

# EXHIBIT

By Joe Hanrahan

Characters: THE ART LOVER (female)  
THE ARTIST TYPE (male)  
THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE (female)

Setting: The Jennifer Angus exhibition at Craft Alliance Gallery.  
Tonight.

(As the audience enters the Gallery space, THE ART LOVER joins them. She's dressed, mostly, in black. Murmuring, frowning, occasionally writing short bits in a small notebook. She interacts naturally with the arriving audience. Minutes before curtain, THE ARTIST TYPE enters. He's dressed in black. He moves through the gallery cautiously. He stands some distance from the walls, then moves in slowly to inspect the art. He peers intensely at the art, seems to shudder internally, then moves on. THE ART LOVER notices him, drifts towards him, smiles. He smiles, but is shy, drifts away, to a spot where he will have a good vantage point near the windows.

At that point, THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE appears on the street, staring through the windows, looking for someone. She conspicuously moves back and forth along the length of the windows, searching. THE ARTIST TYPE watches her. THE ART LOVER watches him, watching. Finally, THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE moves away, THE ARTIST TYPE watching her fade away.

THE ART LOVER addresses the audience directly, as if they were one gallery visitor (or a couple, or a few) she has come face-to-face with.

ART LOVER: Did you see her? And him? Do you think they know each other?

(THE ARTIST TYPE finally breaks from the window, moves back into the heart of the gallery.)

ART LOVER: (gesturing towards art) Well...,these are...something...aren't they? I think you'd have to agree with that. They are...something.

(Looks towards THE ARTIST TYPE, moves towards him.)

ART LOVER (to THE ARTIST TYPE): Who would have thought? Bugs! (laughs loudly)

(He looks at her; looks at bugs; looks back at her; seems to want to move away, but is trapped.)

ART LOVER: (including her audience confidante in the following) Bugs! Who would have thought? Well, there's Kafka, of course.

And The Fly. The Cronenberg version, not Part II. And not the original either, with that little human head on that little fly. (In a very high-pitched voice) “HELP ME! HELP ME!” (laughs loudly at herself)

No, no, I’m talking The Fly, with Jeff Goldblum. I mean, how much of that movie did he spend naked?

(She picks out a woman in the audience.) You know what I mean?

Until those little fly things started coming out of his back. And the end of that movie, the slime, the gunk...Uhhhk!...brilliant!

And Geena Davis was the love interest in that film. Between her and Jeff Goldblum, the two of them must be thirteen feet four inches tall. Can you imagine? Uhhhk!

And lest we forget...(reverential pause)...Starship Troopers. Not Part II or Part III. The Verhoeven version. Thousands of swarming 10-foot spiders, attacking, slicing, dicing, beheading, dismembering. Brilliant. A devastating social satire!

Robert Heinlein, who wrote the original novel of Starship Troopers, had amazing ideas. Couldn’t write at all, but he had at least one good idea per chapter.

Like Starship Troopers. James Cameron, you know, stole several of Heinlein’s ideas from that book, for Aliens. Not the first Alien. Aliens. Cameron’s version. Which was, basically, Alien II. It was Heinlein who first wrote about smart guns, of course. And about women being better drop ship pilots. I think I would have been a good drop ship pilot.

(She says this last line very seriously, looks meaningfully at THE ARTIST TYPE. She continues talking, lost in her theory, as he indeed moves away now. But, unfortunately, for THE ARTIST TYPE, he can’t get out of earshot.)

ART LOVER: But Heinlein’s ultimate idea was in presenting bugs as our ultimate enemy. A race of sentient insects from outer space, fighting for the survival of the universe’s fittest.

Terrifying. And so right, of course.

I mean when our planet is finally destroyed – from a comet, nuclear war, climate catastrophe – whatever – the last creatures left alive on the planet are going to be cockroaches. Tough little things.

So it makes ultimate sense, that if anything is going to be alive in outer space, it’s most likely going to be a bug.

Bugs. In outer space. Cold, calculating, brilliant, merciless. (She looks up, realizes ARTIST TYPE has moved away, then looks closely at bugs that are part of the exhibit, and then around the room.) God.

(She moves closer to audience, takes them into her confidence.) Look at the way he's looking at the art. Eating it up. Focused. Intense. And the black... he has to be an artist. Excuse me.

(ART LOVER moves closer to the ARTIST TYPE. Stands near him, looking at the same art. They stand silently for a moment.)

ART LOVER: Fascinating...

ARTIST TYPE: (Startled!) Aaaaah!!!

ART LOVER: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...(he stares at her)...I was just...I mean, I saw you...I thought...are you, uh?...Well, what do YOU think of all this?

ARTIST TYPE: What...do I...?

ART LOVER: I suppose, uh, artists see things differently than...the rest of us.

ARTIST TYPE: I...suppose.

ART LOVER: See deeper, closer. See the form, the structure of a work of art.

ARTIST TYPE: Uh...

ART LOVER: See the pain, the sweat, the tears, the angst, the blood, the guts...

ARTIST TYPE: Guts...?

ART LOVER: ...of the artist.

ARTIST TYPE: ...the artist.

ART LOVER: (directly into his eyes, as if she's saying his name appreciatively) The Artist!

(ARTIST TYPE stares for a bit, smiles shyly, then moves away, continuing to move through the exhibit with small, self-conscious movements.)

ART LOVER: (to her new, friend and confidant, the audience). I love artists. (She watches him.) But just like The Artist pursues the truth that he...or she...must find and reveal, sometimes The Artist must be pursued. Solitary, out there on the edge,

misunderstood by society, scorned by his peers, The Artist must withstand the savage storms of the present, and gaze forward, fearlessly...(she turns and addresses this to the audience)...forward, into new realms of perception and understanding. And it is only the lone Artist...like a pioneer, a sea voyager, an astronaut...that will venture forth. (ARTIST TYPE has come up behind her, and ineffectually, shyly, tries to get her attention, but she is lost in her metaphor)...The Artist. by Himself...or Herself...

ARTIST TYPE: Uh...

ART LOVER: The Artist, with only the Self...

ARTIST TYPE: Excuse...

ART LOVER: Unheard...

ARTIST TYPE: Uh, would...

ART LOVER: Unnoticed...

ARTIST TYPE: UHH! (touches her slightly.)

ART LOVER: (Startled.) OH! (They stare at each other.)

ARTIST TYPE: I was...

ART LOVER: Yes!

ARTIST TYPE: You were ...

ART LOVER: Yes, yes!

(THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE is now at the windows again, peering in, moving back and forth for a better angle. THE ARTIST TYPE is distracted, watches her, moving away from THE ART LOVER. THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE disappears again.)

ART LOVER: (She speaks again to the audience) But sometimes, as brilliant as they are, artists, they can be...inarticulate...like a child...like an animal....raw...primitive...speaking in a tongue that, somehow, predates language.

(THE ARTIST TYPE makes a decision, steps directly back to her, begins speaking fairly quickly, very articulately, if still shyly.)

ARTIST TYPE: Green Porn.

ART LOVER: What?

ARTIST TYPE: Green Porn. It's amazing. Have you see it? There's nothing really like it. Green Porn? You have to see it?

ART LOVER: Green...?

ARTIST TYPE: Green Porn. You were talking film earlier, and...bugs...have you seen Green Porn?

ART LOVER: Green...Porn...?

ARTIST TYPE: From Isabella Rossellini. Isabella Rossellini?

ART LOVER: Yes...

ARTIST TYPE: Daughter of Ingrid Bergmann. Star of Blue Velvet.

ART LOVER: Yes...

ARTIST TYPE: And her Green Porn?

ART LOVER: I don't...

ARTIST TYPE: It's bug sex.

ART LOVER: What...

ARTIST TYPE: Bug sex. Isabella Rossellini was asked by Robert Redford to create environmentally aware short films for the Sundance Channel, and out of her long-standing interest in animals and nature, she created several short films depicting bug sex.

ART LOVER: Depicting...?

ARTIST TYPE: Yes, see, she dresses up like the bug, in a bug costume, and then she very graphically describes and then acts out bug sex.

ART LOVER: Mmmm...

ARTIST TYPE: Like the earthworm. To be impregnated, earthworms, two hermaphrodite earthworms have to mate, inseminating the other while engaged in the classic...uh...sort of...a kind of...position. You should check it out.

(ART LOVER stares at him, not sure what to say.)

ARTIST TYPE: It makes bugs seem...well, not human, but almost. It makes them seem like...a little like us...maybe.

(The OTHER ARTIST TYPE enters the gallery. She's dressed in black. She moves quickly through the gallery, giving only cursory attention to the art. She seems to be more interested in the gallery goers than the art. She will glance occasionally down the stairs. ART LOVER watches her. At one point, OTHER ARTIST TYPE comes face-to-face with ARTIST TYPE. They stare for moments in fascination, in recognition, then move on to another part of the exhibit. ARTIST TYPE will steal occasional glances at her. THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE finally stops, folds her arms, shakes her head.)

ART LOVER: (quietly, to audience) Another artist, I think. (Walks over to OTHER ARTIST TYPE. Stands beside her.) So what do...YOU...think? I suppose...artists...see things differently...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (wheeling on her) They sure do. Artists! Who do they think they are? Where do they think they get off? I'll tell you who they are! Self-centered, self-obsessed, megalomaniac wastes of space, that's who! And you wanna know where they get off? Anywhere they please, that's where, and that's why they are such...(makes growling sound of frustration!) Artists. Tell me about... artists. (She moves away, towards the stairs.)

ART LOVER: (moving back towards audience.) I love the passion, don't you? Even if it's...negative...I just love it. A passion for life, a passion for art, a passion...a negative passion, often...for the challenges, the pain, the other-worldly perceptions, of being an artist.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (coming back up to ART LOVER) Hey, what's in the basement?

ART LOVER: Downstairs?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Yeah, what's down there?

ART LOVER: I think, rooms for making art, crafts and things.  
(To an audience member) That's right, isn't it?  
Artists' spaces.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Artists' spaces. Is there anybody down there?

ART LOVER: I don't know. Are you looking for something?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Somebody.

(pause)

ART LOVER: Aren't we all?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I'm going down there. (She heads down the stairs.)

ART LOVER: All right. I'm sure it's ok. I mean, as an artist yourself, you...  
The artist. Willing to go into the inner depths, the recesses of the soul, of the psyche.  
Plumbing the catacombs of her past, her present, to find something...someone...in her future.

(pause)

ART LOVER: (Confidentially) I confess. I'm looking for...someone...too. Not any specific someone. Just someone.

I mean, I've just met you. And of course, you're interesting, but...

Oh, I've met other people, at galleries like this, of course. A few artists. But I'd love to...become...friends...with an artist. They're so fascinating. Self-centered, yes, self-obsessed, but they have to be, don't they?

(THE ARTIST TYPE comes up behind her.)

ARTIST TYPE: Do you know her?

ART LOVER: Who? Her?

ARTIST TYPE: The...(gestures towards gestures)

ART LOVER: Oh, uh...

ARTIST TYPE: I've seen her before. Gallery Walk. Last Friday night. I saw her there.

ART LOVER: Really. Well, I was there. Did you notice...? Uh, was some of...your work there? At any of the galleries.?

ARTIST TYPE: (Distracted) What? (Then he moves slowly toward stairs.)

ART LOVER: I was there. I'm surprised he didn't...I mean I have, after all, been a...part...I wouldn't say a force, or even a fixture...but I'd say, a part of...the...art...scene...I'm seen in and around...

(gesturing towards him, standing by the stairs. quietly to audience) Artists. Fascinating. They can be so...vulnerable. So...tragic at times. But, so noble. In their suffering. In their willingness to take on the world and carry it on their shoulder. So alone...with their art, with themselves...

(ARTIST TYPE comes back directly to her)

ARTIST TYPE: Uh...



ART LOVER: Oh, yes...

ARTIST TYPE: Did you...do you...know her...the woman who just went downstairs. I saw you talking, do you know her?

ART LOVER: The...uh..artist...?

ARTIST TYPE: She's an artist?

ART LOVER: Oh, yes. I'm...oh, yes.

ARTIST TYPE: So, you do you know her...

ART LOVER: Yes. Yes, I...

ARTIST TYPE: And she's an artist...?

ART LOVER: Yes, a very promising artist. Very brave, very unconventional. I think you can see that in her, can't you? The passion, the blazing eyes, the singular...(gestures downstairs)...path...

(ARTIST TYPE walks away, stands alone, ponders)

ART LOVER: (to audience) You see. You see what happened. One artist, recognizing another. It's like they say; when two thieves meet, they immediately recognize each other. Not that I'm equating artists with thieves, God, no! But that's what it must have been like when...when Van Gogh met Gauguin. "Oh, do you know him? The swarthy-looking fellow?" Why, yes, that's Paul. Paul Gauguin." "Paul. He must be a painter, too. I'll go and say hello. Paul. Hello. Vincent." You see, that's how it happens.

(THE ARTIST TYPE makes a decision, heads down the stairs.)

ART LOVER: Oh, my. He...what's down there? Do you think it's ok? Oh, it must be ok? They're down there. They're artists, of course, but...Let's just take a little peek. C'mon. C'mon with me. I think it's ok.

(ART LOVER leads audience down the stairs, where they find THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE at one of the tables in the kitchen area, head on table in arms, winding up some quiet sobbing. THE ARTIST TYPE stands helplessly some feet away, gazing at her. THE ART LOVER gazes at both, till the audience is settled enough. She motions to THE ARTIST TYPE to go to THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE. He shakes his head, holds out his hands, not knowing how to proceed. She urges him again. He shakes his head again. Summoning her inevitable urge to intercede, THE ART LOVER goes over to the table, sits near OTHER ARTIST TYPE. OTHER ARTIST TYPE looks up, then puts her head back down again. THE ARTIST TYPE pretends to look around, ventures close to the table to eavesdrop, but stays out of the scene.)

ART LOVER: (confidentially) I just want to tell you...I understand. I mean, I'm...a person, a recognized person...on the art scene, and though I see you have some issues with some...I want you to know that I understand what an artist goes through, and...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: You do? You understand? Then explain it to me. What artists go through. I'll tell you what they go through. They go through your money, they go through your food, they go through your beer, they even go through your closet so they have something...something outrageous, something arty, something retro, something cool, something ambisexual, or omnisexual, to wear to their art shows.

Artists. They go through your heart like a...like a...a runaway train...or like one of those slow trains, you know, you're at a train crossing, and the train just takes forever to go past, just goes on and on, tearing your heart out. Or like a...bad asteroid, you know, one coming to the earth to destroy everything, like in that movie...

ART LOVER: Final Impact.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: What?

ART LOVER: Final Impact. With Morgan Freeman. The movie about the asteroid coming to earth...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: No, I didn't see that. I was thinking of the other one...with Bruce Willis...

ART LOVER: Armageddon.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Armageddon. Whatever.  
(She collapses into her arms again.)

ART LOVER: (moving away from table, towards audience) Final Impact was a much better Asteroid movie, more real, more thoughtful. Armageddon was just special effects, and...

(THE ARTIST TYPE comes over to THE ART LOVER)

ARTIST TYPE: Is she alright?

ART LOVER: Of course, she's alright. She's probably at her best right now. A heightened sensitivity, a laser-like consciousness. I wouldn't be surprised if tonight isn't the dawn of a new and major masterpiece.

Of course, she's disillusioned right now. Discouraged. Who isn't? The crusade of an artist...or an art lover...is never...but what am I telling you this for? You understand.

(ARTIST TYPE makes a decision. Moves away from ART LOVER to sit near THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE.)

ARTIST TYPE: Um...hello? (she looks up) Are you ok?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (noticing some other people in the room) God. Was I making a scene...?

ARTIST TYPE: No, no. It's alright.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (peering closely at him) I've seen you before...somewhere...where?

ARTIST TYPE: Uh...I was upstairs...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: No. (thinks) The Gallery Walk...last week! That was you, wasn't it? You were there.

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah, yeah. That's where I saw you before. (They both nod. Awkward pause). What did...YOU...think of all that? The art? At the walk?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: The art? I wasn't there for the art. (pause) I was with someone.

(silence)

ARTIST TYPE: Oh. (pause) You know, I think I remember him.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I wish I didn't.

ARTIST TYPE: Oh. (small laugh to cover awkwardness.)

(pause)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (trying to collect herself, make an effort) So, what did you think of all the...

ARTIST TYPE: The what?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: The art, the walk. Y'know.

ARTIST TYPE: Oh, uh...I thought...I wasn't really there for the art...either... I was just...sometimes I go to these things...(stops himself short)...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: What?

ARTIST TYPE: Well...I came to this one, actually, cause of the...the bugs.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: The bugs?

ARTIST TYPE: Up on the wall.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Bugs. (thinks) Those were bugs up there? Live ones?

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah. Well, not live, but real. They were live.

(pause)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I like bugs.

ARTIST TYPE: You do?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Yeah. I like how they all stick together. You know. Sometimes you see a bug, he's all by himself – y'know, a bug, down on the floor or the sidewalk – but then you think – somewhere, back home there's like a million bugs, his family – millions and millions of his bug family...back home.

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah, I guess.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Bugs. (Laughs)

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah. (Looks upstairs.)

(ART LOVER moves closer to listen in on them.)

ARTIST TYPE: (clearly a little disturbed by this) I mean...they're just there. Bugs. They're always there. Millions of 'em. All over. Under your feet. In the walls. Millions of 'em. All kinds. Inside. Outside. Everywhere.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Uh...yeah.

(ART LOVER moves away, a little spooked by the “real” bug talk, looks around, at her feet, at the walls, everywhere.)

ARTIST TYPE: (becoming a little haunted) I lived in this place once – Arkansas – little house. Paid nothing for it. Nothing. The rent, shared it with another guy, rent was nothing. It was nice. A little house, y'know.

(ART LOVER moves back to listen in to this nice little story.)

ARTIST TYPE: But the shower had these cracks in it, and when you showered, these big black bugs would come out of the walls. And sometimes when you just started to shower, before you really start or anything, you step in there, there'd be these long grey ones – just sitting there – on the walls.

(ART LOVER moves away again, a little horrified.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Gross.

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah. Made showering kind of weird. And then when I was a baby, I had my own little room – crib and baby stuff, y’know – little dangling things to look at, stuffed animals and stuff.

(ART LOVER moves back to listen to this story.)

ARTIST TYPE: And we lived in this city neighborhood, little apartment, old – LOTS of bugs! My mom said, she’d check on me in the middle of the night, come in, and when she’d open the door, there’d be hundreds of bugs all over the place. Cockroaches. She’d open the door, and they’d just scatter. They’d been everywhere!

(ART LOVER moves away again, itching herself)

ARTIST TYPE: I don’t know if I can just picture it, or I actually...I mean I don’t even remember the room, we moved...but I think I can remember the bugs...all over...me.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Wow.

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah.

(pause)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Kafka.

ART LOVER: (sweeping in) Oh, yes! Kafka!

(they both look at her)

ART LOVER: Kafka. Metamorphosis. The bug. (pause) I saw Baryshnikov do it. On Broadway. Brilliant. But he can do anything, can’t he. Bugs.

(silence)

ART LOVER: (trying to turn it into a laugh) Kafka, it’s one of those words I think you find you can drop into any conversation...and it...not only fits...it becomes a...an appropriate, albeit biting...comment on the topic of conversation. Or the conversation itself. Don’t you find that? Kafka. Kafkaesque. (silence) Of course, there’s other words like that. Synergy. Pan-Asian. So, bugs...now bugs in art...Kafka (she laughs)...now what do the TWO of YOU think...about...

(She gestures towards upstairs gallery. They look around.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (gets up, walks away from table) You know what I wonder?

ART LOVER: What? What?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I wonder what time this place closes? I thought he might show up.

ART LOVER: The artist? I think it's a she...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: The artist. Yeah, I'm sure he'd like to think of himself as THE artist! The artist. Everyone thinks they're an artist! But everybody really wants to be THE artist! The one. The one and only. It's not enough that an artist has to succeed. All other artists have to fail.

(She looks towards back of space. Walks slowly back towards pottery room. ARTIST TYPE hangs his head.)

ART LOVER: It's very difficult, isn't it?

(ARTIST TYPE looks up, looks towards the back of room, then back at her)

ARTIST TYPE: It's tough.

ART LOVER: I know...

ARTIST TYPE: It's like...giving birth or something...

ART LOVER: Yes! Like giving birth...to the work...

ARTIST TYPE: It's work, all right...Trying this, trying that, dancin' around...

ART LOVER: Creating...

ARTIST TYPE: Trying to create...something...a feeling...

ART LOVER: A feeling...

ARTIST TYPE: Get something going.

ART LOVER: The work...

ARTIST TYPE: (nodding) Work. It's not much fun.

ART LOVER: No, it can't be. (pause) So, what are YOU working on now?

ARTIST TYPE: What? No...I was just talking to her...

ART LOVER: Yes, but what were you...

ARTIST TYPE: What?

ART LOVER: Talking about? The work.

ARTIST TYPE: What are you talking about?

ART LOVER: The art. The work. The artwork. The pain, the agony of creating...a new piece of art...

ARTIST TYPE: I was talking about the pain and agony of meeting somebody. You know, like a woman.

ART LOVER: Oh. (after a pause) Well...that, too! (She primps a bit, unconsciously.)

(pause)

ART LOVER: So...

ARTIST TYPE: So I saw her. Last week. She saw me, too.

ART LOVER: I was there...

ARTIST TYPE: We looked at each other. There was something about her...and when we looked at each other, I thought there was something...

ART LOVER: Well, the both of you, being artists...

ARTIST TYPE: What? I'm not an artist.

ART LOVER: You're not?

ARTIST TYPE: No.

ART LOVER: What are you? I mean, what do you do?

ARTIST TYPE: I'm a computer programmer.

ART LOVER: But...but...you...must...love art...you...

ARTIST TYPE: Art? It's ok. It's bugs. It's the bugs.

ART LOVER: The bugs?

ARTIST TYPE: I heard about the...(gestures upstairs)

ART LOVER: You like bugs.

ARTIST TYPE: No. I hate 'em. Scared of 'em. Scared to death. Bugs make me...(he shudders) But I...I've got to look at them. And then I can hardly look away. It's like some...obsessive thing. I don't know if I want to be scared, or...or I want to get over it. Or what.

ART LOVER: But then you were at the Gallery Walk last week...where you saw...

ARTIST TYPE: (after an embarrassed pause) I go to...things like that...y'know, galleries, museums, book fairs...

ART LOVER: Book fairs?

ARTIST TYPE: It's not easy to...meet...anybody these days...

ART LOVER: Oh, so...

ARTIST TYPE: You know. Somebody...interesting. Smart. Maybe even, like...(looks towards the back, where OTHER ARTIST TYPE headed)...an artist.

ART LOVER: Yes.

ARTIST TYPE: It just...it gets a little...lonely sometimes. I work odd hours, and...(drifts off, embarrassed.)

ART LOVER: I know. I know. It can get lonely.

(silence)

ART LOVER: Well, maybe after this, we could go get a...

ARTIST TYPE: (Stand, looking again towards the back) But she's with that other guy, right? That...artist.

ART LOVER: Who? Oh, her.

ARTIST TYPE: You know her, right? I guess...is it serious? Her and this artist?

ART LOVER: Ah, well...



ARTIST TYPE: I don't like that guy. That artist. I mean, I know, he might be a friend of yours. I saw him, too, last week. I don't think he's right for her. I don't think she's happy.

ART LOVER: It certainly doesn't appear so.

ARTIST TYPE: See, I saw her. She saw me. I thought there was something. Sometimes I'm kinda stupid that way. But she remembered me.

ART LOVER: I think I remember you, too...

ARTIST TYPE: I'm gonna just...go. Would you?...tell her...would you?...Aaaaah.  
(He leaves, going back up the stairs.)

ART LOVER: (to her audience friend, finding they are still there, a touch embarrassed herself) Well. I don't know if you caught any of that.  
Well, there you are. Art is a catalyst for...so much, isn't it? For life.  
Art brings people together. Tears them apart.  
Art is really all about love, really.  
Love of life, of creation, sometimes love of another.

(THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE wanders back, in thought)

ART LOVER: Oh, hello.

(OTHER ARTIST TYPE stops, looks at her, falls back into her thoughts, then tears herself away.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Hi.

ART LOVER: Are you...feeling better?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Can't get much worse.

ART LOVER: Oh. Sorry. (awkward pause) Is there anything...interesting back there?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Pottery wheels.

ART LOVER: Pottery wheels?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: When I first came down here, I looked around, I was looking...I was just looking. I saw the wheels. That's what made me...cry.

ART LOVER: Pottery wheels?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I used to do...pottery...and other...stuff like that.

ART LOVER: Really? You used to? In school, or...?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: No, no. I was...pretty serious about it. Maybe too serious, who knows. I had a few...shows and stuff, you know...

ART LOVER: Oh, really. Shows. So you are an...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: And then...and then...I met this other...so-called artist.

ART LOVER: So-called?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: But he was nothing. He is nothing. He had nothing. A whole lot of it. Enough to fool me.

ART LOVER: That's who've you've been looking for?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Yeah. Somebody said he might stop by here tonight.

ART LOVER: You don't know where he is?

(OTHER ARTIST TYPE shakes head)

ART LOVER: You haven't seen him?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Since last week. That Gallery Walk thing. That was it. I knew something was up. I knew.

ART LOVER: So he...?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: He's gone. With everything. He took everything. Took me for a ride.

ART LOVER: How long were you...?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: A year. The year of him. Catering to him. Supporting him. Watching him try to create his pathetic little art. Not that he ever worked very hard. He just took from me. Helping him. Watching him steal from me. Steal my art. My way of seeing things, my...(stops)

ART LOVER: So it's over.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I hope so. I don't know. Why do you let yourself get fooled? Why do you stay with somebody like that?

ART LOVER: Well...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Because you need somebody. Don't you? Gets lonely. Can't live with just your art.

ART LOVER: No. No, of course not.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: And it's so hard to meet people. Somebody interesting. Smart.

(ART LOVER looks up, towards where THE ARTIST TYPE departed.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Somebody who definitely isn't an artist!

(ART LOVER looks up again.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Say, where'd that guy go?

ART LOVER: The guy?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: The guy I – and you – were talking to. Do you know him? (anxiously) Is he an artist? I saw him at that Gallery Walk last week. And then tonight...is he still here?

ART LOVER: I...don't....think so.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Oh. Too bad. Seemed like an ok guy. (Looks towards ART LOVER for confirmation.)

ART LOVER: Oh, yes. He is. Definitely.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Well. This was it. And that's that. That guy's history. Art history! (Ridiculously pleased at her own dumb joke. Needing to laugh, needing a break, she starts laughing, continuing at the relief and joy of it. THE ART LOVER joins in.) Well...thanks for being...nice talking to you. (acknowledges audience.) You, too. See ya. (She heads up the stairs.)

ART LOVER: (to her friend(s), the audience) What did I tell you? About art? It's magic – some kind of magic. It brings out the best – and sometimes not always the best – in people. But it brings it out. Something about it – its power, its raw primal power, forces us to confront it, and to respond.

And sometimes we can't help it, can we? We can't help but to...exhibit our own, real, primal selves.

(Looks up)

I don't know. Well, I suppose we should be headed upstairs, huh? Let's go.

(THE ART LOVER leads the audience up. As she nears the top of the stairs, she is saying...)

ART LOVER: You know, maybe when we get out of here, we could go for a...

(She stops short by what she sees. She stands till the audience comes up and gathers around her. What she and the audience sees is THE ARTIST TYPE and THE OTHER ARTIST TYPE together, in animated conversation. We can't hear much of what they're saying—actors should improv; she's teasing, he's resisting and shaking his head—but as most of audience arrives upstairs they break out of their nose-to-nose conversation)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (grabbing ARTIST TYPE's hand, leading him playfully to the all of bug patterns. He's thrown a bit by her touch.) C'mon, be a big boy.

ARTIST TYPE: (laughing, but serious) No, no.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: They're just little bugs.

ARTIST TYPE: They're big bugs.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: They're not gonna hurt you.

ARTIST TYPE: How do you know?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: They're dead!

ARTIST TYPE: Are you sure? Some...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Sure they are.

ARTIST TYPE: Some bugs can, you know, cocoon, and then, before you know it, spring on you, and...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: ...and what? Look at 'em. They're dead.

ARTIST TYPE: I don't know. One I was looking at over there, I thought his eyes were following me everywhere I went.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: You are crazy.

ARTIST TYPE: I'm crazy? Somebody puts all these bugs on a wall and I'm crazy?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: C'mon now, you'll never get past this unless you confront it. You know that. You've got to walk right up to these things and shake hands with them. Show them you're not afraid.

ARTIST TYPE: I don't know.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: C'mon. You wanna show me you're big and brave, don't you?

(This stops the ARTIST TYPE. He does want to show her that.)

ARTIST TYPE: Well...(long pause)...maybe.

(This stops the OTHER ARTIST TYPE. There's a moment.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: All right then. C'mon. (She leads him to the wall.) A little closer. Closer. Now just touch one of them. Very gently. I want you to touch it and don't just pull your hand back – stroke it.

(ARTIST TYPE looks at her for strength, slowly, tentatively, reaches out to touch one of the bugs.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: N-O-O-O-O!!! (shocking him, almost giving him a heart attack, driving him back away from the wall) Don't touch that! That's art! You don't touch art! (They both dissolve into laughter.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: But, see, you were gonna touch it. And if you had, I'm sure you were gonna live through it.

ARTIST TYPE: Maybe. But YOU almost killed me! (more laughter, he grabs her, as if to shake her playfully. They're both thrown by this touch. Another moment. They look at each other, slowly break apart. Turn, both look at the art.)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I like bugs.

(ARTIST TYPE looks at her, looks back at art)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: I think they're cute.

ARTIST TYPE: Cute?!?!?! (they both laugh again)

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Say...I don't know...would you, maybe, like to go get...a...

ARTIST TYPE: Yeah. I would.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Good. Let's get out of here. Too many bugs.

(They start to leave the room. THE ART LOVER steps in front of them)

ART LOVER: Hello. Hello. Still here.

ARTIST TYPE: We were just...

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: ...leaving.

ART LOVER: Well. Well. (to OTHER ARTIST TYPE) I hope to see some of your work sometime. (pause) Do you expect to be...doing anything new...anytime soon?

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (looks at ARTIST TYPE) Maybe. Maybe.

ART LOVER: Good. Good.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: (to ARTIST TYPE) I don't do anything with bugs.

ARTIST TYPE: Good.

OTHER ARTIST TYPE: Bye. (they depart)

ART LOVER: (to her friend(s), the audience) Well, that was something. I think you'd have to admit that. I tell you, it brings...things...out in people. The art, I mean, not the bugs. They sometimes expose...reveal...exhibit...aspects of themselves that are, at other times, hidden. The people do that, I mean. Not the bugs.

So, maybe you'd like to, uh, after this, grab a...oh, you're with people, of course.

Maybe some other time.

Maybe we'll see each other again, at another show. Have you seen the Ming show, at the Art Museum? Fantastic. Glorious. Made me so hungry for Dim Sum.

(she starts to depart, talking as she does, half oblivious if anyone's listening)

And you've seen The Last Emperor, of course. Bertolucci. You know, he was actually allowed to shoot in The Forbidden City for that film. It was great, but I still prefer Last Tango. You've seen that. Brando. Talk about Forbidden. (she laughs loudly.)

END

