam coat, and yet there is a deliberate and very human touch (which draws attention to the variance between manufactured and handmade) and so asserts the fact of their difference, giving it equal importance as their apparent attempt to be the same.

Other works assert this idea of dissimilarity in different ways. Liversidge's *Winter Drawings* are a life-long series of paired collages made in the winter months from slithers of black tape on the endpapers of old books. Each pair is titled for their difference, rather than their likeness, citing the disparity between the number of leafless branches on one drawing versus those on the other (*I6 vs I6 & I3 vs 22*).

As Meyer writes, in discussing a pair of near identical collages in the Washington exhibition (Robert Rauschenberg's *Factum I* and *Factum II* of 1957) works of this sort are made in stereo, working back and forth between the two, rather than one in imitation of the other: 'Seeing double' he says 'we see again, we see better'.

Or as Rauschenberg's close friend the composer John Cage remarked, in response to the same two works:

*"Hallelujah! The blind can see again. Blind to what he has seen, so that seeing this time is as though first seeing...everything is so much the same, one becomes acutely aware of the differences, and quickly"*

Another wall-based diptych offers an obvious disparity between its left and right halves. Once again, the original is on the left – a card placard of the sort that has become familiar from Liversidge's *Sign Painting Studios* and *Notes on Protesting*, projects that have graced museums such as Tate Modern, London, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, CT and Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm in recent years. It declares its own self-evident truth 'BLACK ACRYLIC PAINT ON CARDBOARD' and nods to the lie of its neighbour, a carefully rendered painting on canvas of the same text.

This reference to the more performative side of Liversidge's practice is a reminder that his compulsion to explore ideas of difference in similarity echoes across almost all his ways of working, including his 'proposal' writing for galleries and institutions worldwide. A proposal to 'twin the city of Edinburgh with Glasgow, Montana', for example, was politely rejected by the city fathers, another 'to invite identical twins to visit and spend time in the exhibition', may still be realised. Another public proposal, first installed in Plymouth on England's south coast in the aftermath of the Brexit vote and repeated here in Edinburgh, questions our acceptance of identity and difference in a plea for togetherness that stretches like a poem across the face of 18 flags.

If the presentation of any work of art is by implication an invitation to look, and perhaps to think, then the making of a double insists that we look a little closer and think a little harder. Liversidge's exhibition is an invitation to see with the brain as well as the eyes. *Hallelujah!* As Cage put it, *The blind can see again*.

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

Born in Lincoln in 1973, Peter Liversidge studied at the University of Plymouth, Exeter, UK. Peter Liversidge's work has been exhibited at a diverse range of institutions across the world, including the Tate Gallery, London; the Centre d'art Santa Mónica, Barcelona; Bloomberg SPACE, London; the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; the Whitechapel Gallery, London; and at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. He has developed site-specific projects for Jupiter Artland, 2020 and 2009, Bonniers Konsthall, 2018, Whitechapel Gallery, 2015, Europalia Festival, 2007, Tate Liverpool, 2008, The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 2010, the Armory Art Fair, 2011, and the Edinburgh Art Festival, 2013. In 2016, the Tate Gallery commissioned Liversidge to write unique songs in response to the Tate Modern's new building where a choir of 500 people performed *The Bridge (Choral Piece for Tate Modern)* in the Tate's Turbine Hall as the centrepiece of the opening. In 2013 Ingleby presented a major solo exhibition, *doppelgänger*, for the Edinburgh Art Festival, celebrating the artists fascination with a sequence of etchings by Max Klinger and the double.