

*Meaningless Work*

A Television Series Pilot  
Episode 1  
"The Opening"

By Hilde Lynn Helphenstein

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## CHARACTERS

LOLLY	An aspirational gallerist/gallery girl
FIFI	The most powerful art dealer in the world.
MARK WALBERG	The director of the gallery. He is the head of the gallery and personally handles the artist's career.
THE ARTIST	The blue chip artist in the exhibition, chemically unstable, hot on the market
BIRD	A debutante turned gallery assistant
WILL	An art handler and generally nice guy
JONATHAN	A gallery boy
HARRY	An art critic for the most important publications.



TEASER

FADE IN:

GALLERY MONTAGE: the mounting of an exhibition sped up x 100 followed by an opening with hundreds of people looking and pointing (in utter amazement) at the artwork. Classical music plays, the kind that makes you think of the heavens and human achievement...maybe even science for some reason.

LOLLY (V.O.)

The Art World. Walter De Maria once cited meaningless work as the most significant and important art form today. (Laughs to self) I know a few people who took that claim to heart.

GALLERY DOOR ROLLS SHUT AND LOCKS, SLAM!

LOLLY

Oh shit!

Lolly opens her eyes and throws the covers off of her. She's late for work and she's still drunk from the night before. There's a man in her bed who she doesn't recognize at first until she remembers that "grabbing a few drinks" the night before has now resulted in a bedfellow.

INT. LOLLY'S BEDROOM

A rambling but extremely neglected Harlem apartment where she lives alone. There's no functioning kitchen and a bunch of empty creepy rooms. She uses it as a project space in her spare time and sees no sense in turning it into a domestic space. Meet LOLLY (30) intelligent, awkward, irreverent, audacious, and naked. She looks around for a kimono, but settles for a dress on the floor.

LOLLY

What are you doing today, Jonathan?

LOLLY looks around for a towel and starts grabbing clothes that she'll wear that day. She feels awkward and wants Jonathan to go.

JONATHAN

I've got to finish writing the press release for the show. Griff wants me to send it out today but that's not going to happen. Artists are so fucking slow and then he freaks out on me like it's my fault.

Meet JONATHAN, (late 20's.) A "pretty boy" who may actually be the only honest piece of art in his boss' gallery. JONATHAN thinks it's cool to be a part of the art world, but probably doesn't actually care that much about art.

LOLLY

Oh?

JONATHAN

You know how that is. It's just annoying because I come into work everyday and Griff has something to bitch about. We aren't on social media enough, we haven't reached out personally enough to our clients, no one cares about the gallery, I don't do things fast enough, we take on too much...(rolls his eyes.)

LOLLY

No one cares about your gallery because Griff is a miserable dick. Who'd want to buy anything from that bag of dust?

JONATHAN

Ha. Right? And sometimes I just want to be like, "Bro, you pay me \$20 an hour. I have a fucking masters degree from Columbia. Give me a break..."

LOLLY

He's been doing this for too long. He's burnt out and he's in debt. His artists can't stand him and his socialite wife thinks he's a moron. I guess I get it.

JONATHAN

Yeah. Ha ha. Guess you're right. Anyway, how's work for you?

LOLLY

You know I signed that NDA. Can't talk about it. It's going great. (rolls eyes)

JONATHAN

Oh yeah. Sorry. Ok, well I'll see you tonight at the opening?

LOLLY

Yes...you will, but I'll be pretty busy, so don't take it personal if I can't talk.

LOLLY blows a kiss and gets into the shower. JONATHAN flashes an unsure smile and leaves.

FADE OUT

(A day at Rambo Gallery. It's the day of the opening. Lolly and Bird are working in the front and the director, Mark Walberg, is in his back office. Art handlers and the preparator are putting on the finishing touches. Deliveries are being made. Technically they aren't open, but sales are always on the top of the agenda. Lolly and Bird are half working, sitting up very straight at their desks. The guards are pacing around the gallery, avoiding eye contact.)

LOLLY

OMG, I am so tired. I can't be here right now. Why am I here? OMG I need to go on a cleanse and stop drinking during the week. (Groans and sighs)

BIRD

Ha ha ha, omg, me too! Luckily I didn't get too wasted last night. I was busy smooching all night with that art handler boy.

LOLLY

You love those art handler boys! You know Helen calls them her little dinner boys!?

BIRD

Hahahaha! What? Why?

LOLLY

Because they always bribe her with weed and dinner to hang out.

BIRD

They are all such little dinner boys with healthy d's.

(as if talking to herself)

It's never anything serious. None of them have gone to college, they all want to be artists but none of them do anything about it. They're just really fun to rage with and they're usually pretty down. I'd never be serious with one. My family would kill me. (moving on) Anyway, can you do me a favor?

LOLLY

What?

BIRD

Can you please go talk to that guard? He keeps looking at his phone and not paying attention. It's in our contract that the work has to be watched. Literally every time someone walks into the gallery, he goes to the bathroom or walks out of the room. I don't know what the fuck is wrong with him! His job is so easy. I can't talk to him about it anymore. It's literally pissing me off so much.

LOLLY

Ugh. Why me?!

BIRD

Because you're better at being a bitch.

LOLLY gets up and walks over to the guard who's watching a YouTube video on his phone. She often gets asked to do the "smacking." She hates it but she knows she's good at it.

LOLLY

Hi? Excuse me. Hi. So... when you're here I need you to put your phone away and pay attention to the gallery. And when people walk into the gallery, I need you to watch the artwork. Have you ever worked at a gallery or museum before?

GUARD

No ma'am.

LOLLY

Ok. So everything in this room, right, is expensive, like extremely expensive. Like so expensive that if anything were to happen to anything in this room, you would basically have to move to mars and start over. You know what I mean?

GUARD

I think so.

LOLLY

(flustered) I don't think you're getting the point. You see that over there?

Points to THE ART.

How much do you think that costs?

GUARD

I have no idea, ma'am.

LOLLY

She starts out politely but quickly gets more and more intense and finally, enraged.

That's 18 million dollars. Do you see how delicate it is? Can you imagine how quickly that could be destroyed? Think about it! Do you see it? Can you imagine what would happen if you were responsible for letting a piece of history be ruined? We would all be thrown out on our asses. That's more money and more history than you or anyone you'll ever know has! I don't know about you, but I fucking love my life...

(She begins to look off distantly and gets very quiet. She realizes she isn't making sense anymore. Looks up and says in a very serious way:)

I need you to wake up and do your job. Do you understand, sir!? Stand up straight and look alive! You need to watch the work. Use your eyes and watch!

GUARD

Yes ma'am I will.

LOLLY walks over and sits down with Bird who is bright red.

BIRD

(whispers) You are fucking amazing. I love you.

LOLLY

No I am not. I'm a bitch, remember?

BIRD

(whispers) Exactly.

Just then three Japanese business people (two men, and a woman) nervously walk into the gallery. Bird and Lolly look straight ahead silently and smile at each other sideways. They both greet the guests with a head nod as they walk past their desk.

At the same time, the guard walks up and begins staring at the works like they are a television set. He is putting his face inches to the work hunched and staring at it. He's not

watching the people and he clearly did not understand the instructions.

LOLLY

(whispers) Go talk to them.

BIRD

(whispers) Why? No...Everyone is pissing me off. I can't deal with people. I don't get it, they come in and stay forever. "Just go away if you're not going to buy something."

LOLLY

(whispers) Look at her Hermes bag. That's a \$75,000 ostrich Birkin bag.

BIRD

(whispers) What's that?

LOLLY

(whispers, but exasperated) That's the battle shield of the Upper East Side. Get up!

Lolly looks accusingly at Bird. Bird gets up and grabs a checklist and map of the exhibition.

BIRD

Hi. How are you all doing? Welcome to the gallery. My name is Bird. Have you been here before? (without waiting for an answer) Here's a checklist of the exhibition and little bit of text so that you can familiarize yourself. Let me know if you've got any questions.

As soon as the Japanese people walk into the gallery, the GUARD walks up to one of the sculptures and begins to watch it like a kid who is way too close to a television set. He's literally "watching" the artwork.

JAPANESE MAN

(in very broken English and pointing)How much for sculpture?

BIRD

Are you personally interested in buying the work?

JAPANESE MAN

(In very broken English)For my clients here. They are very interested.

BIRD

I see. Well I'm not at liberty to discuss the prices with you, we don't make those public, but I'm happy to get the director if you're really interested.  
(sizing him up)

Japanese man looks at his clients and speaks to them in Japanese. He relays the message in an anxious tone. The clients, also nervous, give him an affirmation.

JAPANESE MAN

(in very broken English)Yes, please, we would like to talk to the director.

Bird smiles and walks over to her desk where she makes a discreet and brief phone call.

Within seconds, the temperature in the room drops. Out walks a beautiful, strong shark of a man in a double-breasted suit. Meet the DIRECTOR, MARK WALBERG (46 years old.) He was born into the business so no one understands why he puts so much pressure on himself to sell. His parents were art collectors, he went to an East Coast boarding school, and studied business at Brown with a MINOR in art history. He got a master's degree from Sotheby's. He speaks French, German, and English with a long island lockjaw.

He looks at his watch and walks over.

JAPANESE MAN

(sweating and anxiously) For my clients here. They are interested in the sculpture. For how much are you selling it?

THE DIRECTOR

The director looks irritated and busy.  
Tell me more about their collection.

JAPANESE MAN

(sweating and anxiously) They have many Basquiat. They have the Warhols too.

MARK

Here's my card. You can email me about it. You probably can't have this one. It's on hold for someone else, but I may have something else for you.

He shakes their hands icily. Without looking at the girls, the director walks back to his office. The Japanese people turn to each other smiling and speaking in excited Japanese. They look assured that they had a positive experience. They turn to leave the gallery, bowing at Lolly and Bird who are smiling and waving goodbye to them.

BIRD

Do you see what that guard is doing? He seriously doesn't get it does he? It was like he was a kid getting too close to a television set. He was literally "watching" the work!

LOLLY

I'm not doing that again. Just call the agency and have him replaced. They can send someone new tomorrow.

BIRD

I'm starving. What do you want for lunch?

LOLLY

I have an avocado in my bag. I'm back on my diet only this time I've cut out all dairy too. So now it's no carbs, no gluten, no sugar, and fuck, no cheese! I hate my life.

BIRD

Lolly, seriously what do you eat?

LOLLY

I eat! I just try not to waste too many calories on food. If I'm going to have extra calories, I'll drink them.

BIRD

Stop it right now.

LOLLY

What?

(Phone rings and Lolly answers on the first ring in an overly cheerful voice, "Gallery Rambo." She quickly transfers the call.)

LOLLY

It's her.

BIRD

Who?

LOLLY

The long nosed monster.

BIRD

Omg, I'm so glad you answered on the first ring. Did she sound mad?

LOLLY

Not more than usual...But you know why she wants to talk to Mark. We haven't sold everything yet ...She's

so impatient. That's like the third time she's called today. We haven't even opened the show!

In the background you can hear the director anxious and apologetically talking. Volumes fluctuate.

BIRD

Poor bastard. Well, that's not his fault. You can't put a gun to these people's heads.

Just then a group of people with museum stickers walk in. Bird and Lolly determine quickly that these people cannot be in the gallery because they are closed for installation. They send them out with just a wave and "soooooorrrry."

BIRD

We need to do a little prep before Fifi comes in today. Her assistant called ahead. Helen says to make sure her suite at the Four Seasons is set up for her. She wants her diet coke in the tall glasses from now on. Fill the glass to the top with the big cubes. Set out two trifold napkins on the tray. Black for her dress. Also, they'll need to have her sushi order there for her at 2pm. Get her usual order: two tuna, one seaweed salad, and a small bowl of brown rice. Also, did we figure out her car situation? She refuses to walk.

LOLLY

It's like three minutes away from the gallery.

BIRD

I know. I told Helen, but she said that Fifi might be mistaken for a pharmaceutical sales rep if she has to roll her own luggage down the street.

LOLLY

Ha! OMG. You're telling me this like I don't already know Madame Fifi. God, she's my spirit animal.

BIRD

I'm just really afraid to piss her off. She fired Quinn for coming to work with a canvas tote bag on the last opening.

LOLLY

Yeah, well if I had to trust someone with a couple million bucks, she better look like she thought about shit before she rolled out of bed.

BIRD

I guess you're right, it was a Frieze VIP tote bag though.

LOLLY

Bird, you sound provincial. You need to think like they do. It's all money all the time. You've gotta look and act the part all the time.

BIRD

(Bird blushes) I should have accepted at Yale this semester.

LOLLY

Stop it, Birdie. You're doing great. I tell you all the time. You just need to stop acting like a deer in the headlights.

BIRD

I'm not coming across weak am I?

LOLLY

No, but honestly, you need to be stronger when you're in the gallery. Don't show these people your feelings, even if they scream or threaten. People can smell weakness and it's a bad look. You're lucky I'm the only one who knows you cry in the bathroom.

BIRD

Ugh. These people...You know EVERYONE calls her a major "b" behind her back?

Lolly

So what? She's not making policeman's wages anymore. She runs the biggest gallery in the world. She works with all the major artists. She's self-made. I'm tired of people insinuating she isn't amazing. Look what she's done in her life. She's driving the art market and wearing Marni. Jesus...

BIRD

You'll totally be her someday.

LOLLY

Don't flatter me.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

A few hours before the opening.

DIRECTOR

The director walks out and the girls instantly fall silent and look busy.

How's it going up here? We've got a few more hours before the opening. Is everything ready?

The girls look up at him smiling and batting their lashes. Everyone agrees Mark Walberg is hot, even if he's a total asshole.

Remember I don't want you talking prices to anyone tonight. If someone is seriously interested you can send them to me, but as far as you know everything is on hold. Also, Bird, stay away from the artist tonight. He's got his eye on you and I can't babysit. You know what I'm talking about. Make sure there's enough press releases printed. The bartenders will be here soon? Lolly, handle that. We are expecting a few high profile guests this evening. Make sure you study the faces document and I want you to know spouses too. You understand why it's important right?

Gives the girls a patronizing and searching look.

Are dinner reservations on lock? Make sure you help guide the guests to their seats, but don't make it obvious where I want them to sit. I want the artist center left two seats away from me. Fifi is at the head of the table obviously, and I'll be at the other end. You two need to sit down at the end with the poet and the tech guy. It's your job to talk to them. LOLLY, let me know if the artist starts getting wasted and keep him away from anyone who takes up too much of his time. Discretion is my obsession tonight and he needs all the help he can get.

As if feeling in control and a bit more relaxed, Mark backs away from the front desk.

Ok, I'll be unavailable for the next couple of hours and will not respond to emails, texts, or calls UNLESS it's about sales in which case I can be available.

The director walks back to his office and let's the door slam. The girls look at each other tensely and then Bird mouths to Lolly "kill yourself" and they both start laughing silently covering their mouths.

INTRO to MARK's office. All of the furnishings are austere and Modern. He's got a rotating exhibition of his own in the office. He pulls out whatever he thinks he can torture his clients with and then sell to them at the last minute.

#### THE ARTIST

I feel like I can't breathe. I hate this time of the day. I don't want to be here. Ugh. How many RSVPs do we have? Is it tacky that I'm here so early? Maybe I should just go for a drink? I need to unwind. Are you listening to me? I should take a walk.

#### MARK

(Phone buzzes) Looks at phone and up at THE ARTIST.

Huh? Sorry.

THE ARTIST

Nothing. Nothing. Are you sure we should have put the sculpture there? It feels like its a bit intrusive when you first walk in. I kind of feel like we should hold that back in the space until you go a little further.

MARK

It doesn't matter. It's already on hold. Besides it's your most identifiable work and should I mention it opens in 15 minutes? We've been over this a thousand times. I already sent the art handlers home and I'm done. Why do you always get like this before openings?

THE ARTIST

Sorry. I should have taken a Xanax before the opening. I need to take the edge off.

MARK

We have a bottle of Japanese whiskey from the last opening. I was waiting for a special occasion but if it'll get you to chill, lets crack it open.

THE ARTIST

I love you.

Meet the artist. He's mid career but was picked up by Fifi from a middle market gallery last year. Some people say she "stole him" away. His work is shit and the jig is mostly up, only now people have bought so much of his work, no one can admit he isn't the next Julian Schnabel. His high profile and exposure pretty much keeps him floating. He's a drunk, a drug addict and extremely paranoid of the art world.

MARK

Listen, Nathalie is coming. Don't let me see you talking to her. She's not buying the work and if that means I have to buy it myself she can't have it. The idiot gallery assistant gave her my cell phone number and she's been hitting me up all week.

THE ARTIST

Why do you hate her so much?

MARK

Because she is spoiled and she thinks just because she's got a few of choice pieces in her collection that she can have whatever she wants. Last time I sold her something it ended up at auction six months later and fucked it up for Jamie. She's not going to do that to us. She has to wait.

THE ARTIST

Yeah, I mean, I heard what she did. Where does she have all that money anyway?

MARK

Pfffff... Her daddy owns a bunch of Subways in like Miami. I guess it helped that she bought up Jamie's work before '08. She forced her to chop the works up into even smaller pieces so that she could sell them. Fucking cunt. I think she bought them for like \$150 bucks each. Jamie was on food stamps in those days and would settle for pretty much anything.

THE ARTIST

Yeah, I heard the Rubinovs won't touch her work because of Nathalie.

MARK

Like I said, don't let me see you talking to her.

FIFI

The doors burst open and yet it is silent. Confidence, control, precision, and an air of electricity overtake the aura of the room. In comes FIFI, (57) an elegant and ageless woman adorned in head to toe in Marni \*with a beautiful Prada bag. LOLLY and BIRD are sitting up extremely straight. MARK knows it's her and he comes out to greet her.

MARK scurries over to Fifi like a little roach. FIFI walks directly up to a sculpture in the front of the gallery.

Didn't I tell you I have this on hold for my client?

MARK

Yes.

FIFI

Then what, may I ask, is it doing in the beginning of the exhibition?

MARK

I just thought this is THE ARTIST's most identifiable work in the show. People would want to see it first.

FIFI

Have you ever sold a piece of artwork in your life?

MARK

Sorry.

FIFI

Mark...

Like a disappointed parent this is all FIFI has to say.

MARK

Sorry, Fifi. What do you want me to do?

FIFI

If I have to tell you, then you might as well just go (looks at her watch).

MARK

Sure. I've got a better place for it. You're right, Fifi. Totally.

FIFI walks away with a bored and slightly irritated look on her face. Mark gets on his phone and calls the head art handler.

We've got a problem.

Will, the main art handler, walks in. He's quiet but strong. Some people in the gallery talk shit about him

being too nice, when he is actually the only person who consistently refers to an index of professional behavior.

WILL

Hey man! What's up? Something wrong?

MARK

This has to be moved right now to that other spot in front of the works on paper.

WILL

What? Right now? We open in five. That means I've gotta call Brandon and Jazz back in here. They already went to get drinks.

MARK

Move the fucking sculpture. Don't argue.

WILL

I'm sorry. I'm not arguing with you. It's just that in order to anchor correctly we'll need at least an hour.

MARK

MARK is completely panicked, he's made Fifi angry in the past and he's got too much to lose. He smooths out his suit and focuses.

When you talk like that you disappoint me. You can do it. I've seen you do it before. Get the boys and just do it. Trust me. It's fine. I'll keep the doors locked. C'mon.

WILL

Calmly pulls out a tool from his back pocket and picks up his phone to call the other art handlers (He's used to this). Walks to the back to sort it out. Just that instant someone pulls on the locked door to come in.

MARK

Harry! Hey! Long time no see!

Gives him a warm and generous smile.  
Shakes his hand. C'mon in.

HARRY

The show looks great, MARK.

Takes out his point and shoot and snaps  
a picture of the gallery.

MARK

Thanks, thanks. Yeah, we're really happy to be  
showing THE ARTIST's work again. We're lucky to get  
the work. After Basel Unlimited this year, it's hard  
to pin him down. He's here. Hold on.

Just then THE ARTIST comes out with a  
glass of whiskey in his hand. He's  
tipsy and confident. Smiling.

MARK

Look who's here!

HARRY

I can't stay long. I'm double parked in the street  
and Robert is in the car.

MARK

He's not coming in?

HARRY

Nah. We've been on a trip all day. Had a little round  
up, but I promised this guy I'd see his show so here  
I am. To MARK: Get out of my way and let me have a  
look. I'll try to get something in the paper for you  
this week...

MARK

You gonna post something nice on Instagram this time?

HARRY

People love my Instagram. Can't change it, man.

THE ARTIST

Let me walk you through the show.

HARRY

If you want to. I've been to all your shows. Is this new?

THE ARTIST

Funny you ask. I wouldn't say it's completely new, but it's definitely an extension of previous work. I'm back with naive concepts only this time my perimeter was to work with materials that are closer to eternal. It's all about universal principles, but I don't know quite which ones.

HARRY

What do you mean by that?

THE ARTIST

It all started with "Revery." Remember that work out in desert? Twenty bucks worth of paint from Ace Hardware transformed into a cosmic offering.

HARRY

Sure, sure. Who bought that anyway?

THE ARTIST

Some dumb fuck Wall Street guy. They're not allowed to buy my work anymore. Anyway, the significance of that work was to give the future an empty, yet poetic gesture. Something that would be without any context. The prism is designed to be forgotten and rediscovered in the future. That's why there isn't a map to the work and it's only been photographed once. You know we had to blindfold the photographer and the collector who bought it?

HARRY

So they can't ever visit it? Not even the collector? Somehow I missed that? Anyway, what's that got to do with this?

THE ARTIST

I was interested in translating the enigmatic poem into a flat object for the gallery. The opportunity enabled me to produce flat images, which could also

be absent. I loved that if you don't project onto an image, it's simply not there. I am often much more comfortable with the memory of something than with the actual presence of it.

HARRY

(Laughs) Exploring the aesthetic possibilities of emptiness and displacement with ego. You're a funny guy.

THE ARTIST

Zoe has come in and written some pretty excellent poetry during the install. Her poems are usually nihilistic but she said that something about this show has her on fire!

HARRY

Can you have her email them to me?

THE ARTIST

For sure, for sure.

HARRY

What are you working on next?

THE ARTIST

Can't talk about it.

HARRY

What's the matter? Fifi got your tongue?

THE ARTIST

No, not really. Just that we're working on something that'll tie this all together. I'm going gusamtkunstwerk-style. You'll see it at Basel.

HARRY

I don't travel to fairs anymore. (Reaches out his hand and shakes with THE ARTIST and head for the door.) Why would I? New York is the entire art world. See you guys later. Good luck with the opening, good luck with FiFi. (winks)

Now that all works are pretty much in place it's time to set the prices for the show. Fifi keeps figures and stats from auction houses and other galleries internally and she also has lists of prices in her head. She names the price and they pay.

FIFI

MARK, walk through now.

THE ARTIST

I'm gonna get some air.

THE ARTIST knows its time to go.

MARK

Let's do this clockwise. (Calls gallery assistants BIRD and LOLLY over with his eyes) Walk through!

Lolly runs in with an iPad to note down everything they say. BIRD has a notepad for cross-reference. FIFI says it once.

FIFI

This is 270k. This is 500K. No, it's 650K but you can discount to my people. This is 780K.

MARK

Wait, hold on. This one can't be 980K. The last one was 850K.

FIFI

It's on hold already and it's 980.

If someone wants to know what it sold for you can say whatever you want, but I'm telling you that its going for 780.

MARK

(Looks at Gallery Assistant) If anyone asks the prices what are you going to say?

BIRD

"I believe it's on hold. I can speak to the director?"(shrugs and smiles)

FIFI

No one gets a price for this one. You've got to talk to me.

MARK

What about that one?

FIFI

Same. This one is 1.

MARK

Why?

FIFI

The Rubinovs want this one.

MARK

Didn't you buy one of these too?

FIFI

What does that have to do with this show? (pauses)  
Looks at her watch. Unlock the door. I'll be back in 45. Answer your phone if I call. (starts to walk away and then turns and looks at MARK) What did HARRY say? I hate that fucking guy's Instagram.

MARK

THE ARTIST walked him through. Loves the show. Gonna put something in the paper. I asked him to play nice.

Fifi snorts and walks away. Bird unlocks the doors for the opening and smiles at Fifi as she walks out.

MARK

Don't give up the goose tonight, Birdy. By the way, I like your dress. You look great.

BIRD

Thank you! It's Acne. Hey, are we allowed to go to the after party tonight?

MARK

Yeah, you can come but no interns. THE ARTIST can act like a monkey. His wife will fucking shoot me if she finds out. That guy (rolls his eyes) needs to hold it together. She is the one that is going to float him if the art thing goes bust.

BIRD

Of course.

MARK

Alright, I'm going to my office. Text me who arrives as they get here. I want your eyes on the door. Tell the art handlers they can come to the opening but they've got to change their clothes. I can't take them serious in all that black denim.

BIRD

But they'll have to go over the bridge to get home.

MARK

Not my problem... (walks out of the main gallery and into the office.)

(Yells back) Get that faces document open. I want first and last names.

LOLLY opens the doors and people begin to trickle into the gallery. Everyone is dressed well and no one looks like an artist. The guests of the gallery give off monied vibes, not necessarily intellectual. They are all beautiful in a removed from reality type of way. The girls are focused and serious, but look like Scandinavian cupcakes. The director looks like a knight ready for battle and the artist looks like a sad clown.

THE GALLERY OPENING begins. As all openings go, this one is a blur and full of all the awkwardness and excitement one

can imagine. There's people there to look at art and there's people there to be looked at. The camera zigs and zags through the crowds picking up on bits and pieces of conversations and moments. Society photographers are there taking highly composed "candid" shots.

From person

Get together. Smile!

to person:

Hey you two, this is the artist I was talking about. You may remember him from Frieze Frame last year. I believe we were all at the party in the Botanical Garden.

to person:

Ahhhhhhhhh, yes. How do you do?

to person:

His work is garbage. Honestly, when are people going to realize it?

to person:

Me TOO! I just LOVE salad for lunch!

to person:

The ambiance is dated, but I love the catalogue.

to person:

We all got our MFA's at SAIC. Thank god I never have to sit through one of those critiques again.

to person:

She's way too young for that much success.

to person:

And so I told him, "I've got a whole life and you're just a small part of it."

to person:

I swear all this shit looks the same.

to person:

What are YOU doing these days?

to person:

I hear when people are in crisis they build boxes.

to person:

Can you tell I spilled red wine on this?

to person:

I convinced my parents to buy one of these at his last show.

Really? Where did they put it?!

In the kitchen.

That's sick.

to person:

I am hoping Pascal will offer me a show before December. I don't want to do it after Basel. Everyone is shriveled up from the cold and broke from the fair.

to person:

No, my studio is in Brooklyn. Like I can afford the LES anymore!

to person:

I don't get it. Am I missing something?

Shhhh don't be rude. It's contemporary art.

But it doesn't make any...

Shhhhhhh!

to person:

My dealer says to keep going with it. I'm a little bored painting like that, but we decided on it for NADA.

to person:

There's so much Santal 33 in this gallery I can hardly breathe.

to person:

I love the concept.

You do?

to person:

I love seamless walls. I was just talking about how I wanted to do a show with seamless walls.

No I think the whole point is that they are using the space to create a photographic space.

Are you fucking with me?

No.

Oh never mind this show is whack.

to person:

I saw his first show in Bushwick.

to person:

The white wine is cheap. Smell it.

to person:

I think these are all found materials. Very industrial.

to person:

Do you think it is possible for a model to truly be a good artist?

Maybe an older model.

to person:

OMG. I saw him on Tinder today. He looks nothing like that in his pics.

to person:

I have a few in the back that I can show you, but most of them are on hold.

to person:

Is this work interactive? (reaches to touch it)

Don't touch it!

to person:

Now that Aaron is a blue chip artist, he only dates heiresses or millionaires, he doesn't dip below anymore.

to person:

What is everyone doing after this?

to person:

Are you going to Ethan's opening?

to person:

This work does not translate well on Instagram.

to person:

I'm so sick of New American cuisine.

to person:

I'm ALL about the liminal.

to person:

Alexis, this Tove. She and I studied together in Sweden and it just so turns out she's showing at Michelle's new space. Alexis writes for Art Forum and occasionally Art Practical. (Turns to Alexis) You'd love her work!

to person:

I think I understand what they are trying to go for, but honestly I've seen dirty and dirty clean so many times that at this point I'm not even sure what makes for dirt, you know? Like sometimes I just want to see REAL DIRT but you're just not gonna get it in a gallery setting.

to person:

There's no place for an artist in these galleries.

LOLLY is seen in an empty gallery after the opening looking around at all the empty glasses, setting the alarm, flicking the lights, and pulling down the gate.

It's the after, after party for the THE ARTIST'S opening. Everyone is at Amir's UWS penthouse. This house and a blue chip gallery are indistinguishable with the exception of lavish furniture and city views. MARK usually doesn't allow his staff at these things but LOLLY has pestered him about it all week. Now they're all at the after party. Meet Amir, the handsome collector with vast sums of family money. He likes to be known as the "guy." He's always got drugs, a connection, a party, an "in." He's a little sleazy, but people like him because he's always got drugs and buys art. Welcome to the third floor bathroom of his house!

MARK

Hey, hey, hey, I heard you have a bag. Let's just do this ok?! This is what we are going to do. We are going to bring THE ARTIST in here and we are all going to do this bag. Then you're going to call your guy and he's going to bring us more.

AMIR

Wait. How much? My guy just left?

MARK

(exasperated)

Just tell him to bring as much as \$2,000 will buy. Ok? And if you need more money we can get more. Just get it and get it as fast as possible.

(Hands Amir \$40 crumbled up dollars.)  
AMIR looks at him like "where's the rest of the money," but really wants MARK and THE ARTIST to like him so he just accepts the limited cash and cuts the lines. (They're smallish.)

THE ARTIST

(Stumbles into the bathroom holding onto the furniture until he reaches the bidet.)

I thought you said there was going to be some fucking cocaine in here? That's not enough. That's barely a line. What the fuck? MARK, you told me there would be coke.

(Plops himself onto the bidet and looks as if he might fall apart. MARK crouches next him and puts his hand on THE ARTIST's knee.)

THE ARTIST

She fucking hated it. I know she fucking hated it. Fifi is going to ruin me. Watch! My shit will be at auction by the fall.

AMIR

Listen, listen. It's ok. We are going to just do this little bit now and more is almost here. We are going to have fun tonight. Everyone is going to have fun.

(AMIR gets on his phone to work it out and walks out of the bathroom.)

MARK

(Talking to THE ARTIST)

No, she didn't, man. She hated what I did. It's not your fault. I'm the goddamn director. I told you to put those works in the show. She isn't mad at you. She's mad at me. I let those fucking reporters photograph the show. Those pictures with the works we took out are going to be all over the Internet by tomorrow. I'll be toast depending on what I can sell this weekend. If anyone is going to get it in the morning, it's going to be me. (says unconvincingly) Don't worry.

THE ARTIST

Fuck man. You know I've got three fucking kids and my wife. You said I'd be getting a solo in the winter and then she comes and sees this. She took out two of my works and ignored me during the opening. She didn't even introduce me to Tishman's at dinner.

She's holding back the love. She's going to hold back the good collectors and fucking ruin me.

MARK

No man. It's fine. She loves you, man. We are your people at Rambo. We won't let shit happen to you. Trust me. I know what Fifi loves and I know she is not done with you. Just make a new body of work that she likes better and you'll be fine. Do a studio visit, take her out to lunch and you're golden. Then I'll sell a few pieces and bam. You're back in. She won't even care about tonight. Here. Do a line, man. We are going to get more coke in a minute. Our man has a great connection.

THE ARTIST

(THE ARTIST leans down to do the line and shoots his head back to make sure none of the white powder is wasted. He turns his head and looks at LOLLY.)

Hey. You've got a pretty face.

LOLLY

Hey boys. Don't mind me. I'm going to take jussssssst a little and get out of your way.

(Does a decent amount and turns to walk out of the bathroom.)

THE ARTIST

Hey. You've got a pretty face.

(Puts his face very close to her face and breathes in her perfume.)

LOLLY

(Laughs nervously)

Why, thank you. Congrats on the show. Came together nicely.

THE ARTIST

Yeah. Yeah. Real pretty face. Wanna go in the closet real quick and fuck?

LOLLY

(Roars with laughter)

What? You're funny!

THE ARTIST

(Belligerently)

So you want to? Come on, it's just right there.

LOLLY

(Continues to laugh)

MARK

What is she saying to you, THE ARTIST? Hey, what are you saying to THE ARTIST? Don't listen to her. She's nobody. She's the gallery assistant.

LOLLY

(Looks over at MARK and continues to giggle)

MARK

Who do you think you are exactly? No. I want to know what a nobody like you is doing here laughing at THE ARTIST. You're a gallery assistant.

LOLLY

MARK, are you serious? Chill out. I didn't say anything to him, ok?

MARK

(MARK's aggressive stare begins to soften as he too realizes that LOLLY has a pretty face.)

I told you I didn't want any drama tonight with this one. We've had a rough 24.

LOLLY

(Staring straight into MARK's eyes dutifully.)

I'm sorry. I know.

MARK

(In a docile manner)

THE ARTIST's right though. You've really got a beautiful face. No, no, I'm not kidding. You're like, *so beautiful*.

MARK

(MARK's demeanor begins to change. It's like he's switching personalities. He looks really confused)

LOLLY

(smiles in a confused way)

MARK

Sometimes I think I'm in love with you. It's crazy. When you stare at me, it's like you've got some crazy power over me.

LOLLY

Huh?

It's kind of freaking me out. It's like you can control me. Stop looking at me. Stop. Stop! You know what you are doing..

LOLLY

(Laughs but holds his gaze)

Whoa! Ok I'm not sure what's going on. You've had a really long day and you just need to calm down. Have another drink. I'm not doing anything to you and you don't love me. So stop it.

MARK

No, no, I think I do love you and you are some kind of a witch. Just get away from me. Stop looking at me! Just get the fuck away from me.

LOLLY

(Amused, but turns to leave)

As you wish...I really hope you don't remember saying all this tomorrow.

MARK

(Grabs her arm)

No. Wait. No. I'm just kidding. Stay here and talk to me for a while. I've just had a really hard couple of days. Please don't leave me. Talk to me. You're so beautiful. I was just kidding when I called you a witch. I love you and I'd never ever mean to call you something like that. Just sit down. We have more coke coming. Let's talk more.

LOLLY

(Sadistically amused)

You love me, huh? Mark, honestly! We've barely ever had a conversation outside of the gallery. You don't love me. Ha ha ha.

MARK

(Looking wounded)

You're mocking me. Stop, don't do that. I just want you to sit here and be nice to me. Tonight is going to be so much fun. There's more coke on the way. You're so beautiful. Tell me where you're going on your vacation. What are you working on? Just tell me more about Lolly.

LOLLY

Listen, I really like you and respect you, MARK, but you're freaking me out. Your wife would kill me, and then start in on you, and you know Fifi would finish.

MARK

I'm a mess. I'm sorry I admit it. I'm a mess. I've gotta sell the show. Fifi is fucking relentless. She's getting tired of me. My wife is tired of me. I'm tired of me. I'm fucking exhausted.

(Nudges THE ARTIST out of a drug induced lull)

THE ARTIST

(Snaps out of it with a jolt and sets his eyes on LOLLY)

Look at her. Look at her face. Isn't she pretty? This one is trouble, huh MARK?! Are you an artist too, baby?

MARK

I know what would make things better! Let's go to a strip club. You want to do that? This party sucks.

THE ARTIST

This bitch right here with the pretty face? She's gotta come with us.

(LOLLY rolls her eyes and turns to leave.)

I'm joking, I'm joking. You're not a bitch, OK? I can tell. MARK is definitely always getting the best girls on his team. Treat him right and get him what he wants. He always takes care of me. He put my work in the show. He has gotten me into all the good collections. He brought me here, Ok?

LOLLY

I have to clean up the gallery and have it open for Fifi by 11. I can't go to a strip club with you two.

MARK

Just have the interns do it. They can come early.

LOLLY

It's already 3am and I'm drunk. This isn't a good idea.

THE ARTIST

But it would make me feel so much better after a bad opening if we went to a strip club. Don't you want to make us happy? We worked so hard.

LOLLY gets visibly uncomfortable and crosses her arms and glares back at THE ARTIST who's obviously wasted.

MARK

Fuck it, LOLLY. Let's go. You'll be fine. We all work better with hangovers.

LOLLY

I'm not going to a strip club with you two right now. The only one open is in the ghetto. I'm not doing that and since when are you two such fucking pigs? You're both married! And Mark, you represent major feminist artists!

MARK

If you ever make a sale, you'll get it. This is just a treat for all our hard work. Trust me. If we can't play then it's not worth it.

THE ARTIST comes to again for a moment and almost looks sober.

THE ARTIST

We're fucked, MARK. Fucked.

MARK

I am. Not you. Can we just drop it? Where's the coke? LOLLY, you said you wanted some right?

THE ARTIST

(Thinking he's being sneaky, THE ARTIST grabs a healthy portion of LOLLY's rear and mouth's, "Let's go to the closet," over and over.

Lolly looks down at his hand and over at MARK who is staring intently at her.

She swats THE ARTIST's hand away and  
smiles like the Cheshire cat at MARK.

FADE OUT.