



# CREATIVE FUTURES 2007

Creative Review and PlayStation® present Creative Futures, our showcase of the brightest young talents in visual communications

all our nominees were chosen by the CR editorial team. Our only criteria were to find individuals or teams who we feel have an extremely bright career ahead of them and who are indicative of the future direction of the industry.

For almost 20 years, Creative Review has been giving the next generation of talented creatives an important little shove in the right direction thanks to our Creative Futures scheme. Our Futures alumni now number some of the biggest names in visual communications.

This year's crop, I'm sure, will join their illustrious predecessors. In a first for the scheme, we have done away

with categories: with the way in which people work today, it seems increasingly meaningless to define them so narrowly. Look through the work of our nominees this year, featured on the following pages, and you will find many of them applying themselves to a wide range of disciplines.

In previous years, we have run the scheme as a pay-to-enter competition but, in another change this time around,

This year's Creative Futures are:

- Popel Coumou, p44
- Roel Wouters, p48
- Samuel Akesson and Tomas Mankovsky, p52
- Kate Moross, p56
- Digital Club, p60
- David O'Reilly, p64

Congratulations to all of them.



## POPEL COUMO

**Born** 26.02.78, The Netherlands  
**Education** Photography, Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam  
**Based** Amsterdam  
**Work history** Runs her own studio  
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Popel Coumou isn't particularly secretive about her work but, like many artists, she sometimes finds it hard to explain why she does what she does. Her photographs usually depict a room or space, with a window or door leading off the scene. It can be difficult to work out what's real and what isn't but then, as Coumou says, her work, "isn't about trying to create something real but, rather, a new world, a new reality". Discovering that the scenes in her photographs are all flat collages constructed in paper, fabric and clay, carefully lit by projectors or daylight, simply adds to the mystery of the stories she forms within these new realities.

While devoid of action in the traditional sense, Coumou's photographs certainly do contain stories. A fan of the German artist Gerhard Richter's work, Coumou claims that it's often what lies outside the frame of her pictures, beyond the door or window in a photograph, that adds dramatic tension to the scene. The way the light falls on a single chair in a Richter painting, for example, can suggest that something is happening outside of an otherwise tightly composed scene. "I like people who create an extra dimension with very simple means," she explains. "Like with



Popel Coumou's stunning photographs of rooms and architectural spaces are, in fact, images of collages she has assembled using paper, fabric and clay. This spread, both images are Untitled, 2007, 130 x 87cm

Richter, the way he hangs his photographic works so they look like windows. They're often simple images that suggest a lot more."

Coumou's art, too, is often simple in its layout, using flat planes and shapes to evoke objects, shadows and a light source. Lumps of clay are formed into beds and lamps, curtains are made of strips of fabric, for example, but the end result, transformed by the intricate way that these models are lit, is invested with a palpable tension. At her recent Creative Futures lecture, Coumou showed a behind-the-scenes image of the constituent parts of one of her compositions: compared to the final piece, here were lumps of dull coloured clay and fabric laid out flat on a board. As she said, "without the light, there's nothing left of it".

Coumou has always been fascinated by the interplay of light and space. While only four years old when she decided to be an artist, and eight when she received her first camera, her work as it is now (she's been working in this way since 2003) facilitates her love of 'lightfall' within architectural spaces. "I was trying to decide between architecture, fashion, painting or photography," Coumou says of her initial artistic directions as a student, "so I did a few ▶



Coumou's images are usually devoid of people but she has occasionally worked on self-portraits and also with models. Windows and doors are always the source of the 'lightfall'. Right: Untitled, 2006, 130 x 87cm

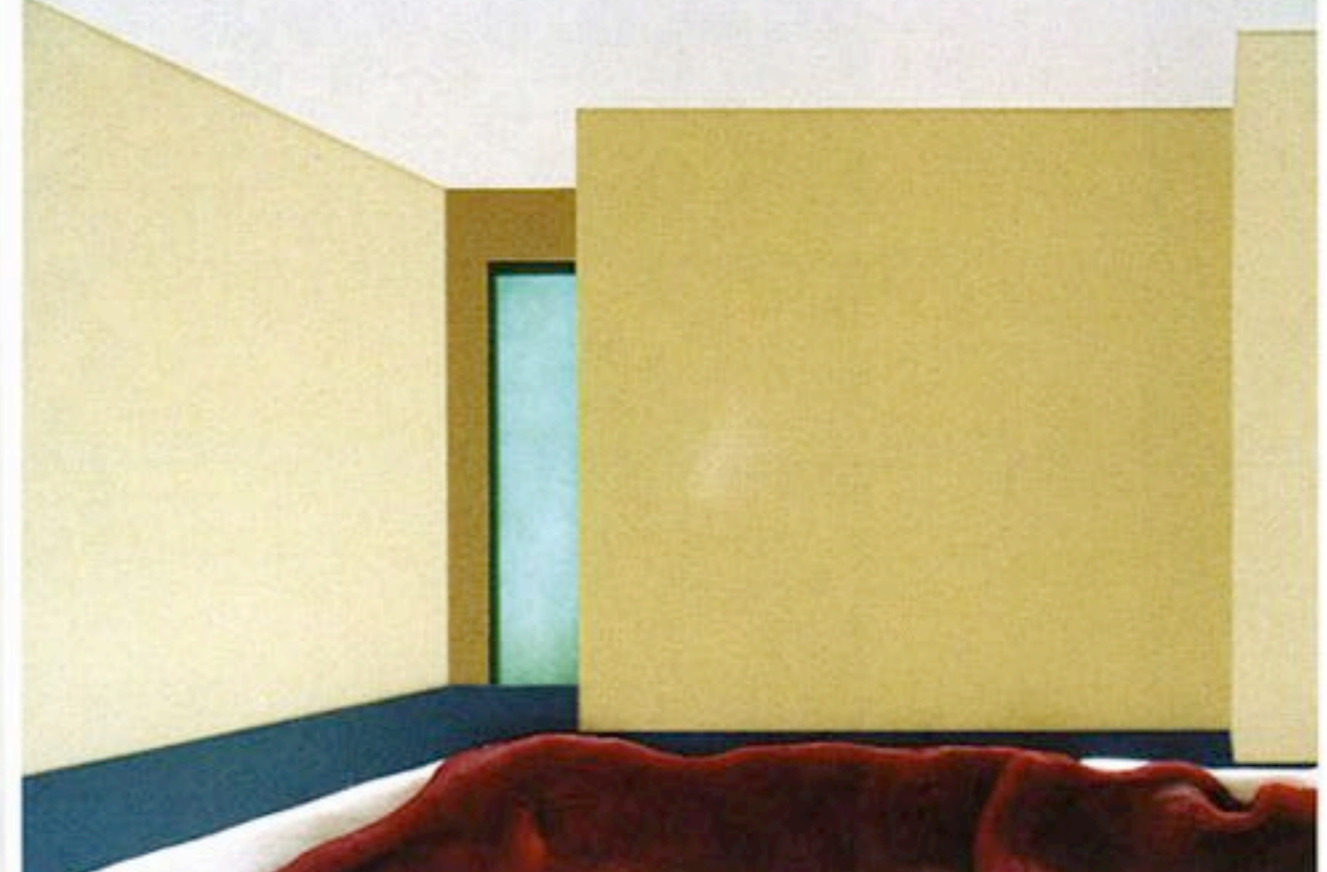
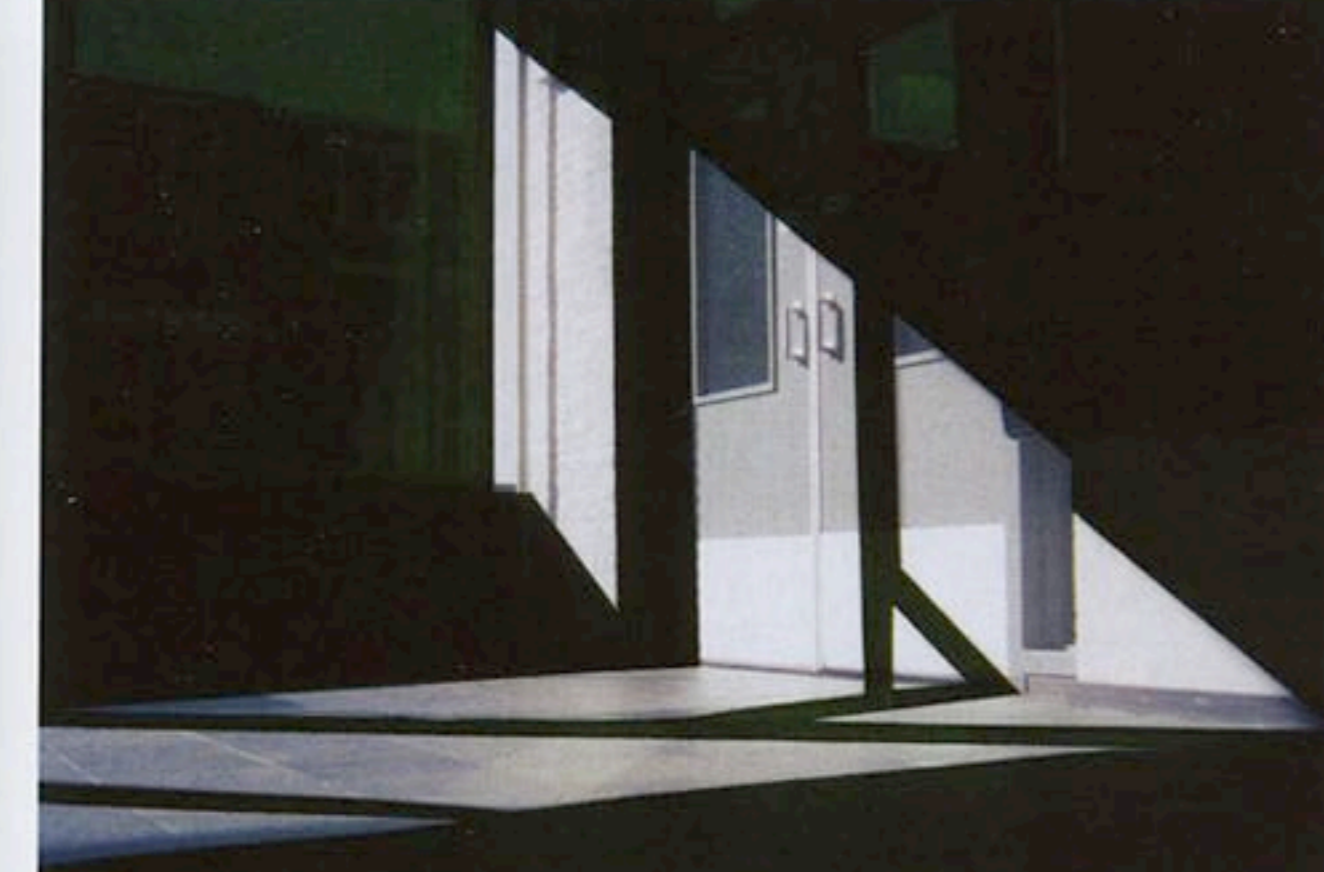
◀ courses and liked photography immediately after I started to work with it. And with photography I was then able to combine all those disciplines."

Photography has enabled Coumou to convey her interest in formal, graphic composition and how two-dimensional collages can be transformed into three-dimensional space. "I'm very interested in how you can make a graphically interesting composition which, at the same time, is also a space. I am also fascinated that with only two pieces of paper and a few pencil lines, for example, I can suggest that space." Coumou often lights her 2D collages with two projectors – one from behind the constructed model and one from the side that will cast light on the subject of her picture; usually a room, containing a bed or, as in more recent work, a chair. "By exaggerating the lightfall you wonder what's happening, what's going on next door," she says.

Coumou uses only a 35mm camera (no Photoshop) and prints all her photographs at 10 x 15" in order to arrange them, Wolfgang Tillmans style, on the walls of her studio. This is the start of a process whereby she moves her favourite pieces to another wall until happy with her final selection.

While still enraptured with the hidden spaces within architecture—Coumou can often be found taking photos of buildings from beneath the stairwell, or from little-used doorways—she has also started to include figures within her work, including herself. These self-portraits and the more recent work completed for fashion label Un Deux Trois in Paris "play on the border between fiction and reality" and retain the sense of mystery that much of her unpeopled work puts across so powerfully. They also represent a new avenue for Coumou's self-expression—one that we're sure can only gain her more recognition.

As a prize-winner at the prestigious Hyères photography festival earlier this year, too, Coumou looks set to transform her lumps of clay, strips of paper and cloth into even greater things in the future. ☐



Far left: Untitled, 2007, 87x130cm. Right: Untitled, 2005, 87x130cm. Below: Untitled, 2004, 87x130cm

