

## CHA ON THIS!

by Charlie Finch

Xavier Cha's current show at Taxter & Spengemann presents all the delights and dilemmas of contemporary art in the 21st Century. This is a woman who once buried herself naked in a giant cornucopia of fresh fruits and vegetables as part of her art, so no one can deny that she lies to jump into the deep end of the pool.

The subject of Cha's art is not so much the beauty myth as the beauty factory. The front of Taxter's space is filled with giant mirror-like photographs of Cha's friends being prepped for a night out with all sorts of grotesque masks, creams, cucumber slices on the eyes and other masques of horror. An especially nice touch, for those who saw the stunning originals at the Museum of Natural History last summer, are NASA's photos of the rings of Saturn photoshopped into the background.

The whole production asks whether we are all passing through a zone of cosmetic terror towards a cosmic ideal of beauty. In the back of the gallery is a large freestanding two-sided mirror in front of which various actors come into the gallery, at Cha's behest, to apply clown makeup leaving clouds of powder behind them, which remain on the mirror, a minute commentary on the transitory fruitlessness of the beauty disguise.

I must say that, as I am explaining it to you, I like this show a lot more than when experiencing it in Taxterland, because the theme of frustration tends to render all of Cha's efforts kind of pointless. Nevertheless, she is a bizarre professional of the first rank, and, if she can bring exceptional touches like those background Saturn rings forward into her art, she has a chance for a spiritual breakthrough from which we all will benefit.

Xavier Cha, "Third I," Feb. 28-Mar. 28, 2009, at Taxter & Spengemann, 123 East 12th Street, New York, N.Y. 10003

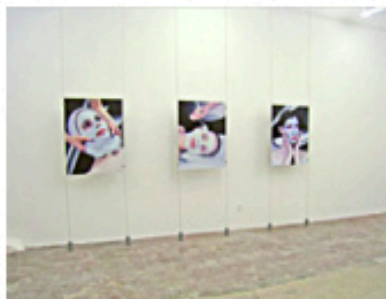
**CHARLIE FINCH** is co-author of *Most Art Sucks: Five Years of Coagula* (Smart Art Press).



[Xavier Cha in performance at Taxter & Spengemann in 2006](#)



**Xavier Cha**  
*Mask 2 (Jessie Cucumbers)*  
2009  
[Taxter & Spengemann](#)



[Xavier Cha's "Third I," installation view at Taxter & Spengemann](#)



**Xavier Cha**  
*Two-Way Mirror*  
2009  
[Taxter & Spengemann](#)