EXTRACT: JAMIE LIMOND

She looks at a painting. The woman in the painting is also looking at paintings, she realises. But she might just as well be crossing the street. Checking for traffic. Waiting for the omnibus. The buildings are too far away to be paintings. The paintings are too close to be buildings. Which is it to be? Is the rail on the wall a kerb? Are they oils and gilt or windows and door frames? Is this a salon or a boulevard? It must be one or the other.

She finds herself enjoying the maddening painterly description of the pictures on the wall. And yet she cannot say why, or even *whether*, they are in fact pictures, and not buildings. In fact, she'd be strongly inclined to say they looked far more like buildings than paintings. But she knows for sure they must be pictures, and not buildings. It is a picture of a woman in a gallery, not a woman crossing the street. How does she know this? She doesn't know. For the 'wall' looks like a dusty peach road, the rail seems to curve away into the distance or to split-off into a junction, marking, impossibly, both the opposite road and the pavement on which she's standing, depending on which side of the picture she focuses. It's partly this unstable near-far space which seems eager to enact the woman's crossing of the 'street', while in reality we know she would only hit a wall. Or rather, in the picture's reality she would. In reality reality, woman, pictures and wall, street or no street, share a space which is no space at all.

She's sure it's a painterly description of some pictures on a wall, and she appreciates the description, even if she cannot verify the identity of that which is being described. But how can she appreciate a description of that which cannot be concretely identified? Finding such a description beautiful is like finding a metaphor that's lost its subject beautiful. Or not quite. Rather, the description *is* a metaphor, at every semantic and material level. The manipulation of the paint denotes neither and both pictures and buildings. If she's sure they are pictures that's only because of other things going on in the rest of the painting. And if she thinks they could be buildings, that's also because of other things going on in the rest of the painting. It's also to do with how these picture-buildings are painted, of course. And looking at how they're painted, it's safe to say they wouldn't look a whole lot like buildings *or* pictures on a wall if the woman wasn't there looking at them.

It occurs to her that the metaphors support one another. Some of them are given greater weight, and these become what the picture is 'of'. In this case: a woman looking at pictures on a wall.

She realises there was an initial delay in realising what she was seeing - thus the buildings. It's possible the woman in the picture has also just experienced such a lag. She could be turning back to double check some canvas she chose to skip. It's the same action as someone stepping back to check that the reflection they just caught of themselves was correct.

She wonders whether it's this turn of the woman's head more than anything which turns the buildings into pictures (while her own turn turned the pictures into buildings). If she were to look away, the spell would be broken, this particular illusion would fade, and she'd find herself on a street after all.

She becomes conscious of her own looking, as if she were on CCTV, seeing her own back, seeing herself looking at the picture, unable to turn and catch her face. She remembers a conceptual work from the 1970s. Two monitors on either side of a wall. One would play footage of the viewer as they rounded the corner, catching a glimpse of themselves just as they disappeared from sight. This old painting is slower, but it's on the same trip.