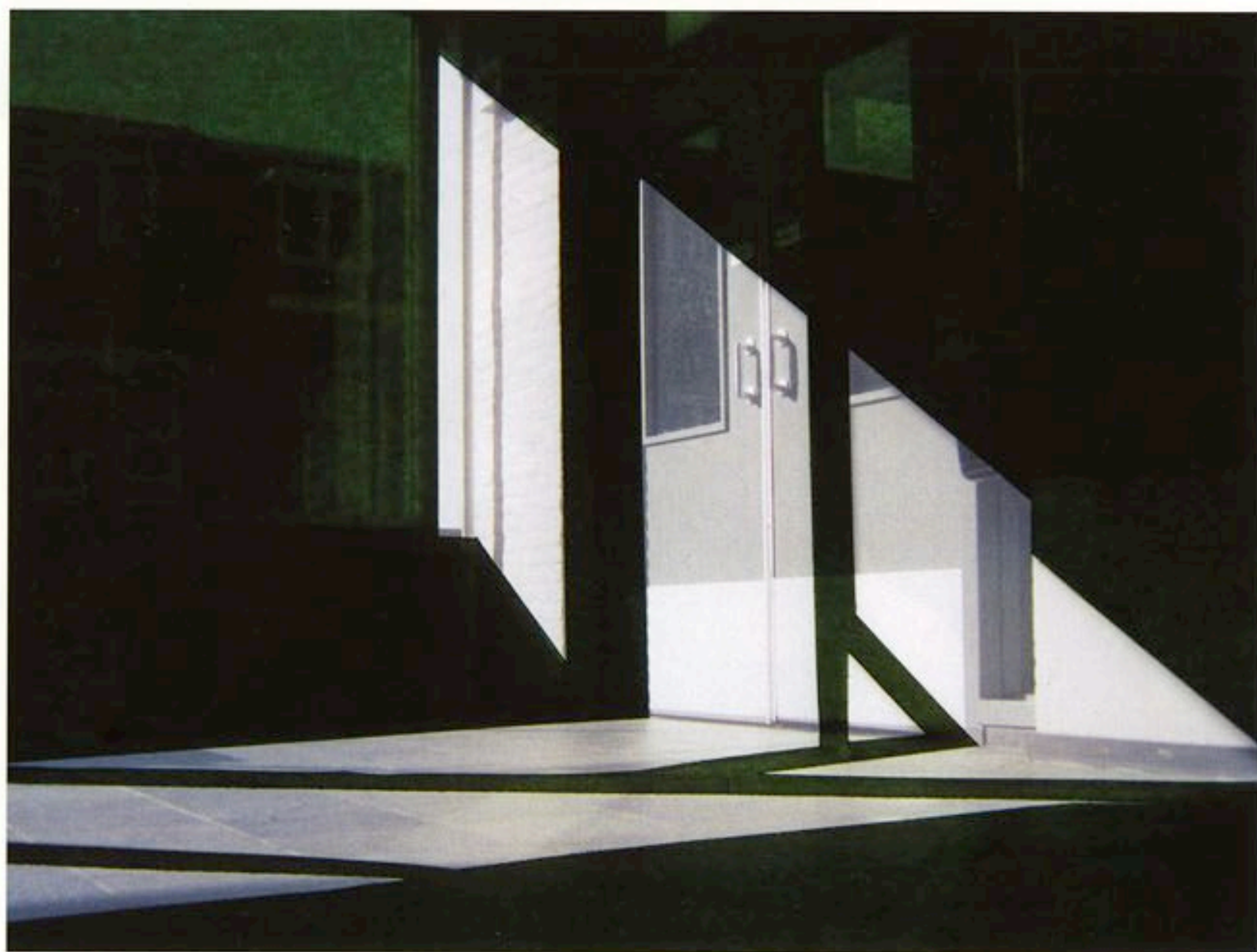


The Other Room

Popel Coumou builds two-dimensional collages from paper, carton, fabric and clay, creating the illusion of space by clever use of perspectives and lighting. The end results are deceptively realistic and beautifully dressed miniature room sets, that seem like they are sheltering hidden secrets. Text: Pim Milo



She combines the visions of an interior architect and a still life photographer. The fictitious three dimensional space is misleading. You find yourself trying to figure out whether the original maquette was two or three dimensional and what the actual scale of the material is. From dark spaces you peer through lit doorways and windows. The reflection of a hidden light source is the only thing that reveals something of the dark interiors. The balanced use of natural and artificial light echoes the paintings of Edward Hopper. In many of the works the feeling of desolation is amplified by the absence of human beings. Popel Coumou is fascinated by spaces in which man is notice-

ably absent, in the midst of traces of habitation. But she appears here and there like a serene actress in her own stark compositions. In that way she adds an extra layer to her work, making it more intimate.

A different method

Popel Coumou (1978) graduated from the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam in 2004. In 2007 she won the first prize at the Hyeres photo festival. An honour she had to share with the American Jessica Roberts. The prize included an assignment to make a photo series in Hyeres to be exhibited in the following year's 23rd festival; International de Mode et de Photographie. For this series, Coumou used a different technique. The starting point was not

the maquette, but a photo of a stairwell or a room. Architectural elements from Hyeres, like the Villa Noailles, the favorite hangout of Picasso and Man Ray. A shadow is made more prominent or a sterile white stairwell gets a warm accent by applying a narrow red paper strip. This collage is then photographed with an analogue camera, after which an enlargement of 87 x 130 cm is printed. Sometimes the prints are worked on with a marker. They are so well done that only a second glance reveals that the interiors are not completely straightforward. With these techniques Coumou traverses the boundary between photography and painting.

www.popelcoumou.nl