

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

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CATHERINE WAGNER

Trilogy: Reflections on Frankenstein, The Arctic Circle, and The History of Science

Exhibition dates: March 3-April 17, 2004

Opening reception for the artist Thursday, March 4, 5:30-7:30 pm

Stephen Wirtz Gallery announces *Trilogy: Reflections on Frankenstein, The Arctic Circle, and The History of Science*, an exhibition of a new three-part series of large-scale photographs by Catherine Wagner that examines the synthesis of science, nature, and humanity in contemporary society and is inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Wagner's extraordinary multifaceted tour de force consists of a three-part focus. Subject matter ranges from experimental equipment at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center to the vast remote landscape of the Arctic Circle, and, finally, to early sculptural representations of molecular structure.

These images offer surprising and profound revelations that run counter to commonly believed myths about the visual aspects of technology and the existence of pristine and unexplored landscape on earth. Like Frankenstein's monster in the celebrated novel, Wagner's portraits of ultra-high vacuum chambers with their multiple "eyes" and outer insulation of common household aluminum foil elicit an unexpected sympathetic human response. Evidence of human presence for the purpose of scientific research in the Arctic Circle is subtly revealed in Wagner's images of the otherworldly beautiful, yet punishing and frozen terrain, which serves as the climatic setting for Shelley's novel. 1950s era molecular models, respectfully archived in cabinet displays at institutions of scientific learning, represent early attempts to visually manifest the building blocks of the physical universe, perhaps reminding one of Victor Frankenstein's laboratory.

In *Trilogy* Wagner weighs the wealth of tremendous promise offered by technological advancement against the inevitable issues of human accountability and social alienation this progress can bring about. Wagner reveals with images unpopulated with human presence man's ambition to shape the world and understand the nature of life itself.

Trilogy follows Wagner's years-long investigations of the visual manifestations of science in society, which has resulted in the earlier series *Art & Science: Investigating Matter* and more recently *Cross Sections*, the product of a two-year collaboration with the San Jose Museum of Art, Stanford University, and the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. *Cross Sections*, a presentation of large-scale photographic based works of images recorded through the artist's utilization of medical imaging devices, was exhibited at the San Jose Museum of Art in 2001 and traveled to the Pasadena Museum of California Art in 2003. Wagner recently completed *Cell Wall II*, a permanent site-specific commission for UCSF. She was named an "Innovator of the Year" in fine art by *Time* magazine in 2001.

CATHERINE WAGNER received her BFA and MFA from San Francisco State University and is a Professor of Studio Art at Mills College, Oakland, CA.

Stephen Wirtz Gallery is located at 49 Geary St., 3rd Fl., San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 433-6879, Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30, Saturday 10:30-5:30.

For additional information please contact Julie Casemore, Tel.: (415) 433-6879, julie@wirtzgallery.com.

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