

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

GALLERIES

Get Your Fix of a Sinister Post-Human Future

by Hrag Vartanian on November 7, 2014



Installation view of Soya Woolfolk's 'ChimaTEK Beta Launch' exhibition at Smack Mellon (all photos courtesy Smack Mellon unless otherwise noted)

Artist [Soya Woolfolk](#) has created a little utopian hive of serenity in the large front gallery of the [Smack Mellon](#) in Dumbo, Brooklyn. Her installation resembles the laboratories of science fiction, where hybrid humans are suspended as if they are hanging out to dry after being churned out of a machine.

[ChimaTEK Beta Launch](#) is part of the artist's evolving vision of a post-human future, where a new species of genetically manipulated woman formed from a spectrum of identities and lifeforms, including plants, has come to life. Woolfolk visually invites the viewer into the space, and lulls them with the drone of techno utopian music that offers escape into a world of meditative calm. Stunningly beautiful videos fill the walls with humanoid figures that move slowly, very conscious of each gesture, suggesting that the future is almost here, while rainbowhued and almost recognizable glyphs float above. The mandala of radiating forms evoke the spiritual elegance of [Yuan dynasty temple paintings](#), but they are thoroughly contemporary with their acid purples, electric greens, hot reds, cool yellows, and digital glow.



Another view of 'ChimaTEK Beta Launch'

Even amid the soothing energy in the room, there's an ominous edge to Woolfolk's immersive world. A central figure seems engaged in a form of devotion while facing an altar dominated by a Kali like form on a video screen flanked by centurions. There's no semblance of ugliness anywhere to be seen; it has been engineered away.

This is the world of byzantine ritual and faith, where icons are living and breathing things but trapped in amber and therefore removed from our corporeal reality. You could be forgiven for ignoring this darkness from the shadows since the luminosity of the tableau is so intense and oddly numbing. I left the gallery wanting to return, without fully knowing why. Woolfolk's world is seductive, perhaps even addictive.



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Soya Woolfolk's ChimaTEK Beta Launch continues at [Smack Mellon](#) (92 Plymouth Street, Dumbo, Brooklyn) through November 9.