

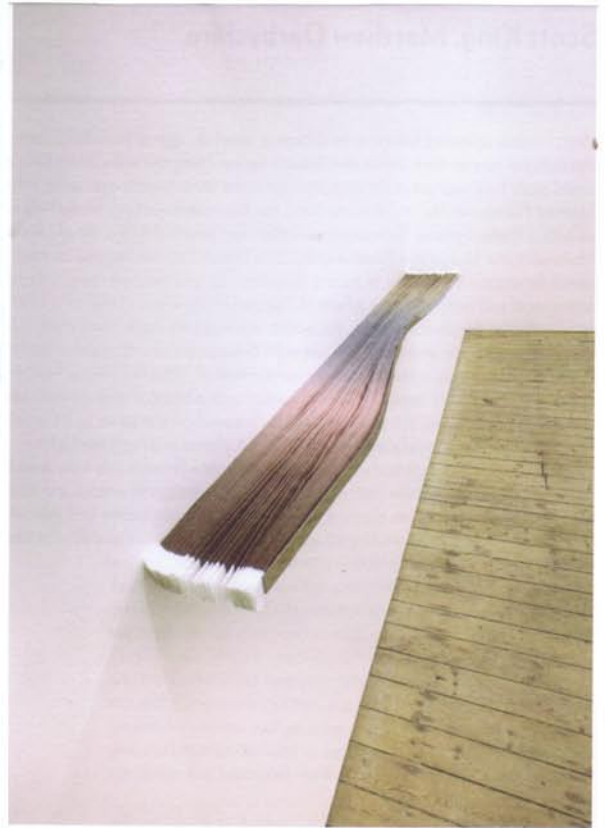
Art Review:

Alice Channer's slight works suit the Victorian house-above-pub dynamic of the Approach's gallery. And from outside, the elemental perks of spring appear to work to her advantage too, animating and spotlighting her sensuous assembly of metal, paper, fabrics and furnishings within the space. As an exhibition title, *Body Conscious* is ambiguous enough to cover various corporeal (and incorporeal) hereditaments: from one's innate response to materials, to the ping-pong trajectories of cultural trends and the proximity of human form to design and production. While her installations almost always feel 'of the moment', with this particular investigation of bodily territories the artist further implicates herself and the viewer in the contemporary state of image and object recycling; the magpie processes of desiring and utilising existing matter.

Body Conscious, an acknowledgement of the physical and an admission of fallibility, reminds us that however sidetracked one might become by a texture, motif or illusory strategy, Channer's work has always been about negotiating the body-object/body-subject split. This exhibition, like her first solo show at the Approach, *Worn-work* (2009), has evolved out of a series of handmade and commercial, machinic and digital processes. And while materiality remains key, Channer's enquiry appears to have taken a McLuhanist turn, to consider the human form in relation to the tools she uses and the influence of ways of making on the viewer/consumer. This is contrasted, riskily perhaps, by the industrial-cool boutiqueness of the installation, at points skirting so close to shop territory (the window display, the changing room) that one half expects to find a label or two swinging in the breeze.

Commercial reminders are everywhere. Gone are the 1950s modern-saucy polka dots and in their place distinctly grubbier animal prints. These reptilian markings have been photocopied from Primark garb and digitally reprinted, high-fashion-style, onto lengths of silk, then strung from the ceiling like a factory-floor centrepiece. Channer's lightness of touch shifts the focus over and again between 'product' contexts and her material and everyday interests. The waist loops of slim-fit trousers, for example – dipped in paint and hung on wall bars at shopping height – appear like the commodified smoke rings of a Philip Guston antihero. Similarly, a line of flatteringly reflective curved steel sections (cut into turret tops, at Channer's body height), S-bend one-into-another with both sculptural and designer-interior purpose. Accordion-pleated polyester forms, partially curled around the foot of the columns like inefficient draught excluders, shift the focus from object to installation: Topshop to Serra.

For all the moments of static beauty, the success of this carefully constructed system lies in the sense of (associative and physical) movement: from the gloopy smoke rings to the imagined action of space flattened, concertinaed between layers of paper and fabric. Channer skilfully flirts with fashionability in ways that reference the high street and the boutique, the workshop and the gallery, following – sometimes closely, sometimes incognito – the filtration of trends through cultural arenas, social and economic strata. *Rebecca Geldard*



Alice Channer
Body Conscious

Approach, London
18 March – 24 April