



Lottie



Bones



Peggy



Prospero



Flo

How sad is that doggie in the window

Photographing dogs left in cars was no easy task. **Zoe Williams** hears why

Is there anything on Earth lonelier than a lonely dog? Sure they're cute, but have you ever seen a more affecting despair, a better distillation of the condition of solitude? This is the photographer Martin Osborne's earliest memory: "Being left in the car, and this feeling that no one would ever come back... the impossible loneliness of this silent space." Funnily enough, I left my boyfriend outside Lidl once and he said roughly the same thing. That was quite annoying. It comes so much better from another species, in a moment of art.

Mute: the Silence of Dogs in Cars has been no simple project. Osborne spent many days wandering around supermarket car parks, barking ("I was looking for dogs but I couldn't see any. I thought they must be all lying down"). Then he realised that people actually didn't leave their dogs in cars that often. There was nothing for it but to find particular dogs, and then put them in cars. Many more hours were spent matching the expression of the dog to the type and colour of the car. Much ham was wasted. The huskies would only react if Sinead

O'Connor was playing. Studio lights beamed into night-dimmed cars, to give that particular quality of bleakness and invisibility.

Giving the dogs back must have taken a fresh emotional toll, especially that white staffie. But what exceptional results: who knew we had so much to learn from a puzzled collie in a Sierra? What's in the dark space of that whippet's imagination? (Mainly chicken, probably. Chicken and cats.) Oh Lottie, so much sadness, just in your eyebrows!

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