

The Drowning Room

GREYSCALE/CMYK a group exhibition, Tramway, Glasgow

By Sarah Pierce

Describing Paddy Jolley and Reynold Reynolds' *The Drowning Room* is like describing a dream. It makes sense, great sense, as long as we accept its logic. Their 2000 film installation presents an ordinary home filled with ordinary objects. Disjointed episodes blend one into the next and people occupy space like snapshots in time. Nothing sorts out these moments from everyday life. Nothing extraordinary, except that the entire film takes place underwater.

Without the usual laws of cause and effect, things stagger. Time takes on new dimensions. People appear fated to an afterlife where they never connect, where actions slip and blunder. In a place where trauma is repetition, water is the repressed that slips into every corner, every interaction, and every generation. As a hopeless refrain, in spite of it all, the filmmaker's infuse this murky interior with flashes of dark humour, one-liners performed in the spirit of Buster Keaton. A man wearing glasses. A 'still' shot of a clock. The sleeping cat that floats lifelessly off its owner's lap. Shot in black-and-white *The Drowning Room* resembles the dream sequence, the flashback, and also an era in film when images were autonomous from their accompanying sounds.

It follows that space is different in this place. Narratives are a linear and images tell us little about the sequence of events. Clocks tick, a violin fades in and out, a cat purrs. Beneath these, the resonance of underwater vibrations remind us that these other ordinary sounds belong to some place else; somewhere different from what we see on screen. Through ideas built in physics, time and space collapse. Seconds translate into lifetimes. A room dies a slow death.

Sarah Pierce, 2002