

EXTRACT: MARIE-ANNE McQUAY

What is the woman doing meanwhile?

Nothing. Sitting. Looking. Thinking. We circle her, as though looking for a way in. The room is mostly bare, a single painting, abstract, box-like, white in a white frame. Eventually, we leave, move back beyond the rooms, looking for a way out. A lot of things happen in quick succession. Firstly, she enters a small room, a library. Upon a lacquered table, there is a thick folder of photographs. She turns a random page (p.300) and looks briefly at an image of a doll or mannequin, split or broken open, encased in a kind of bell jar. Is it Japanese? Perhaps that is a kimono. She moves again. We follow her past a new room of cube monitors, each showing nothing at all, not even turned on. She passes through, continues down a wide corridor along which a sound recording of two voices is playing in such a way that no matter how far along the corridor she and we go, the voices sound as though they are just at one's ear.

What would they be saying? Are they whispering?

The voices would be describing a performance. The woman listens to the voices which recount the details, taking turns to speak each sentence. It is a performance in which the performer somehow utilises an old-fashioned projector and a table of objects. The performance - the voices say the artist says - will not be complete until every object on the table has been properly used. The voices describe the intricacies of the performance carefully; thoughtfully. They even describe how the performance breaks down after the performer, (who has silently, mesmerically presented and involved each object and then threaded film for several minutes) abruptly changes the pace of her actions. It describes how rising, discernible levels of panic from the gallery staff alert the audience that the projector smoking and bursting into flames is possibly unintentional. The performer remains calm throughout, her movements concise, her face slightly abstracted even - the voices recount - even after any distance or semblance of a fourth wall is broken when a man begins to shout instructions at the artist from somewhere in the middle of the crowd. The narration ends, the voices begin to loop again and the woman moves along the corridor and away.