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LOVING REBECCA CHAMBERLAIN + THE "LIVING" SPACE

Bonnie K. Norlander

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Written by Guest Contributor, Muanfun "Dream" Kunawong

Right before I started my first year in college for art history, someone told me that the best way to learn about an artist is to think of him / her as someone who you would fall in love with. Looking back, it is ironic and rather cliché that I first came across Rebecca Chamberlain's work by coincidence on a rainy day. I was wandering around the lower east side and just like other love stories, there must have been a series of unlikely circumstances which brought me to meet her (work). As an art history student, all my love was devoted to portraiture both in sculpture and paint. However architecture slide lectures were the most challenging to get through while staying awake. The gallery representative triggered the *curious bug* in me as I complimented the space, (which used to be a sausage factory.) It was after our interaction that I walked down the black spiraling metal staircase and officially met face-to-face with the *Homatorium I* exhibition.

At a glance, Chamberlain's artwork seems to be a series of photography. However, as one attentively "looks" at the work, the lines of the scenery oozed with subtle (painted) texture. The exhibition provided a fresh approach, diverting somewhat from Chamberlain's work that often includes renderings of architectural venues in the language of geometrical form, (favorable in the early American modernist era.)

In the artist's first solo exhibition in New York at Dodge gallery, ". . . *Wouldn't It Be Sublime*. . ." the artist presents an architectural snapshot that transcribed the feeling of entrapment during the interwar period through the representation of oblique angles and frigid color palette. Chamberlain gracefully fabricated intriguingly contrasting pairings into moving works of art: the photographic-like composition paired with vintage tracing cloth; the rigidity of the geometrical structure with the fluid texture of lithographic ink technique.



Rebecca Chamberlain, *Squared Views Arrangement Screen*, Zimmerman House, Wright, 1950, 2013.



Rebecca Chamberlain "Wouldn't It Be Sublime", DODGEgallery (2011)



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In her latest solo exhibition *Homatorium I*, Chamberlain reaches another level in illustrating the language of architecture beyond its physical design. The work had expanded to the heart of the architecture as a place for *living*. The series of works had strength in its cohesive presentation, with the overt source of Frank Lloyd Wright's Zimmerman house and photographs by Yukio Futagawa. The artist herself described her feelings reflected as she visited the house as "a sanitized version of reality". It is the word "reality" that has a tremendous impact on every detail of the exhibition. The works are still polyptych, however, the panels reach beyond the mere exhibition, rather they are placed specifically to create a virtual *view* when one is present in the space. The concept is strengthened by the artist's custom wooden frame of the works which resembles the window at the Zimmerman house. It is not coincidental, in my assumption of Chamberlain's wishes, that she creates the environment to be beyond the painting. The exhibition is accompanied by a musical score written by Kenn Richards. The musician's concept arises from a combination of music during the 1950s and a found musical score discovered in Zimmerman house. The speaker was discreetly installed in between the two steel beams within the structure of the gallery's staircase. Without knowing the intention of the absent source of ambient music, it does facilitate an atmosphere for the viewer to be in the midst of reality and imagination, simultaneously. The composition of both the subject matter and the exhibition space thus holds a strong presence, interweaving hints of a living dialogue to be found in reverie while viewing the multi-layered reality.

Just like how a special someone changed your attitude about something, Rebecca Chamberlain reintroduced me to the subject of architecture in a fresh, tactile, and tangible way. The work introduces the realm of new perspective through the interplay of reality and collective memory. The new creation that is infused with a sense of *living* had coupled architecture to another intriguing field worth exploring. And these are the reasons why I fall for her.

"Homatorium I" exhibition will be exhibited until March 30, 2013 at DODGE gallery
15 Rivington street, New York, NY 10012

Muanfun "Dream" Kunawong

Born and raised in Bangkok, Thailand, Dream has been living abroad for several years in London, Venice, and currently New York. She received her undergraduate degree in History and Art at the University of Warwick, and is currently pursuing a Masters in Visual Art Administration in New York University's Steinhardt program. Her writing has appeared in Dichan Magazine - resulting in the publication, Once Upon a Time with a Little Art Historian, (a follow-up book is currently in process.) Her recent work includes assisting with special events at the Art Dealers Association of America, specifically with the ADAA Sandy relief fund events, ADAA 50th Gala, and ADAA Art show 2013.