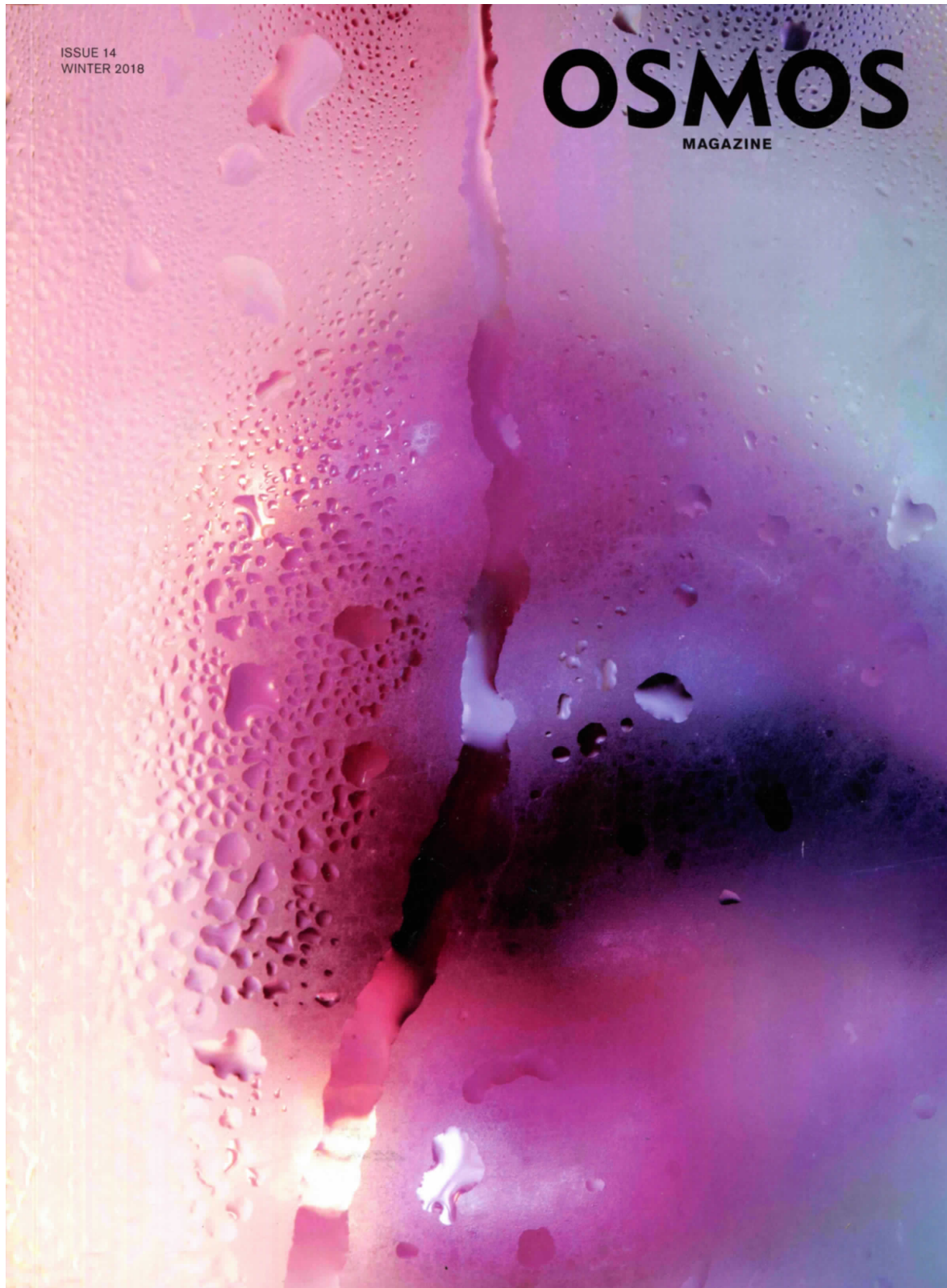


PAULA COOPER GALLERY

Kirkwood, Jeffrey. "Carey Young," Osmos Magazine, Issue 14, Winter, 2018; pp 18-23.



Kirkwood, Jeffrey. "Carey Young," *Osmos Magazine*, Issue 14, Winter, 2018; pp 18-23.

Carey Young

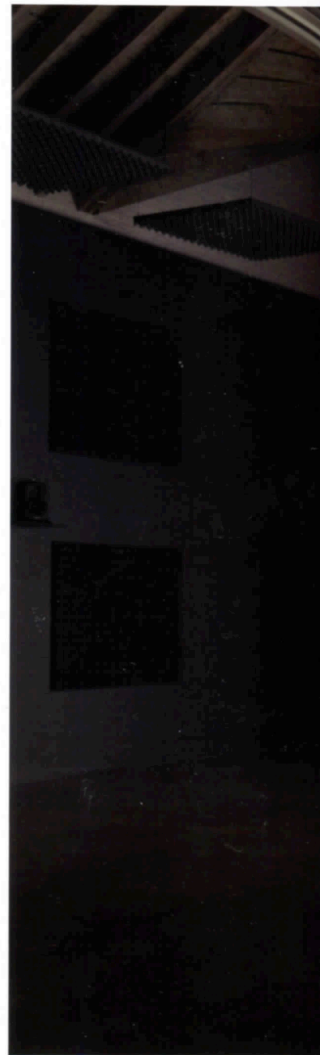
BY JEFFREY KIRKWOOD

Weighing in on the promise of photography as a form of evidence (or more accurately, its lack of promise), Oliver Wendell Holmes observed, "Under the action of light, then, a body makes its superficial aspect potentially present at a distance, becoming appreciable as a shadow or as a picture. But remove the cause—the body itself—and the effect is removed." The American jurist went on to declare that the young medium "fixed the most fleeting of our illusions, that which the apostle and the philosopher and the poet have alike used as the type of instability and unreality." Bodies lent truth to images and the law was concerned with truth in its disciplining of bodies. For this reason, photographic media were temporarily evicted from the halls of justice, only to become one of its central evidentiary fixtures less than a hundred years later.

It is into these legal corridors that the London-based, British-American artist Carey Young returns in her video work *Palais de Justice* and her series of digital photographs *Before the Law*. Young's images, however, do not pursue a belief in the transparency that initially denied photography a role as evidence for Holmes and that would paradoxically make it such a powerful witness in matters of law during the twentieth century. Neither the visual medium nor the law prove transparent in these works, emphasizing a permanent frustration in matters of representation—both legal and artistic.

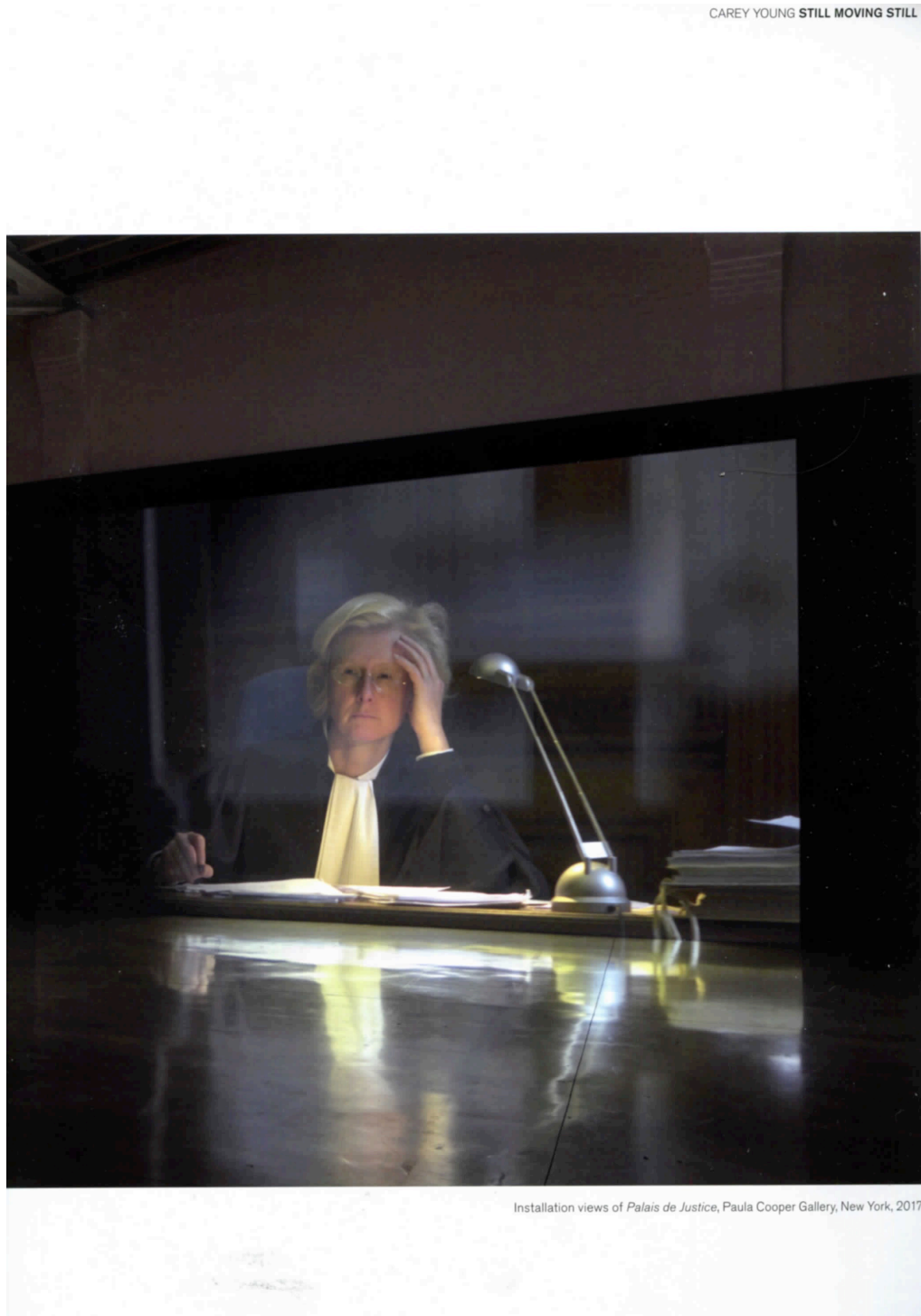
In the 18-minute digital video, filmed in the eponymous *Palais de Justice*, a nineteenth century judicial mega-plex in Brussels, the viewer finds himself forever within the subdued light of the building's interior, furtively watching courtroom proceedings from the outside. Visual access to the courtrooms is granted through partially obscured architectural apertures that immediately recall the history of early "keyhole" and "peeping tom" films like *A Search for Evidence* (1903) and Ferdinand Zecca's *Par le trou de serrure* (1901). Like those films, which functioned as meta-filmic tutorials on the constructed nature of cinematic looking, Young's video forces one into an uncomfortable reckoning with the "instability and unreality" of tangled representational fictions that nevertheless have had such real consequences for the bodies that they define, detain, reform, and punish. Cinema's tradition of exploiting the tension between realism and artifice is brought to bear on legal fictions that cleave on questions of "natural" versus "positive" law, but which leave no room for the productive indecision of art.

This confrontation with the law as one among many forms of fictional representation is made explicit when we find ourselves looking at a coat rack filled with black, ceremonial judges' robes hanging beneath pen and ink drawings of the men who have previously worn them. The institutional position of judgement captured by the robes is revealed as empty when absent a body, and the power accorded to the white bodies when wearing them is shown to be the result of yet another fiction of representation, no different than those of the drawn portraits above. This doubles down on the references to early keyhole films when one considers that the punchline of those films was often that the woman undressing behind closed doors was revealed to be a man. In Young's piece on the other hand, expectations are upset not upon finding a man, but by seeing only female judges presiding. The structurally male gaze of the filmic spectator is forced back upon itself, transforming the scopic viewing subject into an excluded object, with the female judge's gaze commanding both filmic and legal space. The viewer is no longer a subject, but instead subjected to a judgment with real consequences for his practices of vision.



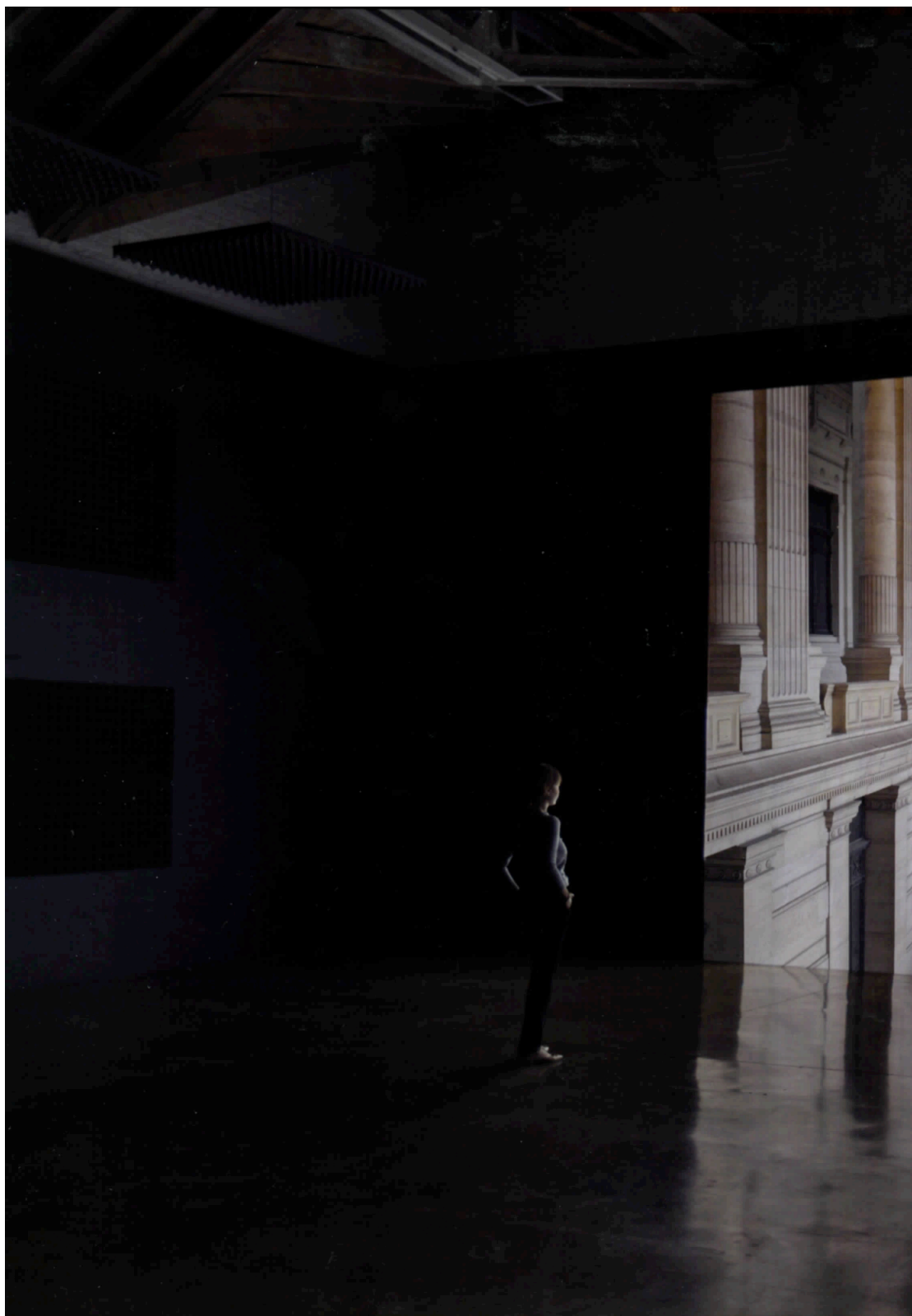
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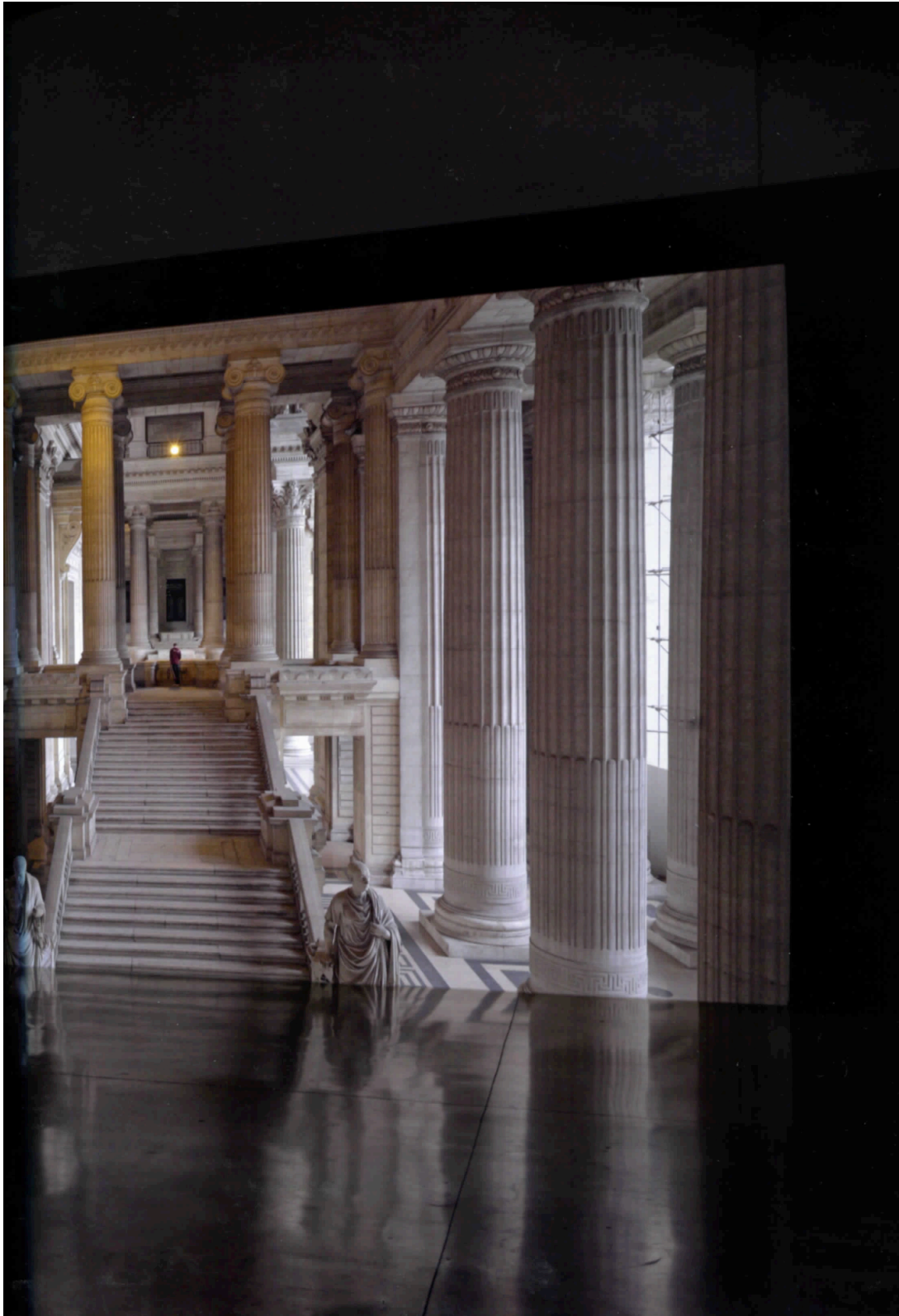
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CAREY YOUNG STILL MOVING STILL



Before the Law, 2017