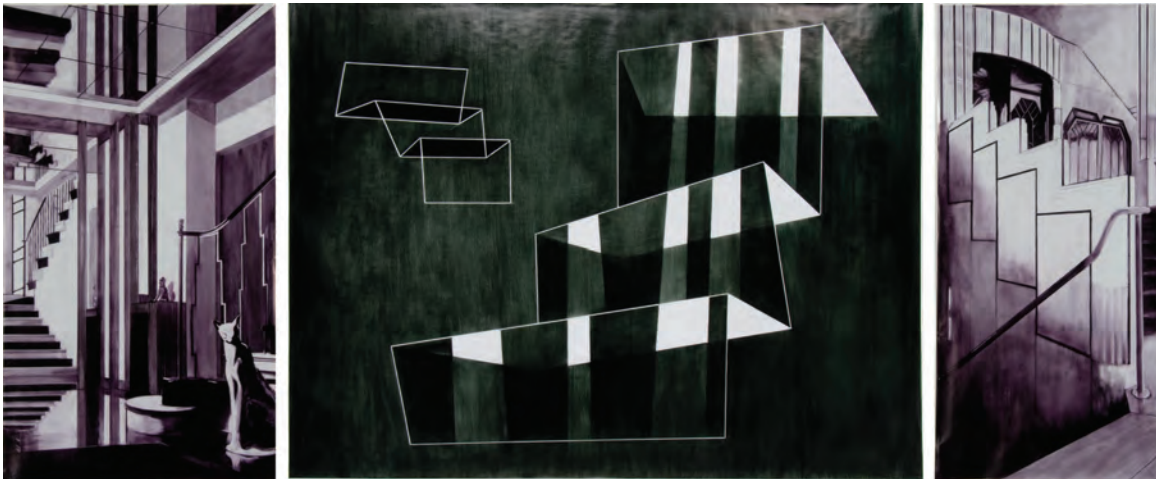


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CRACKED SPACES CHAMBERLAIN'S HAUNTING PANELS by Megan Edwards

Idiosyncratic, richly personal diptychs and triptychs are the latest specialty of multi-faceted artist Rebecca Chamberlain who, when she's not rendering moody modernist interiors in ballpoint and ink, acts in her husband, Guy Richards Smit's, art films and performs in the rock and performance group Maxi Geil! & Play Colt. Chamberlain began in the fashion world, graduating with a degree in fashion design from the Rhode Island School of Design and going on to launch several of her own clothing lines such as Elbridge and Mella. Her many triumphs in that industry include designing handbags for Cole Haan and Tommy Hilfiger and clothing for GAP and UNIQLO. While traveling as a men's wear designer for Old Navy, she conceived her first sculptural project, Kawaii, which later led to a commission to design furniture and interiors for Push, a jewelry store in New York.

But Chamberlain has sleekly assimilated into the art world. Now, her paintings inspire fashion, namely the first collection by M. Patmos. She has been painting ever since her time at RISD, using lithography ink on an architectural vintage tracing cloth- a literal reference to her chosen subject - to depict interior scenes between the two World Wars, often pairing them with art deco objects or renditions of modernist paintings.

Over just the past year and a half, she has achieved two sold out exhibitions and a review in Artforum. Her latest show, "Wouldn't it be sublime..." Rebecca Chamberlain" goes on view at Dodge Gallery in New York from May 14 through June 19. Sweeping metal railings, staircases, arched doorways, and shards of mirror and crystal are placed wistfully across mostly monochromatic illustrations of domestic, administrative, and factory-like spaces, all devoid of people. Yet traces of life

and hints of time passing make each interior haunting, even more so due to the imperfections of Chamberlain's hand that makes each work seem intensely labored and deeply personal. There is somehow no sense of the anonymity or sterility that one might expect from such vacant interiors.

Transitional spaces are the focus of the Dodge exhibition, Modern or Art Deco staircases, lobbies, and hallways link across multi-paneled pieces, evoking frames, windows, or just fractured spaces. The photorealistic panels are contrasted with strips of abstract patterning, drawing on reference such as a Josef Albers glass painting, a Wiener Werkstatte vase, or an iron railing. Abstracted vintage objects are placed beside realist paintings of interior architecture that Chamberlain adapts often from black and white period photographs, which are in their own right already highly staged as edited, styled

and dramatized interpretations of the original spaces. The spaces are even further edited by Chamberlain's particular eye, which sharpens and refocuses each angle and architectural line with her own high-contrast darks and lights, slippery washes, and imperfect edges.

Author and art historian Alexander Nagel has provided his own elegant instructions for looking at Chamberlain's work:

Remember that the spaces you are seeing in Rebecca Chamberlain's work are not simply architecture that has once been photographed but spaces that were designed from the first as pictures, stages where life is to be performed, under perfect lighting conditions. If you need a hadn't gotten from the not very inspiring present to the gleaming past, listen to the Magnetic Fields song Busby Berkeley Dreams, hitting repeat as often as necessary. Witness those whirling stages, minus the song, minus the people.