

the reading room

Stephen Connolly

2' 45" 16mm/DVD 2002



Short Synopsis

the reading room traces the movement of visitors to the British Museum Reading Room, through the opening hours of a single day, in under three minutes and in silence.

Synopsis

the reading room is a short exploration of the changing place of the archive. Using an elevated camera, this single 'master' shot film reveals the layout of this library as a panopticon, a structure envisaged as the ideal prison by Jeremy Bentham (1785).

Bentham described his design as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example." The panopticon was invoked by Michel Foucault as metaphor for modern "disciplinary" societies and institutions, given their pervasive inclination to observe and normalise.

A desire for completion in the depiction - as surveillance - is echoed in the visual form of **the reading room**, as is the gently ironic subtitled commentary, reflecting on the absence of sound in the work and the continued interest of the visitors.

Screenings :

2007 Books, Letters, Words, ICA, 24 & 25.11.07, London UK

2004 Rotterdam International FF; Int'l Video Art Cycle, Macao, China; Videoex, Zurich; World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam; Int'l Film Festival, Melbourne; FilmNet Festival, Seoul; VideoZone, Tel Aviv, Israel.

2003 WRO, Wroclaw, Poland

2002 Kunstverein Bremen, Germany

Collections :

Szuper Gallery Liftarchiv; Kreisverwaltungsreferat, München
LUX, 3rd Floor, 18 Shacklewell Lane, London E8 2EZ

the reading room is suitable for looped gallery presentation

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