

## Speech Model from 'The Flies'

We were working from two principles at a time -- one scenographic and the other, sculptural and by extension visceral, and wanted to find a theatrical text which could foreground a discussion about the ambiguity and conspicuity of objects. Jean Paul Sartre's „The Flies“, an existentialized Oresteia, was of interest because so much of existentialism's life world constructs itself through objects. In Sartre's version of existentialism, bouts of alienation are always preceded by confrontations with objects. The existentialist hero is always watching the qualities of everyday objects dissolve from view, leaving only a density called existence. The real is contingent on the fade-out of qualities, and there are no disputes about the real at the level of qualities. Ironically then, the existentialist disambiguates the qualities of things perceived other than at moments of epiphanic breakdowns of existential alienation. Let's call them original qualities. The destabilization of the certainty of properties is existential (the exist or they don't exist), and has nothing to do with questions about the original properties themselves. The true or false nature of it is interestingly connected to analytic philosophy. So what is the existentialist prop?

In the Flies, they are not everyday but degraded. This is to be expected, but why? Defining the real as that without qualities is necessarily degraded. But it is unclear to me why this translates into abject things in the world. The props also verge on the spectacular: bloody walls, Statue of Zeus with Bloody cheeks etc. The extravagance of the props also interested us. We had this list of things, and we asked ourselves „What kind of qualities should a Zeus statue have, or what kind of qualities should bloody walls have? I never work this way, and it was something I was really curious about in the project, this zero degree of creation.

We went through the text and generated a sort of prop/object/setting list but it quickly became obvious that we were interested in a disobedience to the needs of the play. We excluded ourselves from any representational logic in making the objects that would become Speech Model...we chose simply to indulge sculptural and visual desires, and also the language through which theater and sculpture might speak. The focus has been to foreground idiosyncrasies and ambiguities between types of objects, repetitions of these types, reiterations of motifs within the installation, suggestion, intonation (as in the hysteria or baseness of some of the motifs and gestures which run through the piece). ALL THIS as a way to imitate the function of speech and its search for recognition given that we had totally muted any representational ties to the play. In the end we focused more on the suggestiveness of the objects, and were happy to leave them poised there, suggesting something, in a sense modeling several conversations, never arriving really at anything declamatory. Never becoming the setting for Jean Paul Sartre's existentialist tragedy, „The Flies“. The stage was considered, but ultimately not set.

The resulting installation gestures toward some other, larger theatrical construction. Through various sculptural articulations, it seems to be longing for some kind of action, some kind of performance. The longing is at times loose -- the staircase which could be used for a puppet show, a gumdrop of yellow muck that's scenic. The curtains, Seconal curtains because of their ability to knock out light, are provisional, uneventful objects that generate an alienating association, „Close the curtains, block out the light, just let me sleep.“ There is a fundamental ambiguity both in the materials themselves -- sometimes poor and loose, and at other times aspiring toward a kind of mastery.

## Fruits of Crime

This idea is extended into the second room. „Fruits of Crime“ consists of three elements placed against the wall; an anonymous theatre company's production of Sartre's „The Flies“, and two standing constructions one of wood, the other of plastic and light. The two constructions make a motif out of a cover design by Paul Bacon for „Logical Positivism“, an anthology of Logical positivism edited by A.J Ayer. Of poor quality, the video tape has been edited to bluntly eviscerate everything but the gestural epiphanies of the actors. Sartre's play takes place in Argos, a city stinking with flies and death. This existentialized tragedy, tosses the irony of the Oresteia aside, there is no „cause“, Orestes simply makes a commitment to the freedom he can create for himself in his own mind. In the video, Sartre's play becomes the occasion for watching something analogous to the self definition and freedom it calls for -- the work of the actors who try to distinguish themselves physically and

emotionally within the gray walls and conventionalized reality of a setting which bears the kind of provisional relationship to reality which is always conspicuous in scenography.

The two standing constructions one interpreting the cover of „Logical Positivism“ bluntly in wood, the other with small holes of light. Light and simple wood construction are two base elements in the setting for the anonymous theatre company's staging of Sartre's *The Flies* which is projected over them. The actors gestures are then impossibly addressed to the diagrammatic rationale of the sculptures and the diagram itself, which plays with seeing being. They are animating a play which involves them in a performative construction of making being seen.

Lisa Lapinski and Catherine Sullivan  
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## Goose Fair

While working with Catherine on Speech Model from 'The Flies,' it occurred to me to produce prop lists from sources other than theatrical texts. I then treated Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* as a play and tried to generate a prop list for it. Given the abstract nature of the *Tractatus*, there are only six material things mentioned in the entire book:

a white surface with irregular spots,  
books, one titled *The World as I Found It*,  
a ladder,  
a live horse,  
a gramophone  
lilies.

Goose Fair is a fair of first causes. All of its beginnings are defined so strictly as to be ends, therefore eliminating aesthetic doubt.

For example, at the center of Goose Fair is a gramophone costumed as an Easter lily. It sits alone on a black and white circular stage. This is the first piece in a small series in which I will dress objects in costumes and place them on stages. My initial thought was to dress the gramophone in a constructivist uniform. I chose, eventually, to sew a child's costume. The gramophone is a minor player in a school play about the Resurrection, but I also hope the viewer will see it as having more generalized desires.

This gramophone's life is lovely. It is rich and its life is luxurious. But, above all, it feels nervous exhaustion. It fell into being a successful actor truly by mistake, so it never really desired being stared at, and that can be quite wearying after a bit.

This gramophone is also a being with a certain moral status, or a bearer of rights. But underlying the moral status, as its condition, are certain capacities. The gramophone has a sense of self, has a notion of the future and the past, can hold values, makes choices; in short, can adopt life-plans. It has the capacity to respond, and it is appropriate for one to address it in the first place. Lastly, the gramophone exhibits an openness to certain matters of significance.

The flower petals of the gramophone's costume are made the same way mothers in the United States make angel and wood fairy wings for their daughters. Slightly stretchy material is pulled over wire, glued and cut; the seams are then covered with glitter in order to hide the wire and the uneven edge of the fabric.

Glitter is not only important to the gramophone's costume; it is crucial to the rest of the gramophone's environment. It occurs three times in the installation: glued onto the petals of the Easter lily, woven into one theatrical curtain, and screen-printed onto paper in the image of a tautology. The latter is titled *Glitter Tautology*, and it exists to produce self-doubt in the gramophone.

### Galerie mezzanin

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To begin Glitter Tautology, I put the word tautology into Google's image search engine. Up came an image of a tautology found in chapter three of Denis and Grim's Fractal Images of Formal Systems. In this chapter, titled The Sierpinski Tautology Map, the authors attempt to visualize a standard truth table. Surprisingly, the image resulting from their calculations is an exact replica of the Sierpinski gasket of 1907, discovered in the year of the first Cubist painting and recognized as a primary exhibit in fractal geometry ever since. In Denis and Grim's graphs, „0000“ is represented using the darkest grey, and tautologies are always shown in black. I was particularly interested in the figure in which they emphasize tautologies by whiting out all other values. I used this image, a rendering of infinitely fine tautological dust, to make Glitter Tautology.

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