



ALICE CHANNER was born in the UK in 1977 and lives and works in London. She had her first solo exhibition, *That Make Up Some Things*, at Associates Gallery, London, in 2007, and has shown in numerous group exhibitions including *Strange Solution*, Art Now, Tate Britain, London, 2008; *Dogtooth and Tesselate*, The Approach, London, 2008; *Associates*, Phillips De Pury, New York, 2008; *Multi-Focal*, MA Show, Royal College of Art Sculpture School, London, 2008; *M25 Around London*, CCA Andratx, Mallorca, 2008; *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*, World Class Boxing, Miami, 2008; *Took My Hands Off Your Eyes Too Soon*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, 2007. In 2009 she will have a solo exhibition at The Approach, London and participate in the Hayward Gallery, London, touring show *Quiet Revolution*. She graduated in 2008 with an MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art, London following a BA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, London, 2006. She is represented in London by The Approach.

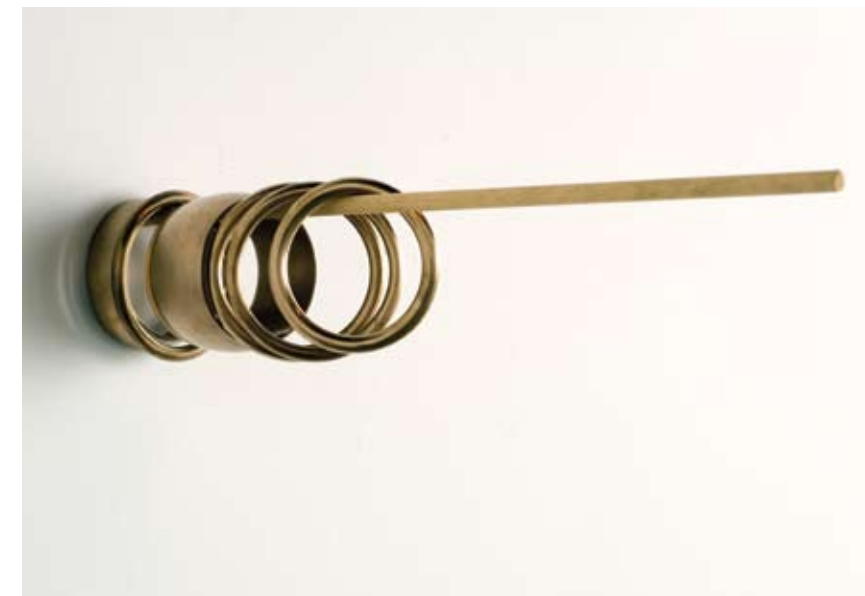
JESSICA MORGAN is Curator of Contemporary Art at Tate Modern, London where she has organized such exhibitions such as *Common Wealth* (2003) *Time Zones* (2004) and *The World as a Stage* (2007) at Tate Modern as well as Martin Kippenberger (2006), the first UK retrospective of the work of the late German artist and the forthcoming retrospective of John Baldessari (2009). She curated the 2005/6 program for Tate Modern's Level 2 Gallery for which she developed a series of solo exhibitions of international emerging artists including Meschac Gaba, Jan De Cock, Roman Ondák, Catherine Sullivan, Simryn Gill, and Brian Jungen. In addition she curated the 2006/7 Unilever commission, *Test Site* by Carsten Höller, and *TH.2058* (2008/9) the Unilever commission by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (2008) all for Tate Modern.

World Class Boxing, a former boxing gym, is an exhibition space displaying the contemporary art collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl.

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ALICE CHANNER



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WORKS FOLDING OUT OF AND IN TO THE COLLECTION OF

BY JESSICA MORGAN

Far from being a frivolous subject, fashion is the utmost expression of the contemporary spirit. Sartorial elements embody the pace and rhythm of modern society and culture as few other ideas or commodities do. The hallmarks of modernity arguably found their most immediate reflection in *la mode*. Since fashion is infinitely self-referential, with each detail quoting or referring back to the past, the basis of its fascination can be as veiled as it is important. Perhaps only a poetic or artistic inquiry into its multitude of meaning could hope to achieve insight into this realm. Arguably our greatest writers on fashion and its cultural and political import—Stéphane Mallarmé, Marcel Proust and Walther Benjamin—are uniquely adept in the metaphorical complexity required to unearth such connections. The folds of the text of a poet such as Mallarmé, resulting in a modal composition based on ‘pli selon pli’ (fold upon fold): a writer as designer who creates and clothes.

Contiuing this tradition, Benjamin’s analysis of nineteenth century Paris and its arcades constitutes an act of remembrance, one, following Proust’s example, that is an aspiration to transform text into fabric. The fabric forms an infinite number of pleats and folds in which the childhood memory is embedded, and the multiple meanings remain hidden. As Benjamin remarked on Proust: ‘The hallmark of his creation which is hidden in the folds of his text (textum=fabric) is remembrance. To put it differently: before Proust no one had been able to prize open the secret drawer of ‘atmosphere’ and make what had been inside truly his own.’ Benjamin employed the metaphor of the fold, especially in conjunction with Proust’s writing, partly because it appears mundane and banal—but more importantly because the fold determines the object that is closest to the human body and can be metaphorically transposed into writing.

Taking a few bare elements from fashion and our decorative surroundings, Alice Channer’s restrained vocabulary of work similarly brings to mind the displaced and yet highly evocative memories enclosed within such objects that remain ever associated with the human body and, with that, personal memory. With twenty first century acumen, however, her work brings these fragments or remnants—pleated fabric, bangles, eye shadow and the ashy remains of a cigarette—into dynamic display restraining their potential such that the many possible associations contained therein can unfold. Her *New Look* series, for example, consists of columnar minimal swathes of lengths of pleated fabric. These long strips of a hand’s width or so drape suspended from the ceiling creating ninety degrees of a circle as their tail end drapes along the floor. Whether placed perpendicular to the wall or free standing in the space of a gallery the implication of the works is of a cut in space, a slice or

opening that might delineate a rapid past motion (someone splitting the air with a knife) or the magical potential for an opening in the atmosphere that would allow us to step into the fold and disappear into another realm (one that we know exists somewhere within the folds of the pleating). Placed together, as in the exhibition here, the two New Looks become Double New Look a choreographed dialogue of the infra thin.

Elsewhere in Channer’s work pleats appear in more conventional form, though perhaps not at first appearance. *Worn-Work* is just as its title implies—a hangar supporting a few items of pleated clothing, the residue of a moment of animation. At opening events or sometimes within the duration of an exhibition actors or friends of the artist will appear dressed in these items selected by Channer, which are then later left to hang, as here, in an adjacent space to the exhibition. One immediately understands the attraction of the pleated material. Its historical significance alone justifies its interest—from the draped fabric of ancient sculpture through the voluptuousness of an eighteenth century dress, or from pleats of such modern classics as garments by Fortuny, Madeleine Vionnet, Elsa Sciaparelli, Jean Desses and of course Christian Dior’s celebrated Bar suit of 1947 (from which the New Look title derives) to the current appearance of the pleat in the work of the Japanese designers Issey Miyake and Yoji Yamamoto. But in addition there is of course both the potential for the partial, the hidden, the transformative and the kinetic within the weave of the fabric that provides endless possibilities sculpturally as well as metaphorically (as we learned from Benjamin and Proust in particular). On a deeply personal level who cannot recall burying their head in the folds of a mother’s garment, or the sensorial pleasure of being engulfed in the malleable fabric—disappearing into fantasy as only a child can truly experience?

The fold has of course also taken an important place in recent architectural thinking, influenced in part by Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy as laid out in *Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque*, which was first published in English in 1993. Not only is the spatial metaphor of the fold quite provocative as a purely formal device, it provides the possibility of a radical critique of the ontological category of space—of site as topos, of space as an empty void, of boundary as a fixed identity, and of limit as the end of territorial desire. Instead of thinking about an architectural object as static inert matter in dead vacuous space, the fold explores the dynamic of the flux. Architectural designs are not just singular interventions in an objective void space, but rather a continuum that both impacts and is impacted by the environment and leads a fluid life of its own in relationship to the world.

Just as the fold is both banal and yet loaded with significance, Channer’s choice of graphic materials is at once of the everyday, and yet, or indeed because this, invested with corporeal and metaphorical import. Eye shadow and cigarette ash are two of her chosen substances for creating drawings both on paper and directly on the wall (as in Untitled (eye shadow) shown here). Both ephemeral substances can be associated with a kind of glamour—indeed Channer’s work is suffused with the

electric atmosphere of an eye attuned to reading for the understated evidence of fashion or, for want of a better word, style. There is something both decadent and utterly appealing about the prospect of using such matter and its intimate association with the body—one as an applied surface and the other almost akin to one’s breath—which adds to the allure. Channer’s drawings however are not the slight doodles one might expect from the casual play we would associated with the ‘lite’ quality of these unserious media. Instead she undertakes with utmost care the construction of an abstracted image—forms that in fact quite often lead back to the pleated fabric of her sculptural works.

All roads lead to the fold it seems in Channer’s work. But then it is such a complex space to occupy as we have briefly observed here. It is a re-examination of the idea of permanence, the static object, the realization that we are inescapably “in” space, in dynamic flux with the world around us, in a fold that has infinite deformations and mutations. Most importantly, as time is folded, bent or enveloped in and with space, it is the knowledge that we are in a continuous state of becoming.

WORKS IN SHOW

Double New Look:
The New Look (part 1), knife pleats, fabric, steel, 2008
500cm x 20cm
Peach New Look, knife pleats, silk, steel, 2008
500cm x 20cm

Untitled (bangles), 2008
Bronze, Wooden Dowel
30 cm x 7 cm

The New Look (part 2), 2007
Knife Pleats, Fabric, Steel, 2008
500 cm x 20 cm

Untitled (hair pins), 2007
Fluorescent paper, paper, hairpins
Installation, Dimensions Variable

Untitled (eye shadow), 2007
Eye shadow and pencil on wall
Installation, Dimensions Variable

Worn-Work (pleated), 2009
Skirts and Neck scarf
Installation, Dimensions Variable