

Dos (a Gesamtkunstwerk)

by

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{installation theater}

SCENE ONE.

Two doll-like fabric mannequins stand side by side on a small stage. Beside them, a table is set with an arrangement of fresh fruit and flowers like a still-life. Ambient sounds of people shopping in the background are heard.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(in German then English)

Thank you for shopping Kunstwerk designs. We will be closing in five minutes.

Projection on wall behind stage: A door opens just slightly. An arm reaches inside, feeling for the light switch on the wall.

WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

Goodnight, Volkmar.

MAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

Schönes Wochenende.

The stage lights go out except for two small spots illuminating the mannequins and the table. The sounds of the customers and employees die out, replaced by the low ambient hum of traffic on the city street, outside. The face of a woman appears, projected onto the blank fabric face of one of the mannequins. She blinks and becomes aware. Her eyes survey her surroundings. A man's face is projected onto the mannequin beside her. His eyes are still closed as he continues to sleep. The woman looks down, to look at herself. She gasps. The man's eyes pop open. He surveys the room around him with rapid, confused eyes.

BARBARA

Oh my god...

(The man freezes. They both stare straight ahead, taking in the view of the people outside the store, walking up and down the city street. Very slowly, with a limited range of facial mobility, they attempt to look at each other. They get a glimpse of one another and SCREAM.)

BARBARA
What are you?!

VINCENT
What do you mean "what?" I'm a who!

BARBARA
Who are you?

VINCENT
Who the hell are you?

BARBARA
I'm... Barbara.

VINCENT
What do you want from me?!

BARBARA
I want to wake up.

VINCENT
I'm the one dreaming here.

BARBARA
Look at yourself!

(Vincent looks down. His eyes widen. He begins to hyperventilate.)

BARBARA
Well?

VINCENT
This ain't me...

BARBARA
Where are we?

VINCENT
Vincent.

BARBARA
Where?

VINCENT

My name is Vincent.

BARBARA

What are you doing in my dream, Vincent?

VINCENT

This ain't your dream.

BARBARA

I am not going to argue with you, Vincent. It's obviously a very lucid and realistic...

(Vincent and Barbara notice people are watching them from the street.)

BARBARA

Dream.

MAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

(in German)

Wow, look at the puppets!

WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

(in German)

I think they're robots. How creepy.

VINCENT

Get out of here! What do you think this is?! She ain't your muppet, pal. Why don't you just move along... You putz.

BARBARA

Thank you, Vincent.

VINCENT

Forget about it.

BARBARA

You understand German?

VINCENT

Is that what they were speaking?

BARBARA

How did you know they called me a muppet?

(Vincent stares out into the street.)

BARBARA

I wish I could just pinch myself but I can't move my arms. I guess it's not that lucid of a dream...

(Vincent continues to stare out into the street.)

BARBARA

Vincent?

(Vincent's eyes begin to well up with tears. He breathes deeply then regains his composure.)

VINCENT

He called you a puppet not a muppet.

BARBARA

You said muppet.

VINCENT

Did I?

BARBARA

What's wrong?

VINCENT

I don't like muppets, Barbara.

(Barbara laughs.)

VINCENT

You think that's funny?!

BARBARA

No, I... What is it?

(Projection on the wall behind them: archival footage of San Francisco circa 1970's)

VINCENT

When I was eight years old my dad took off so my grandmother sent me to live with my aunt in San Francisco. She was the only mother I ever knew. We lived in the Fillmore. You know the city?

BARBARA

Not very well. I've been there on vacation a few times. It's beautiful.

VINCENT

Where you from, Barbara?

BARBARA

Boca Raton. I mean, I live there but I'm from Connecticut.

VINCENT

It must be a nice place.

BARBARA

For some.

VINCENT

You're a classy lady. Of course it's nice.

BARBARA

Your aunt wasn't very fond of the muppets.

(Projection of a rundown victorian house.)

VINCENT

She didn't care. It was her boyfriend. He's the one who got her into heroin, among other things.

BARBARA

I'm sorry.

(Vincent stares out into the street. Projection of the Muppet Movie.)

VINCENT

He'd come over every morning with a bag of Doritos, a cola slurpee, and a copy of the Muppet Movie on VHS. No one was taking me to school anymore. I'd sit in front of the TV. They'd go into her room and shoot up. The johns and junkies would start showing up so Bobby would keep rewinding the movie and giving me cash and tell me I was like Santa's elves, helping him run the factory so we could all have a good christmas.

BARBARA

Oh, Vincent...

(Projection of Kermit and Fozzie dancing onstage in a biker bar. The angry crowd begins to toss them around the room.)

VINCENT

Every day, every night, the same movie over and over, people coming in and out of the house like I wasn't even there. I'd recite every single line, sing every song, and pretended I didn't know what was happening, hoping they'd just leave us alone.

(Projection of Kermit the Frog in a swamp playing the banjo, singing without sound. Vincent sadly sings.)

VINCENT

Someday I'll find it, the rainbow connection...

BARBARA

The lovers, the dreamers...

VINCENT

(whispers)

and me.

MAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

(in German)

See, I told you! look at the puppets! Look!

BARBARA

He's not your goddamned muppet, you putz! Get out of here!

VINCENT

(laughs)

You learn that in Boca Raton?

BARBARA

This is a very strange dream, Vincent.

VINCENT

Maybe once it's morning here we'll wake up.

BARBARA

Maybe I don't want to wake up, Vincent.

VINCENT

What are you talking about?

(Projection of luxurious boats entering the waterway of Boca Raton)

BARBARA

I took a bunch of valium this evening.

VINCENT

Why?

BARBARA

(sighs)

I live in a golden cage surrounded by toxic neighbors. My husband is twenty years older than me and screws anything that's ten years younger than me, men included, as well as the help. I am fairly certain my cleaning lady's daughter ran over my Papillon yesterday, because David got her pregnant last year and still denies it. David's son from his first marriage is on cocaine again and robbed our house with his friends three days ago, taking what was left of my mother's jewelry and... I just found out that I am dying.

(Projection of an ambulance speeding through traffic.)

VINCENT

I'm sorry, Barbara.

BARBARA

(smiling)

Me too.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Mrs. Kretchman? Mrs. Kretchman, can you hear me?

(Projection of a hospital building. A doctor leans into view with a penlight.)

VINCENT

Maybe we're both dreaming.

I'd like that, Vincent.

BARBARA

Clear!

DOCTOR (IN PROJECTION)

(Barbara gasps. The projection of her face flickers on and off.)

Vincent-

BARBARA

(Barbara is gone. Her mannequin is blank once more. Ambient sounds of traffic can be heard on the street, outside. Vincent continues to gaze at the blank mannequin.)

...and me.

VINCENT

(sings)

(The projection of a face begins to flicker on the mannequin doll next to Vincent. He is a young man. His eyes are closed. Vincent watches him.)

MAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

(in German)

I told you! look at the puppets! Look!

VINCENT

Don't you have anything better to do?! Go home!

(The young man's eyes pop open. He looks all around with confusion. He slowly turns to see Vincent and SCREAMS.)

VINCENT

I know. It's-

HADRIAN

Who the hell are you?!

VINCENT
I'm Vincent.

(Hadrian looks down at his own doll's body and starts to hyperventilate.)

VINCENT
Come on, man, relax. You're not dead.

HADRIAN
Then why do I look like this?

VINCENT
I don't know.

HADRIAN
Is this the other side then?

VINCENT
Other side of what?

HADRIAN
Consciousness.

VINCENT
I think we're in a furniture store in Berlin.

HADRIAN
I don't believe you.

VINCENT
I'm pretty sure.

HADRIAN
And you're okay with that?

VINCENT
What am I supposed to do call the marines?

HADRIAN
Oh, that's just brilliant. My immortal **soul** has been sucked into some bloody vortex to the bundesrepublik, stuffed into a bratwurst, next to a disembodied head projected onto a storefront mannequin and now you want to condescend me?

VINCENT
What's your name?

HADRIAN
Hadrian.

VINCENT
You Irish?

HADRIAN
Oh my God.

VINCENT
I'm just pulling your chain, Hadrian.

HADRIAN
Like Marley's ghost?

VINCENT
See? There you go, that's funny.

HADRIAN
How did you get here, Vincent?

VINCENT
I fell asleep now I can't wake up. I think we're inside some kind of shared dream.

HADRIAN
That's impossible. I was at a dinner party.

VINCENT
Maybe you fell asleep at the dinner party.

HADRIAN
I wasn't sleeping, Vincent! This is the most important night of my life!

VINCENT
Well, what happened?

HADRIAN
I don't know!

(Projection of 30 St. Mary Axe - London at night .)

VINCENT

Start at the beginning. What do you remember?

(Hadrian stares out at the street in thought.)

HADRIAN

The firm was having a reception at Lord Lexdon's home for our investors. My boss gave me an invitation and told me to leave early. I was responsible for bringing the bonus checks for our top producing brokers.

VINCENT

You went to the party.

VINCENT

No, the lads at the office started giving me a hard time about it. My best mate Richard told them to piss off. He took me upstairs to 40/30 to the bar. He bought me a pint then I left.

(Projection of the 360-degree view of London from Searcys)

VINCENT

Were you tired?

HADRIAN

No.

VINCENT

Did you drink too much?

HADRIAN

Didn't even finish my pint.

VINCENT

The one Richard bought you.

HADRIAN

Right, then I left and...

(Projection of London traffic.)

VINCENT

And?

(Projection of a young boy walking up a country hillside.)

HADRIAN

I was driving. Next thing I know I'm walking up a hill, through a deserted wood. It was very strange, like I'd been there before, perhaps as a boy. I can't remember really.

(The boy passes behind a tree then emerges as a teenager on the other side.)

HADRIAN

Maybe I was older, but I know I'd seen the place before. The wood opened up to a field. I was still holding checks, at least I think I was.

(The teenage boy approaches a doorway, standing alone in the middle of the field. It is guarded by two Irish wolfhounds. They lick their lips.)

HADRIAN

I walked through the gate and... I was rather astonished. Lord Lexdon's a very conservative man and it was a bit of a circus really.

VINCENT

What do you mean?

(Men in clown suits turn cartwheels and handsprings alongside the teenage boy as he walks down the pathway. He reaches the doors of a well groomed country estate.)

VINCENT

I walked inside.

(Inside, people are dressed like a Venetian carnival: top hats, painted faces. They blow bubbles. Some dance and spin in circles. Others play musical instruments. Everyone watches the boy walk by.)

HADRIAN

I didn't recognize anyone but they all seemed to know who I was, like some sort of private joke I wasn't in on. People were drinking and smoking and dancing about. I figured I was in the wrong place, but at the same time, it all seemed so familiar. I kept looking for my boss, for the brokers and Lord Lexdon. They were nowhere to be found.

VINCENT

What did you do?

HADRIAN

It was getting late. I began to panic.

(The young man walks into a hallway then down a flight of stairs to an indoor pool. Two women in dresses sit at a table with two gentlemen. They lower their carnival masks.)

HADRIAN

Then I saw them on the other side of the pool: Mrs. Biggs, my manager, Mr. Cohen, Lady Lexdon, and her son, Thomas. They said, "You're late, lad, come on. Swim over." So I dove in.

VINCENT

You jumped in pool, in the middle of the party.

(The young man swims with all his might, clothes clinging to his body.)

HADRIAN

I had to. My job was on the line and I was so bloody late that... I had to fix it, Vincent. Mr. Biggs trusted me to bring the bonus money. It was my first big responsibility. Everyone at the office was hoping I'd fail. I couldn't mess it up. You understand? I'd worked my whole life for this.

(He continues to swim. The pool is now a lake.)

VINCENT

So you're swimming with a bag full of checks. Didn't they get ruined?

HADRIAN

I don't remember but I finally made it to the pier.

(Well dressed party-goers stand on a wooden dock, watching. One of the gentlemen reaches down and offers the young man his hand.)

VINCENT

I thought it was a pool.

HADRIAN

No... I climbed out. Everyone congratulated me, patting me on the back. I couldn't believe it, Vincent. Even Mr. Cohen's daughter said I'd broken the company's 100 meter freestyle record set by Lord Lexdon back in 1965.

VINCENT

What about the checks?

HADRIAN

I dropped them on the swim across.

(A well dressed man throws an arm around the young man's shoulders. He leads him back towards the estate.)

VINCENT

Oh, my God.

HADRIAN

Mr. Biggs said he'd fetch the pool man. I told him not to. After all, it was my responsibility. Record or no record, I'd dropped them, I'd go back in and find them. That's the kind of person I am, Vincent.

(The young man marches back to the edge of the pier, barefoot. He is soaking wet.)

VINCENT

Are you listening to yourself?

HADRIAN

My entire life was on the line!

VINCENT

You were drugged, man!

(Projection of the young man, fully clothed, standing at the top of a high diving platform. He stares down at the water of an indoor olympic pool.)

HADRIAN

I'd never been more sober in my life, Vincent, and I was not going to fail! I stood tall. I took a deep breath...

(The young man leaps into the air, twisting through a double summersault. He extends, straightens, just in time to break the surface of the water.)

VINCENT
Did you find the checks?

HADRIAN
No.

(A small cloud of blood rises from the man's nose as he
sounds into the depths.)

I kept sinking...

VINCENT
And?

HADRIAN
I saw you.

VINCENT
It sounds like your best friend slipped you a tab of acid.

(Projection of archival CPR footage. A man gives a boy
mouth to mouth beside a swimming pool. Gilbert
O'Sullivan's "Alone again... Naturally" plays in the
background.)

HADRIAN
That's impossible!

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Lift up the head and tilt it backward to its most extreme position.

VINCENT
You were so busy trying to get ahead that you didn't bother watching your back, man.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Pull the lower jaw forward. Keep the head tilted back. Pinch the nostrils together.

HADRIAN
Richard is my friend.

VINCENT
I've been there, Hadrian, believe me.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Open your mouth wide, inhale deeply and place your mouth tightly over the victim's mouth.

HADRIAN

But I-

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Blow into the the air passage until the victim's chest rises.

(Hadrian gasps for breath. His eyes widen. His mouth works like a fish.)

VINCENT

Hadrian!

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

If the stomach bulges, air is being diverted into the stomach. Press gently on the stomach.

VINCENT

Hadrian!

(Hadrian's face flickers on and off. He looks about in a panic. His eyes implore Vincent.)

HADRIAN

(choked whisper)

Vincent...

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Then readjust the head further back and try again.

(Hadrian is gone. His mannequin is blank once more. Ambient sounds of traffic can be heard on the street, outside. Vincent continues to gaze at the blank mannequin.)

GILBERT O'SULLIVAN (V.O.)

(sings)

It seems to me that there are more hearts broken in the world that can't be mended, left unattended. What do we do? What do we do?

Vincent sighs.

VINCENT

Good luck, man...

Outside, people the on the street watch Vincent.

VINCENT

What?! Get out of here! Just leave me alone...

Vincent stares out at them. Tears slowly roll roll down his cheeks.

GILBERT O'SULLIVAN (V.O.)

(sings)

Leaving me to doubt. Talk about God in his mercy who if he really does exist, why did he desert me? In my hour of need, I truly am indeed... Alone again, naturally.

Thunder rumbles. Lightning flashes. The sound of falling rain fills the air. Vincent looks over at the blank mannequin. The face of a young woman flickers on and off then stabilizes. Her eyes are closed. Vincent smiles.