NOTE TO WHOMEVER: The idea for this piece comes from two sources. One is the theft of Leonardo's Mona Lisa in 1911 (missing for two years) and the heightened attraction this caused. The other source was the author observing masses of tourists frequenting the Louve solely (?) for the purpose of being in the area where the picture is hung but without being able to penetrate the crowd to see the picture. Some of the words uttered by the VOICES here are the actual words the author heard.
This piece can be performed with or without children. This script represents the performance with the presence of children and adults.

DURATION OF PERFORMANCE. Seven to ten minutes. But given the temporal impression of a whole day spent in a museum. SPACE: Preferably a black box, or one with the audience sitting close to the performers.

LIGHTS: Let the crowd-looking-at-the-wall present itself to us as existing in semi-darkness. The activities of the GUARD take place in full light.

PERFORMERS: MEMBERS OF THE CROWD; MUSEUM GUARD (may be either male or female). The number of performers should, ideally, be enough to give (toward the end of the performance) the impression of a very crowded space and a mix of male/female, children/adults and of different ethnicity. But the play (or performance piece?) can be staged with as few as nine performers, all adults. Nine is the number of different VOICES we hear from the crowd. An actor speaking more than one VOICE would, of course, reduce that number.

The Museum Guard speaks, in the manner of a commentator, to the audience. When he speaks, the noise of the crowd should become muted; alternatively, the Guard should be in a position that his voice can be clearly heard by the audience.

The gender, ethnicity (tone of voice) and age of the VOICES are at the discretion of the director.

AT RISE: (LIGHTS UP) A person, dressed in the uniform of a museum guard, appears and opens the entrance door.

GUARD withdraws

LIGHTS GO DOWN TO
CREATE A SEMI DARKNESS

We see several persons, of different ethnic origins, hurry in and starting staring at a wall. One or two of the persons take pictures of whatever they see, or imagine, on the wall. They continue to look and take pictures for a minute or so. A barrier prevents the viewers from getting within arms length of the wall. We can just make out, in the dim light, a large sign, NE PAS TOUCHER (DO NOT TOUCH) hanging from the barrier.

VOICE #1 from crowd: “Strange. I was expecting to see some humor in that face.”
The early visitors are then joined by other people, adults as well as children. The children pull on their parents’ arms indicating they want to leave. Some of the adults hold the children on their shoulders in order for them to see the wall better. Some show the children how to operate a camera. Most of the adults carry guides and sport binoculars and camera.

**VOICES #2 & #3:**

**VOICE #2**

She’s the ugliest woman I’ve ever seen.

**VOICE #3**

How do you know that?

**VOICE #2**

I just do. She’s ugly! Ugly!

**VOICE #3**

Well, it’s just too bad you feel that way.

**VOICE #2**

Really? Since when did you become a judge of ugliness?

A young couple is dimly perceived kissing and fondling each other at the back of the crowd.

(Optional feature): The crowd is now large enough to support the activities of a pickpocket. He moves on the fringe of the crowd stealing wallets, passports, etc. This person can be played by one of the VOICES.

**VOICE #4** “If you want my opinion, I’m not overly impressed with it.”

**LIGHTS UP**

**MUSEUM GUARD**

(Addressing the audience; gesturing left and right)

You have to feel sorry for the other paintings here, like that one over there, it’s by Salvator Rosa…a battle scene from the English Revolution, dated about 1650. Hardly anyone notices it. Or that one over there, that’s Leonardo’s Virgin and Child with St. Anne.

**LIGHTS DOWN**

**VOICE #5:** “This is not the way it’s supposed to look…it’s too small. I think it’s a fake.”
More people arrive and join the crowd. It grows in a geometric progression, the incurable disease of a crowd driven by a “must-see.”. More persons arrive. Some take pictures of what they see with their cell-phones. Some use a variety of cameras. The crowd, now near the limit of the space, moves forward, like cows pressing against a fence. The persons at the front, feeling the pressure, begin to squirm and look for a way out.

VOICES #6 & #7:

VOICE #6
Your skin is quite horny. Your breathing is very heavy.

VOICE #7
Help!

VOICE #6
It’s nothing to be ashamed of…let me feel your pulse.

VOICE #7
Help!

VOICE #6
Your hands are clammy…your veins are jutting out.

VOICE #7
HELP!

Several minutes pass. The crowd heaves forward.

LIGHTS UP

MUSEUM GUARD
(Addresses the crowd looking at the wall; in a loud voice)
The museum is now closing. All visitors are asked to leave immediately.

LIGHTS DOWN

The crowd slowly breaks up and starts to leave. A few departing souls turn and take additional camera shots as they leave.

VOICES #8 & #9

VOICE #8
You must admit that the artist had a sensitivity none of us today can emulate. She obviously inherited an irreplaceable set of values which took generations of artists before her to build up.
VOICE #9

I didn’t know you were a poet.

LIGHTS UP

The space is now empty except for the GUARD who carries a broom and starts to clean the place up. He sweeps around the area.

GUARD

(Addressing the audience)
These tourists…they’re our bread and butter. Still…you have to wonder about the ethics of it all…maybe, just maybe, someone should tell them that the painting they’re looking at was stolen two years ago.

SOUND: Feet scuffling and fists hammering on the entrance door. The pounding becomes louder; the door seems to heave inward; the Guard finishes sweeping, exits with His broom.

FADE TO UTTER DARKNESS.