

ARTFORUM

Wise, Lloyd. "Alice Channer: Lisa Cooley." *Artforum*. January 2013, 210.

Alice Channer

LISA COOLEY

In the annals of transformative buzzwords, "mass customization" seems particularly relevant to our moment. Coined in 1987, the term refers to the use of flexible, computerized manufacturing facilities to create products to order, enabling a firm to benefit from the efficiency and low cost of mass production while tailoring output to customers' individual needs. The method is particularly well suited to the online marketplace: Measurements of your body—typed into, say, Levi's online store—can be converted by adaptable machines at a distant factory into bespoke blue jeans that are then shipped, high-speed, in a FedEx box to your home. Something of this paradigm, in which seemingly unique objects are stamped with an impersonal touch, informs the work of "In Cold Blood," Alice Channer's show at Lisa Cooley.

Featuring industrial materials and abstract forms, the artworks on view bear traces of the body but hold them at a remove. Topshop-brand stretch maxiskirts, cast in pigmented polyurethane resin, hung from the wall. Shirt cuffs, cast in bronze and coated with powder, did too. Polyurethane-cast pants, crooked like crawling inchworms, crept across the floor, their forms interlaced with chromed aluminum bars

shaped after garment patterns. Elsewhere fabric, printed with images of Channer's hand—so distorted it is unrecognizable—was slipped over shaped metal brackets like sleeves, and huge swaths of silk, featuring photos of the artist's hair with a bottle of Pantene Pro-V, fell from the ceiling in cascades.

In the smaller rear gallery, a strip of roughly sixteen-inch-wide mirror-polished aluminum rested sideways on the floor. Aluminum and bronze casts of the artist's index finger rested on the metal's upper edge; against the reflective backdrop they seemed to float. In one respect, these casts of the body may recall the work of Alina Szapocznikow, which was on view concurrently at MOMA uptown. But while Szapocznikow's polyethylene casts of her legs, breasts, or lips always maintained a visceral connection to her body, its uncanny foibles, instabilities, and potentials for delinquency, Channer's metallic digits are cooler, more inert. They are seemingly weightless and depthless, fragmented reflections of the body in industrial materials and virtual space.

But the chilliness of Channer's estranged figuration belies her intent. "I don't crave critical distance, I crave connection," she says in a 2011 interview with critic Sam Thorne. "So much of the world is opaque; so many of the industrial surfaces of the world that I live in are cold, flat, shiny. For me, one of the most exciting things about the process of making art is finding out how the world is made." Thus, while her sculptures were created from materials such as resin, aluminum, and steel, and take the appearance of ethereal things, their fabrication was driven by earnest curiosity. By pouring resin, by chroming aluminum, by digitally printing fabric, she is engaging in a playful mimesis, seeking rapport with the anonymous machine operators, industrial designers, and assembly-line coordinators who make the objects we use every day.

—Lloyd Wise

Alice Channer,
MAR108, 2012,
cast pigmented
polyurethane resin,
29 1/2 x 9 3/4 x 7".

