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ART REVIEWS; Perspectives on a Brave New World and Some Familiar Ones

Written by: Helen A. Harrison

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'Embryoworlds'

Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, State University at Old Westbury. Through Dec. 8. 876-3229.

Blending science fiction with science fact, nightmarish surrealism with the marvels of modern medicine, Faith Wilding has constructed an elaborate, thought-provoking meditation on reproductive technology. Her installation deals with various aspects of artificially induced human procreation, including its moral and spiritual consequences.

Ms. Wilding is a harsh critic of the system that manipulates and monitors the process, and imposes criteria of what is normal and desirable in offspring. A series of translucent shapes, suggesting viscera and body fluids, provides the matrix for drawings of embryonic and fetal forms attached to machines that both watch and shape their development. Invasive procedures intrude on the body's sanctity, piercing the armor that symbolize its integrity.

If all this seems grimly pessimistic, it must be said that Ms. Wilding's installation is not devoid of quirky humor, as in her pseudoscientific illustrations of anatomical curiosities that push taxonomy to absurd extremes. Her combination of watercolor, ink and layered collage is both subtle and seductive, cloaking her mordant message in a veil of sensuous color and form.

Perhaps as an antidote to the overriding concern with technology's malevolent influence, Ms. Wilding's two long vellum scrolls offer images of natural growth as a benign and beautiful alternative. On a frieze of rounded forms that seem to flow in an organic continuum, the Rorschach-like forms take on the aspect of delicate butterflies, similar and yet singular, as if to affirm that continuity and variety are the twin building blocks of life.

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