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napisala  
written by



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## Napuhane iluzije

## Inflated Illusions

Svijet Popel Coumou je dvodimenzionalan. Plosnat poput palačinke. Ovakva izjava mogla bi zvučati pomalo nepristojno kad, prvo, to doista ne bi bila istina, i drugo, kad ne bismo morali priznati da se njezin svijet ne čini plosnatim, budući da je Popel Coumou ovladala pravilima perspektive gotovo do savršenstva.

Dopustite da pojasnim. Popel Coumou (1978.) fotografira interijere. Riječ je o plosnatim interijerima ili, bolje rečeno, o kompozicijama koje kasnije postaju interijeri; interijerama složanim na listu papira zajedno s komadićima papira ili ljepljenke, uredno izrezanim i zaljepljenim, ili s hrpicama gline.

The world of Popel Coumou is flat. Flat as a pancake. This would sound a bit unkind, if it weren't for the fact that a) this is really the case, and b) strangely enough it does not seem flat, since Popel Coumou has mastered the rules of perspective, almost to perfection.

Let me explain. Popel Coumou (1978) photographs interiors. Flat ones that is: interiors, or rather: compositions that later on become interiors, that she made on a piece of paper, with other scraps of paper or cardboard, neatly cut and glued, or with tiny heaps of clay. One would have a hard time recognizing the architectural potential of

fotografije  
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Popel Coumou

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Arhitektonski potencijal tih kolaža nije lako prepoznati tek jednostavnim promatranjem. Međutim, plosnatost privatnih soba, hodnika i hotelskih apartmana nestaje na fotografijama Popel Coumou. Zapravo, čini se da su te sobe napuhane. Iako se u većini interijera ne nalazi ništa osim možda kojeg usamljenog komada namještaja, uglavnom stolica, stolova i kreveta, u njih kao da je udahnut život.

Ovu "varku" Coumouova koristi otkad je 2004. diplomirala na Gerrit Rietveld akademiji u Amsterdamu. Gradi male realitete na kojima svijetlo i tople komplementarne boje stvaraju doživljaj tajnovitosti. Svjetlo kao da uvijek dopire iz sobe susjedne onoj koju fotografuje. Ulazi kroz prozor sa strane, iscrtaava svijetlošću pruge na podu i zidovima. To je predivno, upravo zbog topline boja i kompozicija, no u isto vrijeme i čudno jer kao da nikada nije u skladu s ostatkom prostorije.

Gladajući pobliže, iluzije koje

these collages, just by looking at them. But photographed by Coumou, the flatness of the private rooms, hallways, and hotel suites disappear. Or rather: it seems like the rooms have been inflated, life has been breathed into them—even though most of the interiors are empty, except for some lonesome furniture, mostly chairs, tables and beds.

It has been Coumou's "trick" ever since she graduated, in 2004, from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. She constructs small realities, where the use of light and warm, complementary colours evokes a sense of mystery. The source of light always seems to be in a room next to the one depicted. It shines through a side window; it leaves bright yellow stripes on floors and walls. Beautiful, because of the warmth of the colours, and the compositions. Strange also, because it never truly fits.

On closer inspection, her illusions are not as impeccable

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stvara nisu savršene kako bi se moglo učiniti na prvi pogled. Primjerice, na malenoj glinenju zavjesi može se naći nekoliko otisaka prstiju, cijena plavogj obojavanja. Perspektiva možda nije precizna kao u slikarstvu kasne renesanse. Takve stvari, međutim, nisu važne ni Coumouovoj ni promatraču. Čak štoviše, te nesavršenosti čine njezine fotografije, unatoč posvemašnjoj praznosti, još osobnijima, pa čak i dirljivima.

Odstranjuju profinjnost medija kakav je fotografija te dodaju jednu vrstu ugodnog i karakterističnog majstorstva. Ne treba ni listicati da Coumouova ne koristi sredstva "podlaženja", poput Photoshopa. Što čovjek više razmišlja o njenom umjetničkom procesu, to mu on postaje zanimljiviji. Premda njezine fotografije zbog svoje pažljivo sačinjene kompozicije i zrnastog ispisa prilično nalikuju slikama (njezine fotografije uspoređivane su s radom Edwarda Hoppera, poznatog slikara

as they seem at first glance. For instance, a little clay curtain might show some fingerprints, due to careful moulding. The perspective might not be as accurate as in a late-Renaissance painting. But such things do not matter—not to Coumou, and not to the viewer. On the contrary, these imperfections make her photographs, despite the overall emptiness, all the more personal, and even rather touching. It removes the slickness of a medium like photography, and adds a certain kind of pleasant and characteristic craftsmanship.

Needless to say Coumou does not use "flattering" devices, such as Photoshop. The longer one thinks about it, the more interesting Coumou's artistic process becomes. Although her photographs look a lot like paintings, because of their careful compositions and the graininess of her prints (her photos have actually been compared to the work of Edward Hopper, the famous

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koji je tijekom 20. stoljeća slikao prizore opustjelih prostora u Americi u kojima svjetlo i boje imaju vrlo važnu ulogu), prilično su ovinsve o fotografiskom mediju.

Zapravo, Coumouvin rad na neki nam način pokazuje kako fotografija funkcionira, kako stvarnost pretače u dvodimenzionalni komad foto-osjetljivog papira, ali tako da promatrač ni jednoga trenutka ne sumnja u činjenicu da se radi o bilježenju trodimenzionalnog prizora.

Na postojeće dvije dimenzije Coumouova dodaje još jedan sloj (kolaž), pretvarajući ih u trodimenzionalnu iluziju (skonstruirani interijer) prije nego što ju ponovo pretvori u plosnату površinu (fotografija).

Ima u njenom radu nešto neobično: kada doista fotografira stvarnost, a to je ono od čega se sastoji njezin oeuvre, uglavnom osobno oblikujući prazne sobe, cijela se stvar događa u obrnutom smjeru. Tada trodimenzionalan prostor dobiva plosnat, površinski izgled, poput kolaža. Interijeri iz stvarnoga života koje je fotografirala izgledaju kao i oni koje je konstruirala; uvijek se tu nađe nešto što je dodano (svjetlo), izrezano, pretjerano naglašeno ili skriveno ispod slojeva papira.

Na neki način njezina su djela slična radu danskog konceptualnog umjetnika Jana Dibbetsa (1941.). On

twentieth-century painter of desolate American scenes, where light and colours also play important roles), they deal a lot with the medium of photography.

In fact, Coumou's work shows us in a way how photography works, how it translates a reality to a flat piece of sensitized paper, without having the viewer for one second doubting the fact that this is a registration of a three-dimensional situation. Coumou adds another layer by starting with two dimensions (the collage), having this transformed to a three-dimensional illusion (the constructed interior), before bringing it back again to a flat surface (the photograph).

And the funny thing is, when she does photograph reality, which she has done throughout her whole oeuvre, usually modelling herself in empty rooms, the whole thing happens the other way around. Then a three-dimensional space takes on a flat, superficial, collage-like look. Her real life interiors look like her constructed ones; there is always something added (light), something cut out, something exaggerated or hidden behind layers of paper.

In a way, her work has similarities with the work of the Dutch conceptual artist Jan Dibbets (1941.). In the 1970s and 1980s he also worked on

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je također, 70-ih i 80-ih godina prošlog stoljeća, istraživao prijelaz slike u fotografiju, pokušavajući razviti vizualni izričaj koji bi plosnату površinu povezoao s iluzijom prostornosti i želeći pritom ostati što nevidljivijim i suptilnijim.

Je li stvaranje takve iluzije doista važno? Riječ je o stoljetnom pitanju kako u slikarstvu, tako, zahvaljujući radu ljudi poput Dibbetsa i Coumouove, i u fotografiji. Ona je eksperimentirala i s tom vrstom minimalizma, posebno 2005. godine, stvarajući što ispražnjenije kompozicije. Tri komada zelenog papira i malo svjetla koje proviruje ispod jednoga od njih, to je sve što joj je bilo potrebno kako bi stvorila sobu, to jest, ideju sobe.

Ono što publika vidi u radu Popel Coumou je svijet kakvim ga vidi Popel Coumou. Tako barem ona tvrdi, a mi ćemo joj vjerovati na riječ. Budući da nam je dopušteno gledati njezinim očima, to vrlo rado činimo.

the threshold between painting and photography, trying to develop a visual language that connected flat surfaces with the illusion of space, trying to be as minimal and subtle as can be.

How much do you need to create this illusion? It is an age-old question in painting and, through the work of people like Dibbets and Coumou, in photography. The latter also experimented with this kind of minimalism, especially in 2005, making her compositions as 'empty' as she could. Three pieces of green paper and a bit of light seeping in from underneath one of them—that was all she needed to create a room—or, if you will, the idea of it.

What the public sees through the work of Popel Coumou is the world as Popel Coumou herself sees it. At least, that is what she asserts, and we have to take her word for it. Which is something that we, being allowed to see through her eyes, gladly do.

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