

EXTRACT: DAVID BERRIDGE

I found myself thinking what if there were no images?

When had she first seen it? In a museum?

In two different sites, two different spaces, one in the city and one by the sea. She always said it was one of her favourite paintings and that it made a big impression on her. Now she is not even sure what she remembered of it. She has refrained from looking it up online, so far, and the image is absent from the monographs on her bookshelves. She fails to describe it. Sporadically gathering the details together hoping they constitute a full mental image. No vividness in observed details. No emergence of the whole. She cannot place her memory of that experience into a cogent enough form. Like the other fragments, all it produces is hopelessly schematic, scarcely visual at all. There is this abruptness with which the painter has chosen to confine and bound the scene. How confinement and binding constitute, in effect, almost all of the scene itself. How containment is the content. And yet the description slips through her fingers, enables the painting to exit through the back door. Writing becomes a painting escaping. Much later she found a description of the image. An art historian claiming the painting as an act of mourning, an elegy for a close friend of the artist, a declaration of their personal and artistic fraternity. But she has no desire to put the painting as she remembers it into the tangle of another's personal relationships. Experiences vanish, time proceeds, the work remains. She thought if she were an art historian, she could go to the gallery where this painting is kept in storage. She would sit at a table in some private room and they would bring the painting to her, and she could look at it for as long as she wanted, or until the gallery staff needed to close. She could maybe do that a couple of times but sooner or later she would have to return to a state of not seeing it, of being unable to say what it is she was looking at...

...or for.