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Money and other events before the form

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On a given night, walking down a particular avenue on a particular block after six in New York City you will see a gathering, swishing glasses to one particular kind of art, on another floor of the building or across the street there will be another group just as populated with congratulatory bottles flowing for a distinctly different kind of art. So too, in many European cities, or in Melbourne even, a minute's bike ride will take you from one large opening to the next. Differently, if a bomb dropped on the 22nd of June sometime between six and nine this year at 148 Abercrombie Street, that would have been endgame for the majority of the Sydney art scene. Instead, the overflowing opening, full of good will for this beautiful gallery, was another significant sign of the times. The Commercial is just a roll down the hill from the current private development of Redfern's most historic residential site, The Block. The redevelopment is set to realise an unrecognisable face of the long-time spiritual home and pied-à-terre of Aboriginal

Australians in Sydney. Luckily this is not an issue gallery director Amanda Rowell is turning her back on, transparency is a driver of the way she works as a director. This is meant to come across explicitly in the much talked about name of her gallery and its inaugural exhibition *One/Three* as well.

With *Dermis* (2012), Archie Moore asserts three dried acrylic paint pieces as minimal hanging sculptures. The work's title signifies the black, red and yellow colours of the Aboriginal flag as both the sensitive skin of the artwork and the geopolitical ground on which the gallery stands. Each piece made by laying the paint down differently, renders subtle differences in form and works well as an introduction to the works in the show that while conceptually diverse, display sensitivity to materials and employ overlapping palettes.





Melbourne artist Andrew Liversidge has been impressing many over the last few years with his self-reflexive conceptual work. From data analysis of the syllables used in text messages exchanged during the end of a relationship in *Nothing For Nothing* (2009) to melted puddles of money in the exhibited, *For the Avoidance of Doubt (Quid Pro Quo and the Golden Torpor)* (2011). Liversidge's solipsistic and casually philosophic titles give viewers pathways into what he is on about. The artist selects elements of life and executes formal, if not arbitrary, processes of abstraction. On the floor the viewers see reproducibility of the work of art struck by its absolute singularity in two versions of a planned series of ten; the artist has melted 1000 one dollar coins into a golden funk and 2000 one dollar coins into something the same but different. An indexical movement exists through the series whereby the pricing of the works derives from the dollars used to make the work, the foundry melting labour costs, and The Commercial's gallery commission. The sale of each coin puddle covers the cost of production plus the cost of funding the next puddle which increases in value by \$1000 dollars.

Also, dealing with golden discs Agatha Gothe-Snape's contributions *Inverted Solar Eclipse for Two Parts*, and *Limited Lunar Coalescence* (2012) are collaborations by correspondence with artist Daniel Hollier. The delicately installed, painted and sculptural works of cosmic figurations and found images change for the viewer upon inspection of the very long dossier of correspondence shared between Gothe-Snape, Hollier, Rowell, and Sydney curator Susan Gibb. There's the rub, however, only a buyer who chooses to commit to this work is permitted to read this both generous and heated discussion centered on artistic credit, remuneration, and ego. To contrast, nothing is hidden in the mirror work exhibited by Robert Pulie, where a balance continues to teeter between conceptual and material sensuality, *W (version 3)* (2012) joins two full-length oval mirrors into one sculptural piece whereby the viewer sees a true image (not the usual reversed semblance) of themselves in the mirrors set at a ninety-degree angle of incidence to one another. A succinct and pleasurable pun, the artist allows his materials to determine the formal fate of the work. In another piece *Backward in coming forward* (2012), the artist has painted a portrait on Australian antique skirting boards and allowed the knots in the wood to decide certain figurations.

Clearly titled as such this inaugural exhibition acts as the first of the three exhibitions showcasing the new gallery's stable of artists. Without a curatorial premise the show does not pretend to be anything other than this. Works that are incongruous conceptually, share similarities by way of a pared back install and colour grouping but that is about as far as the relations go. It would have been a failing to attempt otherwise, rather than being muffled by some token 'stock show' theme the works are able to stand alone, their harmony comes from not trying to be critically salient in unison.

It is a funny lottery—who gets commercial representation and who doesn't and what this visible stamp of approval means to any one practice—and such issues play part in the circus of the big celebratory opening events. Rowell admits off the bat that maybe she's made some bad business decisions, only one of her artists was already represented but what is the point of opening a gallery that is simply a retail outlet? Rowell, never having worked for an institution except selling books at the Art Gallery of New South Wales shop, prefers the Wild West aspect of the gallery that she lives above, a space where she can pretty much do whatever she likes. Many of the artists Rowell has personally worked with during her previous position as manager of Roslyn Oxley Gallery. The director has picked a strong idiosyncratic group, many of whose work rewards those who take time with it. Some have simply slipped through the cracks of commercial or institutional recognition for too long. Over the past ten years Queensland's Archie Moore has taken part in an extensive number of major national and international exhibitions and yet maintains a changeable interdisciplinary practice also showing at independent artist run spaces.

It is certain that times are changing on Abercrombie Street, but maybe there is solace to be observed. While the housing market becomes more economically exclusive and many residents are forced to retreat further out, the subject of this review is the second commercial gallery to open here in the last few months. Forgive me if I speak too soon but maybe such events suggest that our micro art market is becoming more diverse rather than traveling in tandem down a similarly conservative street.

One/Three The Commercial was held June 22 - July 14, 2012

Previous spread, left: Archie Moore, *Dermis*, (2012). Acrylic paint, wooden dowel, steel brackets, three parts. Photo: Jamie North.

Previous spread, right: Andrew Liversidge, *For the Avoidance of Doubt (Quid Pro Quo and the Golden Torpor)*, (2011). 92% copper, 6% aluminium, 2% nickel, the first in a series of ten unique works. Photo: Jamie North.

Facing page: Robert Pulie, *W (version 3)* (2012). Mirror, copper, brass bolts, cedar. Photo: Jamie North.