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THE QUESTION EVERYONE'S ASKING; JUST BECAUSE WE CAN, DOES IT MEAN WE SHOULD?

By RACHEL DOVATI

Young, aspiring artist, Alicia Channell, has spread controversy to the majority of America with her latest artwork series titled, "Children of the Future". This piece is currently exhibited at The New York gallery.

Channell believes that her artwork in a few years will not just be a sculpture in a gallery, but will indeed be our reality. With the vivid detail and life-likeness of the half-human half-animal sculptures, it isn't hard to believe that this is a possibility. Channell has used the most recent hot topic in scientific discovery, GMO's (Genetically Modified Organisms), and created uproar in the public and changed the way people view this upcoming epidemic. Art blogs and critics all over the world have praised Alicia but she has also come under harsh scrutiny.

How do you genetically modify an organism? Actually, it is a bit more complex than that. An organism can be a plant, animal, fungus, or bacteria. All of these can be, and have been, genetically modified for almost 40 years. Chromosomes are thread-like structures in the nucleus (commonly known as the "brain" of the cell) that contain DNA and proteins. DNA stands for "Deoxyribonucleic Acid" and is a nucleic acid that determines the genetic characteristics of most living things. A section of DNA that carries the genetic code for a particular characteristic is called a gene, and this gene is then placed in the organism of your choice by using a vector and voila! That is how a genetically modified organism is born. A gene, a foreign organism and a vector are the three main components required to make a GMO. The first genetically engineered organisms were bacteria in the early

People have been using selective breeding to ensure that they receive desired traits for many years. It needs to be understood that scientists do not throw random genetic sequences together, hoping for the best to see if it works. They work very specifically to ensure the results are improving the lifestyle of everyone.



Artist, Alicia Channell, exploring her artistic nature with students in her art class.

For example, malnutrition is common in third world countries where people rely on a single crop such as rice for the main ingredient of their diet. However, rice does not contain adequate amounts of all necessary nutrients to prevent malnutrition. If rice could be genetically engineered to contain added vitamins and minerals, nutrient deficiencies could be avoided. Another example of beneficial GMOs is the use in growing B.t. corn that can help eliminate the usage of chemical pesticides and reduce the cost of bringing a crop to market. Crop losses from insect pests are incredible, resulting in devastating financial loss for farmers and starvation in developing countries. Farmers typically use tons of chemical pesticides every year and consumers don't want to eat food that has been treated with pesticides because of potential health hazards and fertilizers also can poison the water supply.

Although the reasoning FOR genetically modified organisms is beneficial and useful, the reasons AGAINST them are equally as justified. For example, many children in the US and Europe have developed life-threatening allergies to peanuts and other foods. There is a possibility that introducing a gene into a plant may create a new allergen or cause an allergic reaction in certain individuals. An idea to incorporate a gene from Brazil nuts into soybeans was dismissed because of the fear of causing unexpected allergic reactions.

This amazing presentation known as the "most moving and creative sculptures in the world" by the New York Gallery, will be available for viewing on the 5th-8th of July. Tickets can be purchased online at newyorkgallery.com