

Square Cuts

“It is necessary to try to surpass one’s self always; this occupation ought to last as long as life.”

—Queen Christina

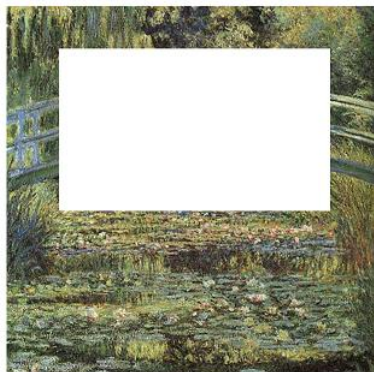
There are certainly better ways to spend a free Tuesday, you think to yourself as you stand outside Melbourne Water’s head office. Taking a deep breath and hoping that you aren’t about to make a fool of yourself, you approach the front desk.

“Hello, I believe this book belongs to one of your employees.”

Or at least that was what your muffled words would have conveyed, had the receptionist not reared up and hurriedly ushered you into an empty waiting room. With a strained smile, one that you almost mistake for a grimace, the receptionist tells you that a certain Mr Van Rjien is out at the moment, but has been expecting you and left clear instructions that you are to wait for him here until he returns.

The waiting room is a brightly-lit monstrosity completely devoid of windows, dotted with dried up water features creating an air of decrepitude. You make yourself comfortable in an enormous yet surprisingly squishy sofa. As you gaze up at the ceiling, the sheer size of the smoke detector astounds you, though not nearly as much as the enormous sprinkler it is connected to. Surrounding this giant abomination of a smoke detector are several ancient-looking frescoes, each with a rectangle cruelly carved out of it. Scanning the room, you see many square chunks of plaster lying around that appear to have been cut out of the ceiling.





—Stephen Muirhead and Yi Huang