

# ARTNEWS

## AROUND NEW YORK

The art that had New York talking this past spring was barely there—shows comprised of empty, or nearly empty, spaces charged with anxious energies: the cacophony of a prison, the voices of art dealers, the movement of balloons, the smell of bacon.

**Andrea Fraser** led the way. For a little over two weeks, Fraser took over the fifth floor of the **Whitney Museum** as part of “Open Plan,” a series of solo shows in the largest column-free museum exhibition space in New York. Light streamed through floor-to-ceiling windows at each end of the airy gallery as audio that the artist recorded inside Sing Sing prison in Ossining, New York, played from speakers mounted on the ceiling; men talked, shouted, and screamed, metal clanged, and birds chirped.

Titled *Down the River* (2016), the work was brutal and efficient, splicing together examples of institutions that have exponentially

expanded over the past half-century: one focused on control and punishment, the other on learning, pleasure, and leisure; one whose population is disproportionately of color, the other whose patrons are largely white; one hidden away from society, the other dead center. It turned the museum into a site of psychological turmoil, as horror mingled with tranquility.

Few artists today are working as incisively as Fraser, who has, from the beginning of her career, bravely addressed inequality in all its forms—racial, social, gender, and (in her searing essay for the 2012 Whitney Biennial) economic. She has done so in the full knowledge of art’s tendency to reduce politics to feel-good back-patting. Acknowledging the pitfalls, Fraser raises the stakes. In an interview in the *New York Times*, she admitted of her show, “I am not sure that on some level it isn’t an absolutely monstrous thing to do.” She shouldn’t worry. After some time with

the piece it was all other art that seemed monstrous.

A smaller but no less antagonistic void was on offer at **Essex Street** gallery, which was empty save for four speakers that played a four-hour-long loop of the gallery’s owner, Maxwell Graham, and his colleague, Neal Curley, reading from Abigail Bray’s hard-hitting 2013 manifesto, *Misogyny Re-loaded*. This was the work of **Bea Schlingelhoff**, who paid the two art dealers \$50 an hour to make the recording (\$875 total), which was not for sale.

The business deal, on its own terms, was a commendably taut conceptual maneuver—a reversal of power, if you will, or a reeducation session, with the artist using the dealer quite literally—but for anyone lucky enough to know Graham, it was also a subtly humorous one. One of the more charming and voluble art types in the city, he was required to listen to the sound of his own voice for hours each day, intoning about radical feminism. How, one wonders, has that experience affected him?

ANDREW RUSSETH



Installation view of Bea Schlingelhoff’s *The Art Dealer Reads Misogyny Re-loaded*, 2016. Essex Street.