

Liam Gillick

Two Short Plays

Lapdog of the

Bourgeoisie

Mirrored Image:

A “Volvo” Bar

Elements

Wood shavings on the floor.

**Two billboards. Outside:
announcement of the plays.
Inside: settings.**

**The actors should read from
the script in their hands.**

**The performance should be
treated as a public rehearsal.**

**Roles should be assigned
randomly for a performance.**

**If actors feel someone is
missing out or has mastered
a part they can break the rule
and assign a specific role.**

**More than one part can be
played by one actor.**

**The actors should imagine that
they are performing for radio
rather than a live audience.**

**There is no “action”. Stage
or spoken instructions should
not be performed.**

Lapdog of the Bourgeoisie

A play in one act based on an episode of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*.

Gallery lights on as normal.

CAST

Gavin
Simon
Liam
Tom
James
Celine
Terry
The Art Collective (Robin)
The Museum Director (Fay)
The Curator (Viviana)
The Professor
The Critical Theorist
Collector A
Collector B

LOCATION

Eastside Projects interior, night.

GAVIN

Once again, I am your visual culture savior. Thanks to me we are no longer stuck dancing with the YBAs.

SIMON

Oh, I wasn't going to that party anyway.

LIAM

Me neither.

TOM

No way.

JAMES

Not me.

GAVIN

Well I am offering you a visit to a critical culture mystery exhibition.

LIAM

Is that one of those totally pathetic who-dun-its?

TOM

Where everyone has to play a stupid character?

JAMES

And solve a fake, idiotic murder?

SIMON

That any moron could figure out?

GAVIN

Exactly! Woo hoo! We're goin' to a mystery show.

The enthusiasm stops there as the rest of them go back to their coffee. Even Simon finds work to be more interesting. Gavin turns to his trusty ol' friend.

Oh, come on, Celine. Tell everybody why this is gonna be so great.

CELINE

Okay, right after you tell me.

GAVIN

You mean you don't wanna go either?

CELINE

Not really. Gavin, I've never been that into critical culture.

To be honest, it's always kinda bugged me that it's such a big deal to you.

GAVIN

[Annoyed]. Well, it's a big deal to me because I happen to be a wi-wittle upset because I had to pay for these catalogues in advance.

CELINE

Well, I'm a wittle upset because I like to be asked ahead of time before someone makes plans for me.

GAVIN

I just thought this would be fun, and I thought you guys would think so too. Especially you, Celine.

CELINE

[Resigned]. Fine, I guess a little exhibition won't kill us.

LIAM, TOM, JAMES, SIMON

Groan!

GAVIN

Yes! That's exactly the kind of enthusiasm I'm looking for.

The group enters a dilapidated looking art center that's littered with trash on the floor. There must not be any heating because everyone wraps their arms around themselves to keep warm. They are the only ones there.

LIAM

Oh, good thing you paid in advance for those catalogues. We'll be lucky to find any work.

GAVIN

Well, I think we should feel lucky that we got our own private show.

CELINE

It's so cold in here, my inheritance is sprouting icicles.

Tom, Liam and James wipe down seats to sit on, and Simon joins them.

GAVIN

Okay, there is now an official moratorium on whining.

An art collective enters the exhibition and looks as run-down as the rest of the place with their shabby grey uniforms, disheveled hair, and beards. They carry a pile of white cardboard boxes.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

[Bored]. Welcome to the visual culture mystery exhibition, where murder is our business and our business is murder — they make us say that. So let's get the festivities rolling with your complimentary text.

The Art Collective strolls down the aisle and tosses a box at each of the visitors.

TOM

Gallery guide and a catalogue?

CELINE

[Throwing her box on the floor with all the other litter]. Oh great! And I didn't even get the catalogue!

GAVIN

You want a catalogue? I'll give you a catalogue.

Gavin opens his carton and takes his gloved hand from his coat pocket. A sticky art inventory is stuck to his glove. He hands Celine his catalogue.

Here, take mine.

Gavin gets up and heads for the toilet as The Art Collective returns.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

So listen up mystery lovers. Here are the parts that you will be playing.

The Art Collective tosses each of them an envelope.

Please read them and become them.

The Art Collective leaves again.

LIAM

If I'm lucky, I'll get thrown from the exhibition in the first act.

SIMON

Trade you?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

[Voice over]. Welcome to the project!

GAVIN

Oh no! I've gotta get everybody out of this thing before —

Gavin pulls open a door to find things are very different from before. The exhibition has now avantgardely turned out to have an early 1990s feel.

something like this happens.

Gavin has The Art Collective by their lapels while trying to make his point.

There's been a big mistake! There are critical people aboard! You've gotta stop this show right away.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Sorry. There's only one way to stop this exhibition.

GAVIN

What's that?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

You, dear boy, have to solve the mystery.

GAVIN

Me!?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

[Handing over an envelope]. You are the detective in this play. As you've already paid for the costume, you might as well look the part.

The Art Collective gives Gavin a pair of expensive glasses and an overcoat.

GAVIN

[Looking down at himself]. Ooohh. Burberry.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Allow us to introduce you to your cast of characters. May we present The Museum Director.

The Art Collective walks over to Simon, who is seated, and Liam, who is thinking away.

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Delighted. I find modern exhibitions so exhilarating, don't you?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

His maid, Liam.

Liam leaves his thinking duties and bows.

LIAM

Charmed, I'm sure.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

The Professor.

James stands and removes his pipe.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

And of course —

THE CURATOR

[Striding forward, smiling with twinkling teeth]. The Curator, international star. A pleasure. At least, I know it is for you.

GAVIN

Where's Celine?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Oh, you mean world-renowned artist Terry. Yes, well unfortunately, he's been the victim of a —

Dramatic music, dum-dum-dum!

murder.

The Art Collective stands aside revealing Terry sprawled on the floor. Gavin screams as he dashes over to the body.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Ha-ha-ha-ha!

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Murder?

THE PROFESSOR

Murder?

THE CURATOR

Murder?

LIAM

Great, something else for me to think about.

Gavin checks his pulse.

GAVIN

Oh, no! He really is dead.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

[Walking over and kneeling beside Gavin and Terry's body]. And the game begins. All you have to do is figure out which one of our exhibition visitors killed Terry.

Gavin looks at the group, each of whom looks suspicious.

GAVIN

Well, I'm not very good at solving murders.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

The first question you want to ask yourself is what was the motive.

GAVIN

I just wanted to give my friends some nice critical culture.

The Art Collective gives Gavin puzzled looks.

Oh, you mean the murderer's motive.

Once again, Gavin looks at his fellow exhibition visitors, who all look away guiltily. The Art Collective rub their heads as if to say, "This is going to be a long night." Gavin has his notebook out and is interviewing the suspects one at a time in a private office. First up is The Museum Director.

GAVIN

Now, Museum Director, tell me what you know about the murder.

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Murder, murder, murder. Everyone is so preoccupied with murder. What you should be focused on is what happened to my reputation.

GAVIN

Whatever. Now, tell me your relationship to the deceased?

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

I had none. I've never met the man in my life.

GAVIN

[Writing]. Never met the man —

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

All right! You've dragged it out of me. We were in love! I was mad about the boy. Desperately, passionately. But he ended it. Horribly, cruelly. And I vowed that some way, somehow, I would get my revenge! But then I got over it and we became friends. So you see, I really have no motive for killing him.

GAVIN

Nope. None whatsoever.

Gavin is now sitting in the private room with Liam, still writing in his notebook.

GAVIN

So you actually work for The Museum Director?

LIAM

I know where you're going with this. You think I'm the murderer, don't you?

GAVIN

Do I?

LIAM

You think I killed him so that I could frame The Museum Director. That way I'd be free of my cruel, self-centered pain.

GAVIN

So, you killed Terry to frame The Museum Director.

LIAM

Do you think I'd tell you if I did?

GAVIN

Yeah ... but then, I'm kinda new at this.

Gavin is now questioning The Professor, who was standing by the door, but is now seated.

THE PROFESSOR

Oh yes, I knew him. We weren't, how you say, buddies, but he was a nice enough kinda guy. If you like that kind of guy.

GAVIN

And what kind of guy is that?

THE PROFESSOR

Oh, you know, the kind of guy that always get the girls. The kind women prefer over the quirky and unique. The kind that makes a guy like me blend into the wallpaper. Anyway, as I was saying, I really have no motive.

The Curator is now in the hot seat. However, he does not seem worried.

THE CURATOR

You're probably quite intimidated talking to an international curatorial star like myself.

GAVIN

Yeah, very. So, um, tell me what you know about the murder?

The Curator stands and pulls Gavin into an embrace.

THE CURATOR

Let's stop this charade! You want me, and to be perfectly honest, I'm okay with that.

GAVIN

Well, I have a problem with guys who use the word 'charade'. Especially ones who use it while my friend is lying dead in the other room.

THE CURATOR

All right, I'll come clean. I used to be in love with a man. A wonderful, magical man.

Gavin can't help smiling at the compliment.

And that scoundrel stole him from me!

GAVIN

And that made you angry?

THE CURATOR

Furious! Why would he pick that second-rate artist over me, an international curatorial star? As you can see, I've put it behind me.

GAVIN

Let me guess, you have no motive whatsoever.

THE CURATOR

[Breathing a sigh of relief]. It would be nice to have you in my next show.

Gavin has finished his questioning, and is standing with The Art Collective.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Well, what have you come up with so far?

GAVIN

First, your play involves a lot of bad acting. Second, I have no idea who killed Terry.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Might we suggest you find out.

The Art Collective makes its way to the other end of the exhibition.

GAVIN

Just for conversation's sake, what happens if I don't?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Unless you solve this case, you and your art friends will be trapped at Eastside Projects ... forever.

GAVIN

Noooooo!!!

Gavin and The Art Collective walk through the show as Gavin pleads with them.

This is insane! We can't just go walking around Eastside Projects forever!

THE ART COLLECTIVE

I'm sorry, rules are rules. Besides, everything you need to solve this case is right in front of you.

GAVIN

Right in front of me where?

Gavin trips over Terry's body and falls, losing his fancy glasses on the way. The Art Collective leaves as Gavin pulls his glasses back on and inspects the body more closely.

Oh, look! He still has the catalogue I gave him.

Gavin holds his arm up to show everyone as they walk over.

And it's unopened. Which means he was killed right after I left him.

Gavin looks in Terry's other hand, gasps.

The Museum Director's missing reputation!

Everyone looks at The Musuem Director.

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Splendid! He found it. If he weren't dead, I'd buy him something.

The Museum Director gets on his knees and pries the reputation from Terry's stiff fingers. It won't come free.

No matter, I still have a good relationship with the public.

Gavin studies the body further, and finds something near Terry's neck.

GAVIN

An old catalogue text with the initials TC. Do they stand for torrid conceptualism, tedious crap, or The Curator?

All eyes turn to The Curator.

THE PROFESSOR

I knew it had to be you! You're just that sort of guy.

THE CURATOR

[*Gesturing toward The Museum Director*]. Sort of guy!? Sort of guy!? What exactly is that supposed to mean!? If anybody's guilty here, it's him!

The Museum Director gasps.

LIAM

[*To The Museum Director*]. I knew it was you!

THE PROFESSOR

[*To The Curator*]. Stop trying to blame other people.

GAVIN

[Watching them argue, smiles]. Finally, I'm having a positive impact. They're turning on each other.

Gavin's smile fades. The four suspects are still arguing, giving Gavin a headache.

People! People! Please work with me here.

Everyone falls silent and turns to Gavin.

Okay, the sooner we figure this out, the sooner we can get out of this exhibition. So, in the interest of time, let's say the murderer just raises his or her hand?

Everyone looks at each other accusingly, but none of them raises a hand.

Don't be shy ... Anybody? ... Anybody at all? ... The Curator?

THE CURATOR

You can't honestly expect me to admit to a crime I didn't commit? I'm a man of honor, integrity, amazing bone structure.

LIAM

Whose old text was near the victim's neck!

THE CURATOR

I had absolutely no motive whatsoever!

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Nor did I.

LIAM

Well I didn't do it ...

They all start arguing amongst themselves again.

GAVIN

And I am officially the world's worst detective.

The sound of a body collapsing to the floor.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

A murder!

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Murder?

THE PROFESSOR

Murder?

THE CURATOR

Murder?

LIAM

Great! Something else for me to think about.

GAVIN

There's been another murder?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Ah-ah-ah. Same murder, and until you solve it, we're all destined to keep replaying the same scene over and over ... And the longer you take, the longer we have to wear these expressions!

GAVIN

So let's go through what we know so far. I left the cabin and Terry was alive. I came back and Terry was dead. That's about it.

The door to the gallery's administration offices opens and two very dirty collectors enter.

COLLECTOR A

[*Stepping over Terry's body*]. Oh, Gavin, there you are.

GAVIN

Oh, Collector B, Collector A, thank goodness you're here! I didn't know this was an art exhibition and ... and now Celine is dead and I have to —

The collectors look down at themselves, and, with a nod, they both point at each other. Suddenly, they're both dressed like collectors from the early 1990s. Collector A wears a white Chanel dress, and Collector B wears a satiny bronze coloured Versace dress with a matching patterned robe over it.

COLLECTOR A

Gavin, there's no need to fear, your collectors are here.

The Art Collective comes over and lays on the charm.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Will there be two more for dinner?

COLLECTOR A

[*Charmed*]. Oh, no, we're just passing through.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Oh, too bad.

Collector B and Collector A turn and watch The Art Collective leave.

COLLECTOR B

I wouldn't mind spending eternity on this train.

COLLECTOR A

Hello! Did you see the way they looked at me? [*Turning back to Gavin*]. Okay, I have a plan. First, I'm going to interrogate The Art Collective.

COLLECTOR B

Hey, that was my plan!

GAVIN

And this plan helps me how?

COLLECTOR A

They know who the murderer is. Trust me, we'll have it out of them in ten minutes tops.

COLLECTOR B

Five, if they're ticklish.

Suddenly, a critical theorist appears at the door.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

And if that doesn't work, you always have me to solve the crime. Now then, let's say we have a look at the corpse, shall we?

Gavin is kneeling by Terry's body, and The Critical Theorist crawls over it looking for clues.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

This body is simply rife with clues. What, prey tell, have you been doing for the last few hours?

GAVIN

Hey, I found the reputation and the catalogue text!

Gavin shows The Critical Theorist the text.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

Hmm, those items, combined with this idea I found, should tell us everything we need to know.

GAVIN

[*Holding up the idea*]. I can't believe I missed this.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

In your defense, it was lodged fairly deep into his nasal passage.

GAVIN

[*Disgusted, drops the idea*]. Urgh!

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

I believe we only have one thing left to do. Dust the body.

GAVIN

For fingerprints?

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

No, it's filthy!

Collector B sits, reading an art magazine, while Collector A makes out with The Art Collective in the corner. Collector B finishes her magazine and taps Collector A on the thigh with it.

COLLECTOR B

When is it my turn to interrogate them?

Collector A comes up for air with her lipstick all smudged.

COLLECTOR A

Collector B, I told you, we're giving him the old good collector, bad collector routine.

Collector A returns to her make-out session.

COLLECTOR B

Oh, right. Which one am I again?

The Critical Theorist and Gavin are sitting with the suspects gathered around.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

This one was a bit dodgy all right, but I think we came up with a discursive potential.

GAVIN

Do you even know what that means?

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

Haven't the foggiest — but, I do know which one of you is the murderer!

Everyone looks at one another dramatically with a dum-dum-dum.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

It all began to make sense when I learned of The Museum Director's missing reputation!

The Museum Director is shocked.

Enter flashback. Celine is sitting at the end of the car, examining the catalog, when The Museum Director spots her and devilishly makes his move.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

[Voice over]. Gavin was out of the room, so The Museum Director knew he only had seconds to make his move. Counting on their prior relationship and Terry's impeccable work, he offered his hand, but he also knew that his reputation was loose and his plan worked perfectly. Terry started to choke on his reputation!

Gavin stands, pointing to The Museum Director.

GAVIN

I knew it! The Museum Director is the murderer!

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

[Also standing]. No I'm not!

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

But he would have been if Liam hadn't stepped in.

Liam looks shocked.

Enter flashback. Liam, The Curator, and The Professor are sitting and talking when Liam notices Terry choking. Liam rushes over, moves The Musuem Director aside, and begins mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on Terry with his ideas right in his face.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

[Voice over]. A former critic, his instincts got the better of him, but he had a plan of his own. He knew that Terry was highly allergic to ideas and that prolonged exposure to them could kill him.

Gavin stands again, but this time he points at Liam.

GAVIN

I knew it! Liam is the murderer!

LIAM

No I'm not.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

But he might have been if it weren't for an involuntary burst of intuition from the artist.

Enter flashback. Terry is sneezing while The Museum Director sits by, seemingly unaware. Liam is thinking some more, and the Curator is talking to The Professor. The Curator sees what's wrong with Terry, and walks over.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

[Voice over]. Terry sneezed, violently, I would imagine, and dislodged all but one of the ideas from his nostrils. However, The Curator seized on the opportunity, like only an international curatorial star could, and offered Terry one of his texts to wipe his nose — or to strangle his intuition!

Yet again, Gavin stands, but this time points to The Curator.

GAVIN

How could you!?

THE CURATOR

I didn't!

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

He's right, you know. He didn't.

GAVIN

Cut to the chase. We're running out of suspects.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

Which brings me to my most interesting piece of evidence: the dust on the body. It wasn't dust at all, but pipe smoke!

Everyone turns to The Professor, with his pipe.

THE PROFESSOR

That means nothing! You also smoke a pipe.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

Yes! But mine only blows bubbles.

The Critical Theorist demonstrates.

Enter flashback. The Professor is discussing something with Liam while he walks over to Terry, passing the curator along the way. The Professor offers Terry a puff of his pipe.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

[Voice over]. Once Terry recovered, The Professor came up behind him and offered him his pipe, containing tobacco. A substance which, according to the entire Western medical community, kills ... eventually.

Gavin stands, and places his hands on his hips.

GAVIN

But Terry doesn't smoke!

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

Exactly! Which is why The Professor is definitely not the murderer.

No one seems more amazed by this than The Professor himself, but everyone looks thoroughly confused.

GAVIN

So none of them is the murderer? I thought you said you'd solved the crime?

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

I have. The murder was committed by someone who had both motive and means. Someone who had a petit-bourgeoise background.

Enter flashback. Back to the very start of the story when Gavin is reading Collector A's inventory.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

[Voice over]. Someone who knew that, in large quantities, contemporary art is fatal to petit-bourgeoise identification.

GAVIN (IN FLASHBACK)

Yuck! Why does Collector A always go so heavy on the contemporary art?

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

[Voice over]. Someone who seized the opportunity and went to great lengths to make sure he'd covered his tracks.

Enter flashback. Gavin, Simon, Liam, Tom, James, and Celine first enter Eastside Projects.

Someone who knew that the inventory should not be seen —

Enter flashback to The Critical Theorist of the present talking to Gavin in the past, when Gavin handed Celine the catalogue.

— but can easily be absorbed through critical language, and placed in something as innocuous as a catalogue.

Back to the present. Gavin leaps to his feet, and points at The Critical Theorist.

GAVIN

The Critical Theorist!

THE MUSUEM DIRECTOR

[Pointing at Gavin]. The murderer!

THE PROFESSOR

[Pointing at Gavin]. The murderer!

THE CURATOR

[Pointing at Gavin]. The murderer!

LIAM

[Pointing at Gavin]. The guy who bumped him off.

GAVIN

Why are you all accusing me!? I didn't do it, I swear! I-I didn't even have a motive.

THE CRITICAL THEORIST

Oh, no? Isn't it true that you're angry with Celine for not supporting you in your ever more manic quest for perfect critical culture? That you're being so resentful of her pouty attitude and sarcasm, that the rage built up in you and you —

GAVIN

[Maniacally]. Yes! It's true! It's true! I'm the murderer! I killed Celine! [Surprised]. Wow! I totally didn't see that one comin'.

Collector B breaks off her kiss with The Art Collective, still chewing her gum. The Art Collective, their faces red with lipstick, collapse onto the floor painting, waving their arms as if giving up.

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Gavin's the murderer!

COLLECTOR A

Good work sister.

Collector B and Collector A high five.

COLLECTOR B

Let's go.

She pauses, and turns back to The Art Collective.

COLLECTOR A

Oh, here's your gum.

Collector B and Collector A jump over Terry's body.

COLLECTOR B

Gavin, we know who the murderer is!

COLLECTOR A

It's you!

Gavin turns around to show them that he's already in handcuffs.

GAVIN

So I've heard. So what happens to me now?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

[Looking very happy]. Well, now that you've solved the murder, you're free to go.

The Art Collective removes the handcuffs, and smiles smugly at Collector A and Collector B, who had enjoyed kissing until the party was over.

GAVIN

Really?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Mm-hmm.

GAVIN

Wow, this was great. Y'know, you really throw a nice exhibition, but how did you know about Collector A's large inventory, and that I was mad at Celine?

THE ART COLLECTIVE

Murder's our business, and our business is murder. [Calling out]. Next stop: Cairo!

In an instant, everything is back to how it was. The litter-strewn floor and frayed ideas, everyone back in his or her own clothes.

GAVIN

Wow! He really does murder right.

Celine stands to talk to Gavin as everyone else is talking in a group in the background.

CELINE

Whoa! I don't remember much, but this critical culture thing is exhausting. I'm so dead.

GAVIN

No you're not, you're alive again.

CELINE

Again?

GAVIN

Look Celine, I wanna talk to you about this whole critical culture thing. It may not be important for you, but it is for me, and I was hurt that you weren't more supportive. I mean, I supported you when you —

CELINE

When I was going to move to Prague, and with pretty much everything I've done since you've known me. I'm sorry Gavin.

Gavin smiles and starts to follow, but he's held back by Tom, who is checking his watch.

TOM

Gavin, I seem to have misplaced a few hours of my life. Was this a ... bewitching kind of evening?

GAVIN

It was for me, and I know it was for you. Or should I say, The Curator?

TOM

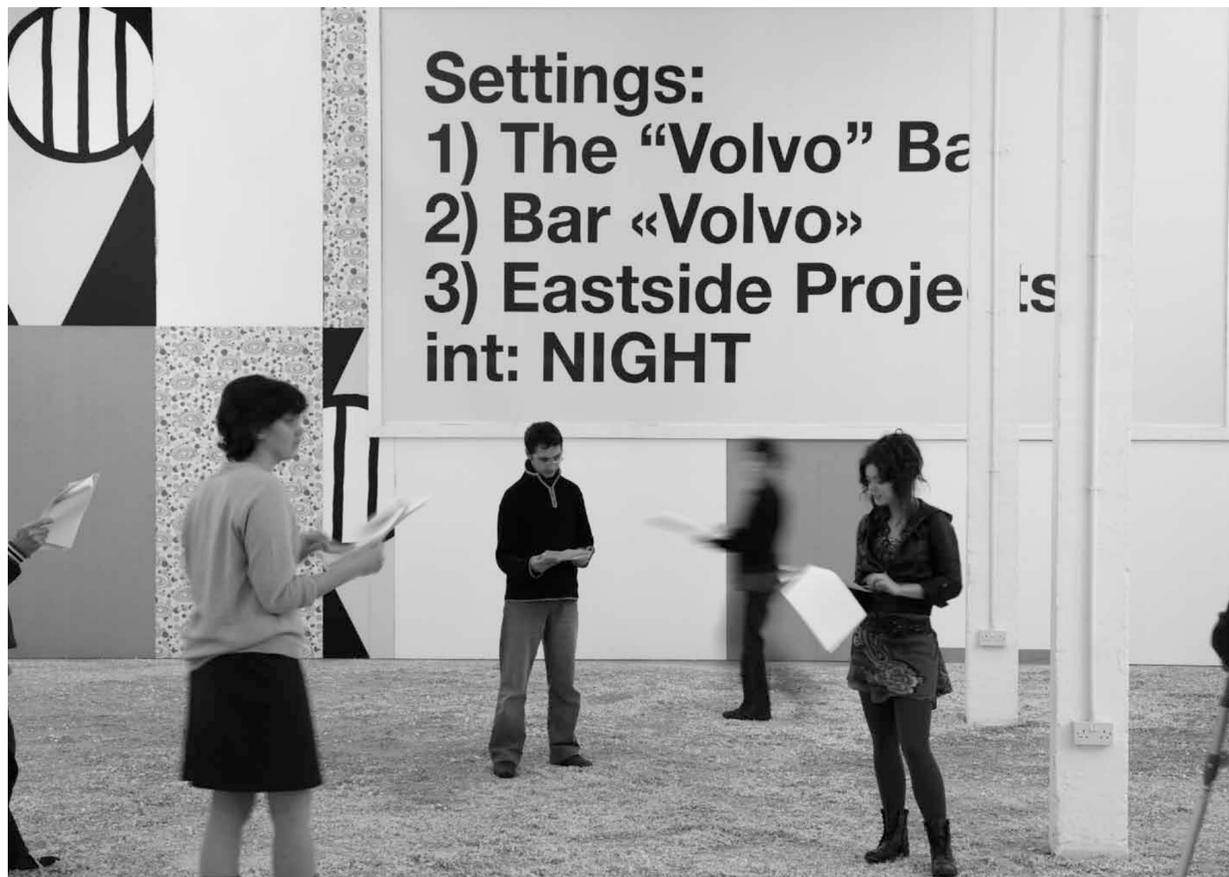
One day, one day.

Gavin's smile fades into a pout as he exits the exhibition. THE END.









Mirrored Image: A “Volvo” Bar

A play in eight acts.

Two 500w halogen lamps
directed at the performance.

An airhorn begins the play.

Act 1

CAST

Alberto Esposito
Frank Zimmermann
Jürgen
Doris
Helene

LOCATION

Volvo Bar

ALBERTO

What can I get you?

FRANK

What's on tap?

ALBERTO

Old beer.

FRANK

Old beer?

ALBERTO

I've also got Smirnoff Ice, Barcardi Breezers or Red Stripe in bottles with a straw.

FRANK

Old beer will be fine.

ALBERTO

Big one or a really big one?

FRANK

A really big one. How much?

ALBERTO

1 Euro.

FRANK

1 Euro?

ALBERTO

Something wrong?

FRANK

That's me in the mirror.

ALBERTO

A reasonably close resemblance.

FRANK

I haven't seen my reflection in a while and it surprised me. I mean, I could look in a mirror more often if I wanted to, but I haven't wanted to.

ALBERTO

You really ought to look in a mirror more often. How long has it been since you've taken a good look at yourself?

FRANK

I guess it's been a while. Do you have today's paper?

ALBERTO

I already tossed the Birmingham Post. Tomorrow's copy will get here about six. Wait ... I may have saved the sports page.

FRANK

August the eighth, 1964. It's the day I was born.

ALBERTO

Happy birthday.

FRANK

I was born at twelve-thirty. Forty-three minutes from now.

ALBERTO

No. Actually, it was seventeen minutes ago. Time's a little funny here. The city voted not to go on daylight savings time. Twelve-thirty here isn't the same as twelve-thirty somewhere else.

FRANK

Then I was born about the time I walked through your door.

ALBERTO

On the house. Happy birthday.

FRANK

Who was that?

ALBERTO

Should have warned you. Jürgen's got the worst breath around here.

FRANK

Jürgen? His name is Jürgen?

ALBERTO

Un-huh.

FRANK

And your name's Alberto?

FRANK

Not ... Esposito?

ALBERTO

No. Not Esposito.

FRANK

I know a Jürgen and I know an Alberto too.

ALBERTO

Alberto is pretty rare.

FRANK

But Jürgen isn't, especially since the Jürgen I know and this Jürgen have the same horrid breath.

ALBERTO

Halitosis isn't rare, especially with the old timers.

FRANK

Maybe not, but there are two boys out front who look familiar, too.

ALBERTO

Don't all boys look a bit alike?

FRANK

Especially me.

ALBERTO

This one's name is Doris. Any Doriss in your life?

FRANK

Not that I can remember.

DORIS

You no car worker.

FRANK

No. I'm just passing through. My name's Frank.

DORIS

I was car worker. Best damn car maker in the city. I make twenty-four cars a week. Twenty-four. Today sixteen is big deal. My Grandmother could make sixteen cars a week. You think I lie!

ALBERTO

Easy Doris. Let the man enjoy his beer.

DORIS

I know. How could a cripple build twenty-four cars in a week? I no always look like this. I was big. Strong like bull.

FRANK

I'm sure you were.

DORIS

Testing open top cars in the rain did this. Soak my bones. Rust them. I be lucky to live to see fifty.

ALBERTO

I thought it was forty?

DORIS

I was forty in March.

HELENE

Al, give me a double shot and a can of Snus.

FRANK

Hey!

HELENE

Hey ... Who the hell are you?

FRANK

It's me.

HELENE

I don't know you.

DORIS

He tells me his name Frank.

FRANK

Frank. Frank Zimmermann. But your name is Frank too, isn't it?

HELENE

No, my name's Helene.

FRANK

Do you have a younger brother?

HELENE

What about him? Put it on my tab, Alberto.

DORIS

What if he from the City Inspectors?

FRANK

City Inspectors?

ALBERTO

Running a bar tab is illegal. If you were from City Inspectors, I could lose my license.

DORIS

Check his wallet!

HELENE

You a city agent?

FRANK

I don't think so.

HELENE

Let's see your wallet.

FRANK

You know ... who I am is really none of your business.

DORIS

Take it, Helene!

ALBERTO

Come on. You'll be late for work.

DORIS

In old days, I take it from him.

HELENE

Yeah, well, these aren't the old days.

Act 2

CAST

Frank
Robert
Doris
Alberto
Gavin
Ada

LOCATION

Volvo Bar

ROBERT

Alberto don't get channel eight too good. Only now and then, late at night when the iodine bounces the signal.

FRANK

Iodine?

ROBERT

I read about it in the Post. This iodine layer bounces satellite signals hundreds of miles. A station in Lithuania got bounced clear to Canada by the iodine.

GAVIN

Ionosphere. The signal gets reflected by the ionosphere.

ROBERT

Yeah. That too.

FRANK

Your name isn't Lawrence, is it?

ROBERT

I'm Robert.

FRANK

Robert? Your name is Robert!

ROBERT

You heard of me?

FRANK

I have a friend named Robert.

ADA

I never knew anyone named Robert. What's he do?

FRANK

She figures things out.

ADA

She? This Robert is a girl?

FRANK

Sort of.

ROBERT

How'd you like me to straighten your back, Doris?

DORIS

Give me another Alberto. He isn't what he pretend to be.

ALBERTO

What's he pretending to be?

DORIS

When I figure that out, I know — why he here.

ALBERTO

Maybe he's here for the same reason you are ... to get a beer.

DORIS

I no drink beer, Alberto, you know that.

ALBERTO

I forgot.

DORIS

You no forget nothing. I wonder what happen around here if you did?

ALBERTO

Things might go a little ... ka-ka.

ROBERT

Don't let Doris get your coat. He don't trust nobody. He forgets. This isn't Russia where everybody works for the BVD.

FRANK

KGB?

ROBERT

Them too.

FRANK

I know another Alberto who says ka-ka.

ALBERTO

It's a common expression.

FRANK

Not where I come from.

ALBERTO

You're not where you come from.

FRANK

So it's just another coincidence?

ALBERTO

Ka-ka is a pretty common expression since nearly everyone comes from the old country. They all say ka-ka.

FRANK

Do you know where I come from, Alberto?

ALBERTO

You already told me.

FRANK

I only sald I was born in 1964. Why doesn't that bother you?

ALBERTO

Flrst rule of bartendlng is to listen and nod, no matter what the customer says.

FRANK

You know why I'm here don't you?

ALBERTO

The second rule of bartending is never to give away information for nothing. Like to take a chance? Only cost you a Euro. You could hit the jackpot.

Act 3

CAST

Jürgen
The Director

LOCATION

Eastside Projects, Birmingham

THE DIRECTOR

How long are you going to be?

JÜRGEN

A little over a month.

THE DIRECTOR

A month!

JÜRGEN

Give or take a day or two.

THE DIRECTOR

Maybe we're trying catch a moment, maybe an earlier moment, maybe it's a Volvo moment, 17th of June, 1974, when the view from the factory was of the trees and the way to work together was as a team and we know that the future is going to work out, everything is a trajectory as long as we can keep it this way.

Act 4

CAST

Frank
Doris
Robert
Luc
Ada

LOCATION

Volvo Bar

FRANK

I'm a spy. Spies know everything.

DORIS

Ha. Ha. You make big joke. Very funny.

ROBERT

Don't worry, Doris. If someone drops a bomb, we can hide at Eastside Projects until the radiator blows away.

LUC

Radiation.

ROBERT

That too.

DORIS

"That too." "That too." You so damn dumb, you no know your own name.

ROBERT

Robert. Want me to spell it?

DORIS

Yes.

ROBERT

R-o-b-e-r-t.

DORIS

Last name. Spell you last-name.

FRANK

So Robert's a nickname?

ROBERT

Yeah.

FRANK

How'd you get a stupid nickname like Robert? Does Alberto do all the nicknaming around here?

ADA

Yeah. He's good at it.

FRANK

I'll bet he is.

DORIS

Why you care what Alberto call us?

FRANK

I need it for my KGB report. What about Jürgen?

Did Alberto nickname Jürgen?

ROBERT

He must have. He nicknames everybody.

DORIS

He no name me and he no name Jürgen! Jürgen been Jürgen since day he was born. Alberto only name dummy like Robert.

FRANK

I'm tired of hearing you call him a dummy.

DORIS

Why?

FRANK

How'd you like it? Moment. Robert. What is it?

ROBERT

Trouble at Eastside Projects.

Act 5

CAST

Dominik
Alexander
Kuger
Ada
Frank
Robert
Arno
Doris

LOCATION

A Discussion Room

DOMINIK

An Exploslon.

ALEXANDER

How bad?

KUGER

Two people are trapped.

ALEXANDER

Who?

KUGER

The Palermo brothers. Helene and Hartwig.

DOMINIK

The director's office is filling with gas. We'll have to ventilate before anyone can go in.

ADA

Why? We've got air tanks.

DOMINIK

Breathing isn't our only problem.

ROBERT

What about the Palermo Brothers?

ALEXANDER

They'll have to wait.

FRANK

What if they can't? What if they're hurt?

ALEXANDER

Who are you?

DORIS

He State Safety Inspector.

ARNO

You're from the bureau?

FRANK

How long will it take to ventilate the room?

DOMINIK

Forty-eight hours.

ADA

In forty-eight hours, they'll be dead.

DOMINIK

They're probably already dead.

DORIS

They alive.

DOMINIK

How the hell do you know?

DORIS

I know.

Act 6

CAST

Frank
Alberto
Doris

LOCATION

Volvo Bar

FRANK

How'd you know what I was thinking?

ALBERTO

A good bartender is part philosopher, part psychiatrist and part psychic. I stick to the basics.

FRANK

How about. Why am I here? Why do you think you're here, Frank? Answering a question with a question.

ALBERTO

That's good, Frank.

FRANK

Thank you. Why am I here?

ALBERTO

You're beginning to think it's to save the Palermo Brothers.

FRANK

But it isn't.

ALBERTO

Not directly.

FRANK

How about indirectly?

ALBERTO

Who knows?

FRANK

Who are you?

ALBERTO

A bartender.

FRANK

Who knows everything. You're not just a bartender.

ALBERTO

That's true. I own the place, too.

DORIS

You want help Helene and Hartwig, the Palermo Brothers?

FRANK

I think that's why I'm here.

DORIS

Me, too.

FRANK

How dangerous would it be to go in after them?

DORIS

No danger.

FRANK

What can I do?

DORIS

Be safety inspector.

Act 7

CAST

Jürgen
The Director

LOCATION

Director's Office

JÜRGEN

At the heart of all this is a re-examination of 'the day before' as a model for understanding how to behave, activate and present. It tries to get to the point just before the only option was to play the tuba to the workers. The day before the Brass Band became the only option. The day before the mob became the workers; the day before the factory closed; the day before Hotel California was released — the idea of a bar in the middle of nowhere, with nothing to listen to and everyone waiting for the arrival of the 'soft' future.

THE DIRECTOR

Working situations have not changed; the idea is that YOU have to change. The idea of flexibility in the workplace is a way to encourage people to rationalise their own disappearance. We've had flexibility and now we are redundant yet we refuse to stop working.

Act 8

CAST

Frank
Alberto
Hartwig
Helene
Ada
Luc
Robert
The Director

LOCATION

Volvo Bar

FRANK

There isn't anything he wouldn't do for me.

ALBERTO

Or you for him.

FRANK

Or me for him. That's not true. He asked me to do something for him once and I didn't.

ALBERTO

Something you could have done?

FRANK

I could have tried.

ALBERTO

Why didn't you?

FRANK

Because I wasn't there.

ALBERTO

Did you save him?

FRANK

Yes. Yes, I did.

ALBERTO

And then?

FRANK

What do you mean?

ALBERTO

Didn't you ever test the limits?

FRANK

What are you trying to tell me? Jimmy!

HARTWIG

No. My name's Hartwig Palermo.

FRANK

Where'd he go?

ADA

Who?

FRANK

Doris.

ADA

Steve?

FRANK

Not Steve, Doris! Doris, he was sitting at that table a moment ago! He was there! Then he ... disappeared.

ADA

Whatever Frank's drinking, I'll have one.

ROBERT

Me, three.

LUC

I come over on boat with Doris. We worked at the Volvo factory together. Best car maker I ever saw.

FRANK

Right. He said he could build twenty-four cars a day!

LUC

Nobody can build twenty-four cars, Not even Doris. But he come close. Then the Volvo Factory blew up and Doris only car worker come out alive. After that, people look funny at him. It was a car fell on his back. Stoop him over.

FRANK

A car didn't stoop him, he had arthritis from testing open top cars in the rain.

LUC

How you know Doris?

FRANK

I met him here today!

LUC

Not Doris. He die In 1993.

FRANK

You created all this, didn't you.

ALBERTO

I built the bar if that's what you mean.

FRANK

This is more than just a bar.

ALBERTO

There is something special about this place.

FRANK

Dead men who save car workers and then vanish. Yeah, I'd say there was something about this place.

ALBERTO

Books are full of stories of the dead saving the living.

FRANK

So Doris was here?

ALBERTO

I remember him.

FRANK

Why don't they?

ALBERTO

That's the way it is.

FRANK

One moment he's one of them and the next, they have no memory of him and all you can say is 'that's the way it is'

ALBERTO

'That's the way it is' is sometimes the best explanation.

FRANK

Not for me.

ALBERTO

I'm not sure you're ready for more.

FRANK

Try me.

ALBERTO

Can you accept what you see as reality?

FRANK

Which reality do I accept? That one? Or this one?

ALBERTO

Haven't you accepted both looking into all those mirrors?

FRANK

It's the Director. I thought you'd never get here!

THE DIRECTOR

Where's here?

FRANK

It's called 'The Volvo Factory Bar.'

THE DIRECTOR

How about that. I always wanted my own bar. We have created the conditions for the experimental, but no actual experiments and vice-versa. Micro-communities of redundancy have joined together playing with the difference between art time and work time.

THE END.

Performers

Jenny Stokes

Born 1952, Lincolnshire, lives and works in Birmingham

Jenny trained at BSA and Birmingham Theatre School and has acted in many stage productions in recent years at MAC, Artrix, Old Rep Birmingham. Roles include Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*; *Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; Liz Morden in *Our Country's Good*; *The Vagina Monologues* at The Station Sutton Coldfield and the Henley on Thames Fringe Festival.

Melissa Kay Hurlbutt

Born 1986, Solihull, lives and works in Birmingham

Melissa has been working as a professional actor and interdisciplinary artist since 2007 and is particularly interested in experiential, durational and site-specific performance.

Alex Nikitas

Born 1967, Walsall, lives and works in Birmingham

Alex is an actor and storyteller who has been performing professionally since 1998. Credits include work for BBC TV, Radio 4 and the Belgrade. www.alexnikitas.info

Georgina Barney

Born 1985 Nottingham, lives and works in Newport

Georgina is an artist and writer studying for a practice-led PhD, 'Curating the Farm' with Gray's School of Art and Harper Adams University College.

Alex Kapila

Born 1974, Birmingham, lives and works in Stratford-upon-Avon

Alex Kapila has been involved in theatre as an actress, director and teacher for the last fifteen years and is the Artistic Director of Infinite Space Theatre.

Naomi Paul

Born 1960, London, lives and works in Birmingham

Naomi is a teacher, writer and performer. She has worked with Banner Theatre and Birmingham Opera Company as member of the community cast. She has recently completed an MA in Creative Writing and is currently writing and performing her own work.

Kate Hattley

Born 1985, Chester, lives and works in Birmingham

Kate is an artist and has recently graduated in Fine Art at the University of Westminster. www.katehattleyart.co.uk

Kerry Rousell

Born 1987, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Kerry is a conservatory trained actress and artist, who recently arrived back in the UK from New York. She plans to move to London next year.

Dore Robinson

Born 1992, Dudley

Dore is currently studying acting and dance.

Sarah Gordon

Born 1971, Stockport, lives and works in Birmingham

Sarah has performed a variety of roles, equally enjoying classical plays or new scripts by local playwrights ranging from a witch in *Macbeth* to a neurotic virgin in this year's premiere of *Lifelong Yearning* by David Wake. She is a

leading member of Kings Heath based Up'n'Running Theatre, but also performs with other companies including He's Spartacus and Worcester based Melting Pot Theatre.

Amanda Hadingue

Born 1964, Welwyn Garden City, lives and works in Brighton

Since graduating from Lancaster University in 1988, Amanda has worked as a performer with companies ranging from Station House Opera to the Royal Shakespeare Company. She is also a member of Birmingham based performance company Stan's Cafe.

Ian Flynn

Born 1973, Birmingham, lives and works in Solihull

Previous roles include Bryan Runnicles in *No Sex Please, We're British* with Shirley's Centre Stage, in *Live Bed Show* as Cash for Hall Green Little Theatre, and the Greek/Irish writer Lafcadio Hearn in Yakumo's *Kukedo* for the Illusion Stage Company, Matsue, Japan.

Katharine Kavanagh

Born 1981, Southampton, lives and works in Lye

Katharine trained at Dartington College of Arts and Birmingham School of Acting.

Alice Forrest

Born 1985, UK, lives and works in Warwick

Alice recently graduated from the Birmingham School of Acting. She previously graduated from the University of Leeds with a BA in English and Theatre Studies.

Antonio Roberts

Born 1985, Leicester, lives and works in Birmingham

Since graduating from Staffordshire University in 2004, Antonio has worked as a software artist and formed the Birmingham based hackerspace, fizzPOP. Previous performances include *The Tempest* with Somesuch Theatre Company and *Othello* with Birmingham Opera Company.

Robin Kirkham

Born 1986, Solihull, lives and works in Birmingham

Robin runs a publication called *An Endless Supply* and hopes to pursue a career in publishing. www.anendlessupply.wordpress.com

Gene–George Earle

Born 1988, Bloemfontein, South Africa, lives and works in Solihull

Gene is an artist recently graduated from Birmingham City University, Bournville.

Sarah Farmer

Born 1985, Northampton, lives and works in Birmingham

Sarah is a musician and artist. She has recently been involved in setting up a studio group called The Lombard Method. www.sarahmfarmer.co.uk.

Jo Masding

Born 1985, Birmingham, lives and works in Birmingham

Jo is an artist and has recently been involved in setting up a studio group called The Lombard Method. www.thelombardmethod.wordpress.com

Doug Fishbone

Born 1969, New York, USA, lives and works in London

Doug is a video and performance artist whose work has been exhibited extensively in Europe. Exhibitions include *The British Art Show 6* and *Laughing in a Foreign Language* at the Hayward Gallery.

Liam Gillick

Two Short Plays EP7

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A new artist's edition by Liam Gillick, *A "Volvo" Bar* (2009), has been produced to coincide with the exhibition in an edition of 20, A2 silk screen, available at £250 unframed.

An unlimited edition mug by Liam Gillick, *Syndicat* (2009) is available at £5.

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Credits:

Mirrored Image: A "Volvo" Bar

Stefan Kalmar/Kunstverein München

Lapdog of the Bourgeoisie

Tirdad Zolghadr and Nav Haq/Arnolfini, Bristol

Liam Gillick (born Aylesbury, 1964, lives and works in London and New York). Gillick was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2002, and represented Germany at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. His current 'retrospective exhibition' *Three Perspectives and a Short Scenario* is at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

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