

David Stephenson heads the photography program at the University of Tasmania School of Art. He was born in Washington, D.C. in 1955, and studied at the University of Colorado and then the University of New Mexico, completing an MFA in 1982. He moved to Australia in 1982, and was awarded a PhD in Fine Art by the University of Tasmania in 2001.

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David Stephenson

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From 1993 to 2003, David Stephenson, an American photographer based in Australia, documented the recondite geometry of the interiors of cupolas at religious buildings and palaces throughout Europe. In 2004, this gallery exhibited a healthy selection of the often-symmetrical square-format prints, which boggled the mind despite their visually apparent ordering logic. In this exhibition, Stephenson presents recent work that fruitfully expands on the earlier series, combining images of naves, apses, and crossings into diptychs and triptychs that more fully explore the Gothic architecture of cathedrals in northern Europe. What is most striking about these images, beyond their variety and majesty, is also what sets these buildings apart from most constructed in our era: the visibility of their structure's armature. In each image, a fretwork of arches runs the length of the ceiling, creating a hyperelegant drawing in space that likewise serves to ensure the building's stability. It is difficult to choose favorites from a series so conceptually straightforward and well executed, yet the twin clouds of light that appear to hover just inside the central windows depicted in #50405, *Chartres Cathedral*, 2006/2007, set that work apart. One can't help but see what is likely to be overexposed film as a hint of spiritual apparition. Likewise, Stephenson's two-panel photograph of the ceiling at Paris's Saint-Chappelle is one of few to translate the delirious majesty of encountering its intricate stained-glass windows after passing through its dim, low-ceilinged entrance hall.

—*Brian Sholis*