

Cooper Jacoby
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COOPER JACOBY: MATHEW, BERLIN

by Arielle Bier

ARTFORUM

Cooper Jacoby

MATHEW | BERLIN

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Raising the floor of the gallery with a platform of industrial steel grates—the kind avoided on urban streets for fear of falling into seedy underground tunnels—Cooper Jacoby sets his viewers up for a disorienting and portentous encounter with his sculpture series “Stagnants” (all works 2016). Four fiberglass sculptures cast from sections of decaying roadside curbs in Los Angeles—including gutters and drains—hang at waist height, one on each of the three walls with the fourth supported by poles in the window. A gothic depravity looms over the sooty matte black curbs, pooling into the reflective black resin-covered ledges of the gutters. Along the gutters’ shiny surfaces, numbered points and zigzagging pathways of acupuncture meridian lines are drawn in white, projecting routes of energy flow in the human body onto access points for the arteries of a metropolitan sewer system.



View of “Cooper Jacoby: Stagnants,” 2016.

With these works, Cooper combines characteristics of the human body with elements of urban architecture while summoning the black metal-derived aesthetic of Banks Violette and alluding to concepts from Valie Export’s photo series “Körperkonfigurationen” (Body Configurations), 1972–76. Although Cooper’s sculptures may represent ubiquitous curbs that could be found in any city, naming their site of origin in the press release, along with the human maleficence insinuated by the work, brings to mind the darkly disturbing curb stomp scene from the film *American History X* (1998), where orifices meet concrete and the circle of life and death comes to a painfully alarming halt.

— Arielle Bier