

MARY JO BANG

MASQUERADE: AFTER BECKMANN

We're sitting here quietly.
You're feeling your arm, I'm feeling my face.
We're supposed to stay quiet

and live the waiting life.
We were told to be a portraitist's object
and imitate a sad fate.

We are a skull times two.
We're supposed to stay quiet.
Herr Moment is looking

at a watch that says now.
Its red face reminds me of the eye of an ogre.
Its shiny rim reminds me

of Herr Moment's handcuffs.
I don't want to speak
about what can't be fathomed—

mourning and missing,
rings cut from corpses,
Herr Moment's refusal to show his real face.

Max Beckmann, Masquerade, Oil on canvas, 1948