

Press release

Worms

ALICE CHANNER

November 3, 2021 – January 7, 2022

Quartz Studio is pleased to present *Worms*, the first solo show in Italy by the British artist **Alice Channer** (Oxford, UK, 1977), with a critical text by **Eva Brioschi**. *The artist says, “The show is called 'Worms', the title of one of the sculptures. I titled the show 'Worms' after small but very significant animals that live underground, whose labour is rarely acknowledged by vertebrate production chains. Many of the materials and forms come from underground (rocks, sand, fossils, metal), and have been brought above ground for the exhibition. It is guided by gravity and anti-gravity, and different kinds of scale vast and tiny”.*

Do ye not comprehend that we are worms, born to bring forth the angelic butterfly that flieth unto judgment without screen? (Dante Alighieri, Purgatory, Canto X)

Dante used worms as a metaphor for metamorphosis to speak of the uncertainty and transience of earthly human life, while what interests Alice Channer in the worms for which her exhibition is titled is these primordial creatures' biological configuration and functions. They represent a process of a biosystem that always building, modifying, shaping, processing, just as the artist does in the studio and humans do in our environment. Individual units in a complex system, in which each element is linked and interdependent.

Channer calls into question the concept of authorship as well as those of unity and determination. Who makes what? Everything is in a constant, continuous transformation, voluntary and involuntary, predetermined and accidental. Every object, every form is the product of a work in which organic and industrial processes, genetic mutations and temporal and spatial stratifications participate. The surface of the objects made from crafted fabrics, from fossils brought back to life is — literally — scabrous, bearing marks of ruptures, scratches, concretions, sediments, folds, and marks, just like human skin.

Alice Channer calls it 21st-century process art, as the process of creating the works is a substantial part of her practice. For this and her use of materials, she has a special connection with the Italian Arte Povera movement, which is evident in a particular alchemical style open to the contribution of chance along with the physical forces that inhabit matter. From primordial rock to digital prints by way of industrial fabrics and animal fossils, her creative universe expands from the chthonic realm to the hyperuranion one.

During the exhibition's planning phase, she wrote in an email to Francesca Referza, Quartz Studio's director: “After Brexit, it's more important than ever for me to get 'my' work out of this island and make it part of an international dialogue. ”Despite recent political choices — divisionist, separatist, neo-identity, neo-racial, protectionist, sovereignist — “no man is an island entire of itself”; this is a fact, one of our few certainties. We have realized how much every single living being is part of an always precarious balance that makes us all interdependent.

Considering the butterfly effect, the Anthropocene theory, the Fridays for Future, environmental policies and government agendas focused on rethinking the human impact on the planet, it is fair to say that what we truly need is a change of perspective. A new perspective of the world system, in which worms and human beings should have the same "political" importance, the same existential dignity. These years have shown us how size does not reflect the importance and effectiveness of a living organism in doing its job, for better or for worse. A microscopic virus has managed to stop the world; the entire civilized world has been brought down by a puff of air.

We need to change our criteria, update our priorities, understand what we want, take on new risks. "The 21st century needs objects that are vulnerable, uncertain, other, alien." This statement from Channer could be a starting point.

E.B.

Alice Channer (Oxford, UK, 1977) lives and works in the edges of London, UK. Channer's forms and materials are found in the social and sensual worlds of industrial and organic processes. Over long periods of time, she immerses herself in industrial and natural materials and production processes to find forms within them that she develops as sculpture. Her method is both experimental and precise, collaborating with people, machines, and materials to bring multiple bodies and voices into her polyphonic works. She has exhibited widely over the last two decades, including institutional exhibitions at: Liverpool Biennial, UK; Marta Herford, Germany (2021); Tate Britain, London, UK; Towner Gallery, Eastbourne, UK; Ca'Pesaro, Venice, Italy; Nasher Sculpture Centre, Dallas, USA (2019); Museum Morsbroich, Germany; Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK; Kettles Yard, Cambridge, UK; La Panacée MoCo, Montpellier, France (2018); Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, USA and Kunsthaus Hamburg, Germany (2017); Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK (2016); Aishti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon; Public Art Fund, New York, USA; Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, USA (2015); Fridericianum, Kassel; Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover, both Germany and Künstlerhaus Graz, Austria (2014); The Hepworth Wakefield, Yorkshire; the 55th Venice Biennale, Italy and Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany (2013) and South London Gallery; Tate Britain, both UK (2012).

Quartz Studio would like to thank the artist and the curator Eva Brioschi. The exhibition will be open from November 3, 2021 to January 7, 2022, by appointment.

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