

THE GOLDEN APPLE, 1983. 103.559 OUNCES OF PURE GOLD

TALES OF GOLD

The Tale of Ray

**An Installation at
Artspace by
Billy Apple with
Wystan Curnow**

16 June until 3 July, 2004

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‘The Tale of Ray’ is the latest addition to a group of collaborative works by Billy Apple and myself, known as *Tales of Gold*. Although jointly conceived and developed the collaboration also involves a division of labour; Apple is largely responsible for the installation while I take care of the text.

The first two — ‘Gold Standard’, ‘Atalanta’ date from 1988 and belong to Apple’s ‘Golden Rectangle’ series of paintings — their texts silk-screened onto sheets of gold passivated steel.¹ In 1990, the Wellington City Art Gallery commissioned a billboard; ‘Tales of Gold’, publicized the presence of these two works in its exhibition. *NowSeeHear!* Later Apple was commissioned to name and design the label and packaging for a new Robart & Butler desert

¹ ‘Gold Standard’ and ‘Atalanta’ are illustrated in *As Good As Gold, Billy Apple Art Transactions, 1981–1991*, Wellington City Art Gallery, 1991, pp.57–8. The Golden Rectangle paintings are discussed in my catalogue essay, pp.41–2. A third painting, ‘midas’ was commissioned in 1993, and exhibited at the Warwick Brown Gallery in October.

wine. It was named *As Good as Gold*, 1992, and with its text on the label and the box, ‘Dionysus’ became another tale of gold. ‘El Dorado’ was produced as a double-page page-work for *Pavement* magazine (August, 1997), and subsequently as a score in the 1998 Lopdell House exhibition, *The Lure of Language*. ‘Installed’ on the gallery’s baby grand — Apple had divided the keyboard using the golden ratio. At the opening it was read by myself accompanied by Jonathon Besser on piano.

‘The Tale of Ray’ is an installation which incorporates Billy Apple’s ‘The Golden Apple’, 1983, and provides a narrative context for it. This sculpture was commissioned by Ray Smith, owner of Auckland Coin and Bullion Exchange. First shown at the Exchange’s premises in September of that year, under the title, *Apple Turns to Gold*, its \$85,000 price tag created a small scale media frenzy. It appeared on the cover of the catalogue for the Wellington City Art Gallery’s survey of Apple’s 1980s art transactional works, *As Good As Gold*, 1991. This show was unique in its direct engagement

1. THE TALE OF RAY

2. By the end of September 1987,
I owned:

3. A home on Takapuna Beach
worth \$1.5 million

4. The latest Bentley Turbo R
made by Rolls Royce
worth \$350,000

5. A new Ferrari 328
worth \$200,000

6. A new Audi Quattro Turbo
worth \$120,000

7. Half shares in an Agusta
twin turbine helicopter
worth \$2 million

8. A 58 foot cruiser "Spartacus"
worth \$500,000

9. A ski chalet in Ohakune
worth \$85,000

10. 27 million shares in
Goldcorp Holdings
valued at \$36 million

11. An art collection
worth \$150,000

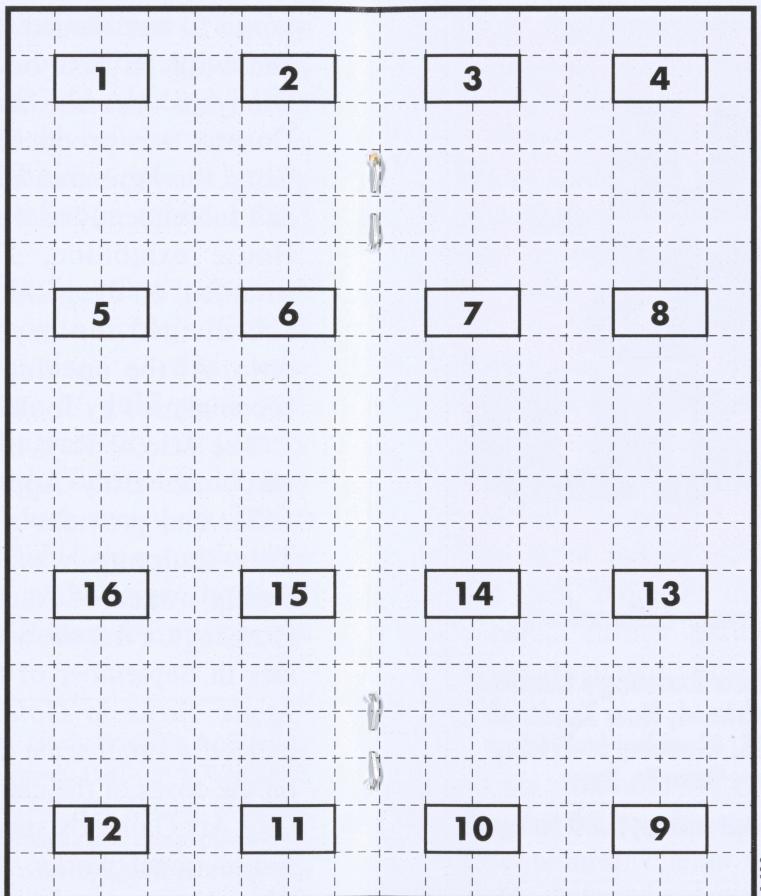
12. Exactly one year later,

13. all of my assets had been
seized and my shares were
worthless.

14. How, you might wonder,

15. could such a complete
reversal occur in a person's
life in such a short time?

16. WHERE'S THE GOLD?
My Story.
Raymond W. Smith, 1994



PLAN OF CEILING, INDICATING PLACEMENT OF TEXT ON LIGHT FIXTURE COVERS

APPLE TURNS TO GOLD

**"The Golden Apple," a trans-actional art
work by Billy Apple**
Auckland Coin & Bullion Exchange Limited
60 Parnell Road, Auckland, New Zealand
5-10 September, 1983. Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 3pm

Preview: Monday 5 September, 5.30 to 7pm

A4 ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE EXHIBITION *THE GOLDEN APPLE*,
AUCKLAND COIN & BULLION EXCHANGE LIMITED, 1983.

with the boom and bust mentality of the times and its inclusion of 'The Golden Apple' confirmed that work's iconic status.

Apple selected the fruit that was to be reproduced actual size in pure gold, Smith organized and funded the production and found a buyer and the two of them split the difference between the costs and the sale price. Smith, Apple and the purchaser, signed an agreement of sale and Apple was paid his \$7500 fee on September 8, 1983. The mould was included in the sale and it entitled the purchaser and any other person nominated by him to produce an edition of nineteen numbered and initialled sculptures. The artist would receive a royalty of \$1,000 for each. None of these were produced. The contract further entitled the purchaser to as many unsigned copies of the sculpture as he saw fit.

In *Where's the Gold? My Story*, Ray Smith writes that shortly after he had sold 'The Golden Apple', 'I was approached by two of my Christchurch clients who had made a killing trading silver futures with us. Over a two month

period they made over \$500,000. New Zealand still had exchange control regulations and after taking legal advice, they approached me with a proposition. Would I be able to make them five solid gold apples to take to Hong Kong? As works of art, the apples would be a permitted export. They would then melt them down and sell the gold, effectively moving \$400,000 out of the country. I pointed out to them they would be required to repatriate the funds and as that didn't seem to worry them, I suspected they declared the value much lower. We did no finishing work on the apples of course as they were destined for the melting pot.' While Smith and the others had signed the sale of agreement in 1983, the purchaser's payment was not due until a year later so presumably Smith produced these five apples in the interval between signing and payment. Since the artist had already received his cut, and signed away his copyright, he knew nothing of them before the publication of Smith's book.

— *Wyston Curnow*

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