

EPISODE 6: FUCK BOX

[00:04 Narrator:]

The Law is a White Dog is a podcast series developed for TULCA Festival of Visual Arts 2020. Made during the global pandemic, the series places artists and artworks in dialogue with lawyers, advocates and activists. As a festival of visual art produced in a time of confinement and restriction for many, the podcast series explores unseen dimensions of the artists' work.

[00:37]

Eimear Walshe is an artist and writer from Longford. They make sculpture, video, performances and lectures, and publish writing in various adaptations of artist memoir. In their work, Walshe aims to reconcile the aesthetics, values and tastes of their queer and rural lives. They work with a diverse community of collaborators, including academics, farmers, traditional musicians, drag kings and engineers. Again and again, an obstacle occurs for the artists assembled through The Law is a White Dog: the problem of how bodies, as sources of knowledge, come into conflict with laws and regulations enforced by governments and other powers. In the reading we are about to hear, titled *Fuck Box*, Walshe explores the entanglement of social and sexual life, focusing on the exciting possibilities of re-purposing commercial vehicles.

Content Note: this reading contains reference to police harassment.

[01:38 Eimear:]

Sex Lorry. I say these words aloud for the first time, just to sound it out. Do you understand what I mean? A lorry for sex. Sex parties. Group sex parties. Everything you need. Slings, hoists, a cage or two. A glory hole into the cabin, maybe. Like something from San Francisco in the 1970s, except parked up outside Kinnegad or Ballinalack. Pounding music, red LED strip lighting. Heavy-duty, easy-clean PVC tarpaulin on the walls, and on the ceiling. A sprung rubber dance floor, extra bouncy.

Booths for the bashful, a Velux for the voyeurs. And if the neighbours have a problem? You just slide that baby into gear and drive off into the sunrise.

Granted, this is heavy stuff for our first conversation. But absolutely necessary. If he's turned off by the idea of a gang of hardcore revellers clinging to each other while being thrown around in the back of a curtain-sider pulling out of a lay-by on the M4, it's just not going to work out. It's fairer for him if I put him off early.

[02:59]

But it's not just a test, it's a sincere proposal, an evangelist's petition, a chance to see beyond his own horizons. God knows why I've become interested in someone so respectable, but I don't want to judge or exclude him for it. His reluctances are not his own fault. I wasn't born like this. Everyone deserves a chance.

[03:22]

I might have been born like this. I remember as a child having a proto-sexual attraction to things that moved on wheels. First it was KITT, the talking car from Knight Rider. KITT was an ostentatiously sexy car, a modified Pontiac with a bratty, smart ass, faux-servile personality, who communicated internally from a blinking red light in the dashboards console, and externally with a row of small red lights set into a slit on the bonnet.

[03:53]

'What would you like to hear?' are the first words KITT says on the TV show. The man in the driver seat freaks out when he hears the car talking. KITT tries to comfort the man by explaining that this is the car talking: a talking car. Unfortunately, the fact that KITT is a talking car is exactly the problem for the man, and the talking car explaining itself in order to reassure the man that the voice in the car is just the car talking only further triggers the man who is highly alarmed at the talking car talking. The more coherence and intelligence the car employs in the conversation, the more the man escalates and resists. Feeling self-conscious and undermined, the man tries to regain control of the situation. He tells the car to shut up talking to him, and play some music instead. The man chooses to listen to the Eagles.

[04:42 sings:]

Take it easy, take it easy,
Don't let the sound
of your own wheels
drive you crazy.

[04:59]

You must understand this idea of the Sex Lorry, because you are a disk jockey, I say, absolutely clutching at straws at this stage. You create the beats to which people get close to each other, you're the architect of how desires get expressed. It must cross your mind when you're writing music or planning a set, and surely when you're playing you're on the lookout for it? He concedes that he once discovered that mixing two particular tracks consecutively towards the end of a set would suddenly, and without fail, turn the mood intensely sexy. He repeated this trick a few times at different gigs, and then started to question his own responsibility in wielding such power.

[05:45]

Paul B. Preciado writes in *Pornotopia* about the biopolitics of Hugh Hefner's Playboy architectures, including the Playboy Mansion, the Playboy Townhouse, and the Playboy Clubhouses. Preciado talks about the use of design and technology to create an almost mechanised experience of sexual consumption, mediated through social hierarchies, surveillance, and subtle forms of control. Hefner made his cash selling access to experiences of a permissive yet prescriptive male sexuality which was heterosexual, urban, infidelitous, and indoors. But interior architecture is just a tool like any other, it can be used to any end.

[06:27]

I light some candles to cover the smell of dampness, all excitement. It's been so long since I had a house, I say, by which I mean that renting hasn't really worked out for

me and I've been sleeping on couches, squatting in studios, and borrowing relatives' beds for the last two years. I've never had a house, he says, by which he means he has lived with his parents in a South Dublin suburb for his entire life. So look, we've both found ourselves in the "Can't Host" category for different reasons. That's something we share, I think to myself. A common cause. When we have sex he asks for the window to be closed, in case anyone is listening outside on the deserted village road. I realise at this point that things are not going to work out with the sex lorry.

[07:16]

Roadblock was one of a number of wedge-shaped contestants from the Robot Wars series that stole my heart as a child. An invention for Technology class by two A Levels Students from Cornwall, Roadblock bore a real traffic sign reading, "ROAD AHEAD CLOSED 200 yds", which was bent and beaten to form a bonnet. The rear was covered in yellow and black hazard stripes. The tip of the wedge was very close to the ground, which allowed Roadblock to sneak underneath opponents and flip them over. Sometimes, in the chaos of a multi-way battle, amid sunken pits and spitting fires, another robot would accidentally drive up the acute angle of Roadblock's ramp body, and promptly get piggybacked right out of the ring. Roadblock, the inverter. It was the simplicity of the design that won them the first season, leaving other robots twitching on their backs in impotence like a load of flipped beetles. Roadblock could also reverse into other robots and attack them with a serrated circular saw set into the curved rear. The saw and steering were operated by two different remote controls, a combination used to great effect to tear lumps out of the Dublin robot Nemesis, a furry polka dot invention, right before another robot set Nemesis on fire.

[06:30]

Juhani Pallasmaa writes about how the centring of the single-point perspective in architecture has resulted in a neglect of sensuality in design practice. Even peripheral vision, he argues, plays a greater role in our perception of architecture than the directed gaze, because peripheral vision creates the impression of what's surrounding us, rather than just what's in front of us. He regrets as well the

abandonment of the anthropocentric tradition, the use of the body as a proportional base measurement with which to plan and create spaces for bodies. He's dead right. Architecture is generally way too much for me. There's usually a clear foot between my head and the average door frame, three of me could easily fit in a four foot bed. The dimensions of rooms don't relate to me, I can't heat them up. Everywhere I go, I'm paying for space I don't need. Space for my eyes, not for my body.

[09:29]

I'm starting to get the feeling like I don't need a shit house, what I need is a really fancy vehicle. If I withheld my last month's rent, I could afford to immediately buy a second hand, top-of-the-range Ifor Williams box trailer, hitch it to my car, insulate it, and put a bed in it. Thinking about this makes me fold over myself with longing. Nobody could evict me, but then again someone could steal my house and drive away with it pretty easily. But a Berlingo? I could easily lie inside that. A Volvo Estate? If you let the seats down I could crawl in there no bother. A Land Rover? I could fit bunk beds in there! What's more, I'd fuck any Land Rover built before 1995.

[10:12]

I start thinking about tall lovers though, and I get ambitious again. I become serious about going commercial. A 26 tonne lorry has higher ceilings than a Georgian townhouse, but jumping through all the hoops for the CE category test would take more than a year, and I wouldn't get insured. A 7.5 tonne would take months. But a 3.5 tonne can go on a B license and gets through tolls at the cheaper rate.

No van drives past me without getting a thorough once-over. I hijack conversations with friends to point out unusual body builds, clever modifications, year-to-year design differences. I ruin a first date when I see a Transit crew cab drive by, immediately going on my phone to price securing a compatible Luton body on the chassis, and then thinking out loud about how to sleep six people in the back (double at floor height, a double flat hammock, and a double in the cabin overhang). The men who mostly drive the vans sometimes mistakenly think that I am staring at them, and I give them an embarrassed wave just to satisfy them. I'd steal what they're driving in a heartbeat. What's the difference between me and these men? They can't

possibly all have company insurance policies, full clean licenses and no claims bonuses.

What do I have to do to get inside you?

[11:32]

“Thing? An object without life? A personal possession? Incorrect!”

Johnny 5, Short Circuit 2

With a binoculars shaped face, telescopic blue glass eyes, and barn door eyelids, the robot Johnny 5 from the Short Circuit film series is, as far as I can tell, indisputably cute. He speaks in synonyms to demonstrate that he understands what's being said, and his voice illuminates a row of red lights where his mouth might be, just like KITT the talking car. He has hands with three opposable, rubber grip digits and moves around on surprisingly nimble triangular tank tread wheels.

Johnny 5 oscillates between two modes of being. Most of the time he is painfully amicable, curious, trusting, and wondersome. He's subservient to a degree, but when he understands any existential threat to himself, he will act to self-preserve. After he gets betrayed and beaten up by people he thinks are his friends, he transforms into a scary punk robot, combative and sarcastic, wearing spiky cuffs, a Mohawk, and chains. His eyes turn red, and he starts swearing. He is patched up with duct tape and covered in engine fluid.

[12:48]

Johnny 5 is given a sense of sexual taste and agency, and seems to be programmed in 'heterosexual' mode. When he bursts in on his friend Stephanie while she is bathing he remarks, “Nice software, mmmmm”. She blushes and hides behind a towel. He tries to get Stephanie to dance with him, replicating the man and woman dancing on the TV. Johnny 5 perceives himself to be equal to his human peers, but is forever contending with the category of realness, forever seeming to fall short in the eyes of others.

[13:20]

The porno website Kink.com has a fucking machine named Fuckzilla. Fuckzilla looks extraordinarily like Johnny 5, except with one hand made of a hydraulic dildo thrusting mechanism, and another hand comprised of what looks like a chainsaw, except with a row of floppy pink rubber tongues where the chainsaw teeth would be.

[13:41]

A dream. Some Gardaí bang on the wall of my van very late at night. You are both inside me and we are getting close. The van is in stealth mode, but it might have been rocking slightly. OPEN UP, they say. I put a hand over each of your mouths, and pull you out of me. I look into both of your eyes in turn. I am trying to tell you, with this grave stare, that I am the only one who is going to speak in this situation, because I have the fanciest accent, and the least problem with authority. I take the sheet and wrap it around myself. I shuffle to the door and slide it open halfway. Two luminous men are standing outside. Hello Garda, what seems to be the problem? I say gaily. They have flashlights which they point into the back corner of the van, straight into both of your faces. Who is the owner of this vehicle? Garda One says. I am, I say brightly, would you like to see my logbook? We are going to have to search this vehicle, Garda Two says. I take a deep breath, I want to get back to fucking as quickly as possible. I close my eyes and rehearse what I am going to say in my head:

I *think* you are supposed to have a warrant. Too arrogant.

I think you *are* supposed to have a warrant. Too pedantic.

I think you are *supposed* to have a warrant. Passive aggressive, shit.

I. Think. You. Are. Supposed. To. Have. A. Warrant.

When I say it out loud, I sound like I'm trying to do a robot voice, but as it turns out there was no way of saying it that wasn't going to make them react badly. Garda One puts his foot against the van door while Garda Two begins writing in his little notepad. My eyes roll back in my head.

[15:38]

LISTEN YOU FUCKERS, STOP CARRYING ON LIKE YOU'RE HERE TO PROTECT ME. WHAT'S YOUR PRETENSE, THESE MEN HAVE KIDNAPPED ME IN MY OWN FUCKING VAN? YOU CANNOT LET ON TO GIVE A FUCK ABOUT ME BECAUSE I KNOW YOU JUST DON'T. COS WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I COULD HAVE DONE WITH YOUR SERVICES? HAH? DON'T WORRY I'M SAFE NOW GARDA. AND WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO CUM. AND YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE? THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY. IT IS ADEQUATELY TAXED AND INSURED. NOW GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY HOUSE.

[16:10]

My arms are flailing. My sheet has dropped. My eyes and face and brain are swelling. I have made various mistakes. They move towards me. Both of you get up, bollock naked, and go for them. They retract because they are existentially afraid of being even accidentally touched by a dick. You jump out of the van and push Garda One backwards, his head hits the floor and he goes limp. You have to get Garda Two now as he's a witness. You take his little notepad out of his hand after he goes down.

[16:43]

I am the only one who can drive away but I am crying so much that I can't see properly. The sudden change from extreme internal stretching to fearful contraction is causing angry spasms in my pelvis. You put me in the driver seat and drape a hoodie over my shoulders and legs. I put the van into reverse, but we're parallel parked tightly against the wall, and one of the Garda's bodies is in the way of my tyre tracks out. Please get out and move the Garda's body. You pick him up by the arms and legs and lay him on top of the other one. We drive the backroads West. Up behind the Phoenix Park, around and out. There's a friend who will take us in, just outside Carrick, we can stow the van in the lane around the back. I feel guilty, but even inside the dream I have the sense to know we have to stay out of the city for a while, and that probably the van will have to be got rid of. I wake up tangled in my sheets and with a pain in my belly.

[17:37]

After months of observing me in a state of fixation, my little nieces are eager to see the van. I let them in loose up the front and start the ignition. They play with the gear stick and the lights, open and close the glove compartment, and swing on the steering wheel. They pull out a Grateful Dead CD, the most colourful one on the dashboard, and get me to put it on. Booooooring, they say and start dancing and jumping on the seats regardless. They are falling over each other and laughing. They wave like crazy out the window at a woman walking her dog who doesn't wave back. They add to the condensation forming on the windscreen by going *huh*, and start drawing animals and scary monster on the glass, to protect me from intruders. They struggle not to erase each other's work in their fervour, and I try to mediate the territory between the blobby ones, the spiky head ones, the big teeth ones and the ones with big hairy ears. In the night time, when the streetlight hits the windscreen at a particular angle, I can still make out the greasy streaks of their outlines on the glass.

[18:45 Narrator:]

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