SAYA WALKATALK A Cabinet of Curiosity

In so much as it differs from present reality, any story set in the future could be decried as fictitious. Nonetheless interested in what lies ahead, and in the possibilities of a post-human era, Saya Woolfalk's lives, works, and performs in this space of the speculative. Her upbringing, a marriage of African-American and Asian heritages, explains an intimate understanding of the political possibilities of mash-ups and assemblage. Through video, collage, textile, painting and performance, her multi-disciplinary work, which integrates two and three-dimensional worlds, explores cross-pollination. Pairing totemic iconography with Technicolor science fiction, it gives life to a race of women able to alter their genetic make-up and merge with the natural world. As technology, biology and art history coalesce in this newly created cosmogony, viewers plunge into a more fluid, yet plausible, 2.0 version of humanity.

A Cabinet of Anticipation pays homage, as much as it eschews, hard science and the visual rhetoric of natural-history dioramas. Through practices of collective visualization, embodiment and tactile activation, the artist re-centers attention on empathy and offers possible modes of togetherness. Far from esoteric, her works, which confuse the bonds between the human and the vegetal, reads as a manifesto for increased inter-species interaction—a prerequisite for sustained growth, be it on our planet or others. In so doing, Woolfalk's practice critiques the operative structure of capitalism, and other product-centric systems, which rely on competitive accumulation of capital. Instead, she anticipates and strives for the possibility of an equalitarian society, a mode of becoming based on interconnectedness, or what contemporary art historian Nicolas Bourriaud termed relational aesthetics.

A Cabinet of Curiosity is co-curated by former CAC Curator, Steven Matijcio and Valentine Umansky, the CAC Curator of Lens-Based Arts.

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