

Xavier Cha  
*Future Greats*  
by Tyler Coburn  
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## Future Greats

### Xavier Cha by Tyler Coburn

What do whirling dervishes, Cossack dancers, mythology reading groups and Wiccans have in common? For one, they have all passed through the revolving door of Xavier Cha's performance-based practice. Like Christian Jankowski, Cha has a knack for producing earnest collaborations with a range of unusual contacts, many of whose interests might elicit condescension or parody in lesser hands. Cha's sympathetic take, it would seem, in large part derives from the fact that she uses her own eccentric tastes, including a penchant for alter egos, and navigates the Internet, often in the guise of these characters, in search of allies and creative co-conspirators.

In the weeks leading up to *Holiday Cruise*, her 2006 solo debut at Taxter & Spengemann, for example, the artist invited various specialist Internet groups to set up shop during her exhibition. A more ingenious exploitation of the white cube's open-source potential could not be found in New York that spring, as Cha's online cohorts flocked to the townhouse-size gallery and, depending on the week, found the artist embedded in an oversize cornucopia (as the character Horn of Plenty), covered head-to-toe in synthetic cornrows (*Cornrow Hairbraid*) or balanced atop a silver ball in a gigantic cape (*Polyhedra*). Through it all, Cha hid behind her costumes and kept mum, content to be the patron saint of a happening that rivalled the best of the artworld's heyday: one, moreover, which not only brought new blood into Chelsea, but gave the various walks of virtual life an opportunity for fleshy camaraderie, in as performative an environment as they come.

Web navigation aside, from the ripe days of art school at UCLA to the present, Cha has also developed a series of performances addressing the body's role in postcapitalist labour. Whether this entails using clippers to 'tag' her name into the hedges of Beverly Hills mansions (*Topiary Tags*, 2003), offering unsolicited streetside advertising to a cosmetician by dressing up as a gigantic pink fingernail (from *Holiday Advertisement Series*, 2004) or appropriating an actual Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris guard as a one-day performance (part of Cha's participation in *RESIDENTS* last month, at Espace EDF Electra, in Paris), one can rest assured that Cha's work will always fascinate – with a humour that tickles first, then bites.

clockwise from left: *Nail*, from *Human Advertisement Series*, 2004, c-print, 61 x 38 cm; *Crystal*, video still from *Human Advertisement Series*, 2004, digital video, colour, sound, 1 min 15 sec; *Joe Shephard Open Jazz Dance Class with Cornrow Hairbraid*, video still from *Holiday Cruise!*, 2006. All works: courtesy the artist and Taxter & Spengemann, New York

