

Temple Bar Gallery + Studios New Writing Commission 2017

The TBG+S Writing Commission aims to expand ideas around writing about art by inviting Irish authors to create a series of pieces inspired by the exhibitions at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios. In 2017, TBG+S has commissioned Gavin Corbett to write a piece of short fiction inspired by each of the exhibitions in the gallery programme. This piece was written in response to *Woodall* by Hilary Lloyd.

Gavin Corbett is from Dublin. He has published three novels: *Innocence* (2003), *This Is The Way* (2013) and *Green Glowing Skull* (2015). *This Is The Way* won the 2013 Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year award and was shortlisted for the Encore Prize. He has been published widely as a journalist, and has written and broadcast for RTÉ Radio. Last year, he was Trinity College Dublin's Arts Council Irish Writer Fellow.

TBG+S WRITING COMMISSION 2017

Gavin Corbett

Essay #1 *Parallelogram*

1 used to stare at the ceiling tiles, obsessively make connections between dot and dot and dimple in the tiles using invisible string. The string was invisible and endlessly divisible, it was giveable without end. How long is a etcetera etcetera as the saying? 1 ceased to see tiles and dots as the string began to thrum. Call it conditioning, because now the buildings from the window maybe they've been so long there, and 1 am so long here, and 1 have never been to those buildings, they're just planes of light, distant lightboxes. 1 am trying to see them all the time at night as if they're lightboxes, they're x-ray viewers or EXIT signs. Purpose of lightboxes is to offer something that is to be made sense of in its division of void and mass, of light and block. They should be easily understood, shouldn't they, even when they prompt debate or provoke equivocation? 1 make what 1 will of those buildings, of that plane, in its division, of dark and light.

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When I see a light on its own in the dark in this red and it doesn't fall on anything, when it is weak and overpowered and it hovers there, it blinks sometimes, it moves, appears to go blue, blue in red yet the blue goes smothered, it disturbs me, the light doesn't land, can't find a landfall.

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I can't find the right notes. I can't see, I really can't see, it's laughable. I need more light than this. I can't see in red. I'll trip as well as everything. I need to use my eyes as well as my ears. I'm useless, really. I don't trust my ears. You don't trust your what? Your years?

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1 sit there in the flat looking at the changing buildings. The changes are melts, really melts, you know as in film. It's like 1 have been sitting here for twenty years, for that entire span as the lightboxes change. Some thing lingers before the next thing resolves. What was it you said before, 1 don't trust 1 years? In the dark when 1 look at these things through the half glass door (the bottom half is EXIT to oblivion) there is some light that gets in, that is permitted, that doesn't appear to be just out there. This light is like light that's travelled twenty years from an exploded star. And it finally finds its landing. It lands across the angle of the inner wall as the wall turns to meet the outer wall creating an ember like even humming parallelogram across that awkward surface. The light turns the corner. The lie that gives to laws of light only going in straight lines. And in the twenty years 1 have waited for the light to arrive the melts work through the phases. And the light is plastered to the wall more tightly than the plaster that covers it. The light is nothing if not for the mass it clings

to. Poor weakening light that has travelled through void. In twenty years of waiting the scene melts melt after melt.

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Remember how the tips of my fingers bled? Remember how one evening I seemed to bleed a lot? It was before I had developed calluses. It took a while to understand that what I was seeing and feeling was my own blood. In the red light my blood appeared black or a peculiar silver. I had no choice but to keep going, keep the strings thrumming, even as the blood flowed. The sound of the strings became strange. They were badly out of tune already of course. On top of this I barely knew what shapes I was making, or what or where I was touching. I wondered did everyone mind. Now I am thinking that in some parallel world there's some scale of notes in which all these notes made sweet harmony. Everything seemed to go on forever if you remember.

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1 seem to remember at one time there were written notes for this scene 1 was about to create. It was not quite a script, more directions, though 1 had intended for there to be words spoken. 1 was hoping perhaps that you would provide these words though no pressure was applied. In the end 1 dispensed with directions, though that isn't right, and dispense is right, in the manner of a calmative that is dispensed, as a single direction to remain yourself made you relax, or remain yourself.

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I sat in front of a gridded imperfect view that was the far end of what was to all intents and purposes a box. I, the mirror behind the lens, was the analogue I made. An ice-cold glass was balm to my throbbing hands. My trousers as far as my hands had been able to reach, and probably further, were stained. I being the mirror behind the lens I made myself the light's chance destination. My eyes could not be lenses themselves, access points for light. I was not looking for any recursion of the image, not looking at all. Differences in light came as pure variations of wavelength. I made for the light to land as a dead thud. Tuned my mind to recede. Thoughts were a different matter. Both mind, in recession, and mirror could exist independent of one another. Or, at least, the mind did anyway, as the mind will do what it will.

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All the while as a hole in the end of my sock tightened around my big toe. It became an intolerable sensation. The hole wrapped around my toe like wire. More holes, more wire, snare-like, around my toes. Light and thought fused slowly. Rainbow coronas burned inner perimeters in spots of flare. Dogs, minks, dresses, plants materialised.