



SALON 94

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Frieze New York 2012: The Complete Coverage



The Frieze New York 2012 Guide



Happenings: This Week In New York

*frieze new york 2012*

## *At Salon 94's Frieze Booth, Liz Cohen's Eastern Bloc Lowrider*

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By Michael H. Miller 11:04am



Liz Cohen "Trabantimino." (Courtesy Salon 94)

At Salon 94's booth at Frieze, the artist Liz Cohen is showing a work that would have fit in just as nicely at the New York International Auto Show. For the last 10 years, she's been converting a Trabant—the most common car in the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War—into a Chevy El Camino, in Ms. Cohen's words, "the all-American car."

"It's a family car, it's a truck, it's a race car, all at the same time," she said, standing in front of her creation at the opening day of

the fair on Thursday. The hood of the car belongs to the Trabant, but it begins a weird sculptural concoction as the back end is connected by a long, exposed chassis that is powered by hydraulics. She's apprenticed in auto shops and worked on the car all across the country, in Oakland, Scottsdale and Detroit—"the Land of GM," she said—where she finished building it.



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At Frieze, where the car is for sale for \$250,000, she was explaining how it works to a group of Deutsche Bank executives, who stood in a half circle in suits with contemplative frowns (it really did feel like an auto show at that moment), and Sandy Heller, Roman Abramovich's art adviser.

"I took out the Trabant's engine with a Chevy small block," Ms. Cohen, who is small and softspoken, said. "A V8. It's much more powerful. I needed to build a chassis to support the engine and the car went from being front wheel drive to rear wheel drive. I needed the length of the car to go from Trabant length to El Camino length. I needed something to power that transformation. Since the car was coming to this country as an immigrant, I wanted to pick an immigrant sub-culture in terms of customizing the car. So I chose low riding."

One of the suits said very earnestly in a heavy German accent: "You really pimped this ride."

"What exactly does this car do?" someone else cut in.

"It drives. I was just in Marfa and I drove it to the Mexican border. I drove it for about 60 miles and it went about 60 miles an hour. Here, I'll make it smaller and bigger for you."

She got in and turned a switch, which compressed the chassis connecting the front and back end. The car went from El Camino length, to looking like a regular old Trabant. Then, she stuck her hand out the window and clutched the roof as she turned another switch. The Trabant started jumping up and down like a galloping horse on its hydraulic system. The Germans applauded.

Mr. Heller was looking on with a big grin. He gestured to a John Chamberlain sculpture, sitting next to the car in Salon 94's booth, a small crumbled work made of car scrap metal.

"If I drove that thing, it would look more like that," he said.