

EXTRACT: LAURA HAYNES

Even with the windows open the room is increasingly oppressive. The smoke from her cigarette rises straight up, like a chalked line. They both spend more time looking for cool, quiet corridors deep in the heart of the place. And sometimes they do talk about it - the estate - as a great sprawling and unruly body. All the images encountered today seem unable to make a fist. It all blurs at the edges. Not a thing seems to fit. They talk about their shared nightmare of an endless walk through the infinite, pointless rooms of the Louvre. Finally, in the shaded corner of a brown anaglypta wall populated by lifeless still lives, they come across an image of some nameless noblewoman, adjacent to a heavy, damask curtain; a fine lady, something about whom seems to match the day. The image itself feels deprived of a proper airing, the colours are dragged groundward by the weight of the woman's crimson gown and filigree gold. It is as though she is strangled by her own cloth. The great lady's eyes vacantly stray to the corner of the painting where there is a void, an avoidance, a drop to black.