

Johnson, Ken. "Saya Woolfalk: 'ChimaTEK: Hybridity Visualization System'," *The New York Times*, 19 February 2015.

The New York Times

Saya Woolfalk: 'ChimaTEK: Hybridity Visualization System'

By Ken Johnson

Feb. 19, 2015



"Untitled #7" (2015), by Saya Woolfalk. Courtesy of the artist and Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York

Saya Woolfalk's engagingly imaginative exhibition evokes the lobby for a New Age boutique. It includes paintings of psychedelic kimonos, digital animations of archetypal iconography and exotic avatars and colorful mannequin heads decorated with bones and jewelry. Like the young video artist Jacolby Satterwhite among others, Ms. Woolfalk extends the genre known as Afro-futurism, which includes the music of Sun Ra and George Clinton and science-fiction novels by Samuel R. Delany and Octavia Butler.

An installation in one corner is called "ChimaTEK: Virtual Reality Station": Between white posts upholding flat screens that play digitized ritualistic imagery a life-size figure sits in a meditation posture wearing a beautifully made, vaguely Asian costume that could have been designed to wear at Burning Man. A three-minute video, "Life Products by ChimaTEK," is a mock-corporate advertisement for a machine that distills transformative energies from luminescent rocks, effectively "hybridizing" its users and expanding their minds.

All this revolves around a story about women called the Empathics who uncover old bones that turn out to be the remains of plant-human hybrids. The bones release spores that induce elevated states of consciousness. The women form ChimaTEK, a company whose products transform customers, enabling them to transcend ordinary limits, including those imposed by racism, ethnocentrism and sexism. If only such a thing were possible.