

Wheel of Fortune for Beginners 2026

Bram Van Damme, 2026

Very Very Hush Hush begins with a pair of stylized grey men's wigs orbiting one another. They function as a shared prop for a public demonstration of power and secrecy. Any potential wearers must conform to the roles of ruler versus lackey, the latter bowing his head with due humility to whisper privileged foreknowledge into his master's ear. This takes place in full view of everyone, of course, but sotto voce—through voiceless vibrations intended solely for that one auditory channel.

The paired 3D wigs (more helmet than hairstyle, really) are derived from a press photograph taken in an elementary school in Florida on September 11, 2001, at precisely 9:07 a.m. Andrew Card was the lackey on duty: in the middle of a reading session with G.W. Bush, he stepped forward in his role as Chief of Staff to whisper, as he later recounted, the following words into Bush's ear: "A second plane has hit the second tower. America is under attack." We can still vividly recall Bush's disorientation, that stunned gaze lingering painfully long into the void. The news itself had already reached the public faster, making any notion of privileged information obsolete—quite the opposite. Suddenly, everyone had an unobstructed view of the delayed mental registration of a message that was already sending shockwaves across the world. Very hush hush, indeed. "Timing is everything," as the saying goes, not least in the spectacle of power.

The Butler (crisis management meeting)

The audio play unfolding in the same space transports us to the boardroom of an organization confronted with a sudden crisis. No further details are provided. The anonymous board members lose themselves in a random escalation of hollow stock phrases from a *Business English for Beginners* course, in a futile attempt to project professionalism. No one seems to feel the need to actually intervene. The priority of this language game, it appears, is not to offer a concrete solution to a given problem, but to consolidate a managerial status quo—to maintain one's position, in other words. To outsiders, it sounds more like a support group for managers with a limited vocabulary, more "Globish" than English. As Stefaan Dheedene notes: "These slogans are 'universal instruments of persuasion' that must be deployable in any environment and on any occasion. They radiate a self-satisfied truth that stands above all discussion and need not be tested against empirical correctness."

The tribulations of this busy middle management set the tone for an exhibition that gradually unfolds as a comedy of manners for uncertain times. An image emerges of a Wheel of Fortune that has irreversibly been set in motion, yet loss of face must be avoided at all costs. As so often, Stefaan Dheedene exploits the comic potential of the situation in a *mise-en-scène* of carefully composed props and plot devices—the deadpan of the accomplished comedian articulated in the hushed language of objects.

28 protest signs: the statements of the group are neatly rendered on white protest signs hanging on the walls, which—should they ever be used in street protests—will certainly not appear unkempt. An automated arm has inscribed the self-selected typefaces in crisp felt-tip lettering, and the wood is evenly cut and assembled.

Dashboard: the streamlined central console of a self-driving car embodies the desire for a driving experience with no perceptible difference between standstill and motion. The protest

songs on the playlist have been expertly reduced to wordless ambient sound, ready for an ad lib session of Carpool Karaoke.

The Swap: a prototype of street furniture with familiar anti-homeless studs—a passive-aggressive intervention that must once have seemed like a good idea during a meeting of professionals—forms the setting for a discreet, if somewhat transparent, transfer of secret documents in a briefcase.

A Theme Park Ride with Sandy, Mike, and Frank

In that sense, it is not illogical that we arrive on the first floor at the architecture of theme parks. In the early 1970s, following the opening of Disney World Orlando, Roberto Venturi proclaimed that Disney had connected more effectively with what people truly want than anything architects had ever offered them. (For Disneyland Anaheim, he had relied solely on set designers specialized in illusion, not architects). Karal Ann Marling speaks of “*the architecture of reassurance*”: reassurance, safety, life on cruise control.

Yet Frank, Mike, and Sandy—the troubleshooters on duty in this second narrative—are working behind the scenes to fix yet another malfunction. “This is what you can do when something unexpected happens,” Frank instructs from a distance, “give it form, give it language, make it small enough to handle.” Something suggests that the artist feels a greater affinity here: has he not also set himself the task of devising forms that confront disorder? Perhaps we can speak of a concentrated moment of stillness, beyond the spectacle, reduced to the scale of individual consciousness—or, as Samuel Beckett puts it: “when the object appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then and only then may it be a source of enchantment.”