

Art Review:

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ANICKA YI

Anicka Yi: *Sous-Vide*

47 Canal, New York

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Anicka Yi's first New York solo exhibition is, unsurprisingly, titled after a cooking process. Thus far in her career she's pictorialised tofu and offered witty readymade combinations of tripe and hair gel, among many other foodstuff derivatives. *Sous-vide* translates from the French as 'under vacuum' and describes how food in airtight plastic bags is cooked underwater, in low heat, often for days at a time. Such low-temperature cooking was first invented in the eighteenth-century, but it wasn't popularised until 1974, when French chef Georges Pralus discovered that it was perfect for keeping foie gras from shrinking when cooked. Prized for keeping meat fork-tender, it became both gourmand and utilitarian, suitable for *prix fixe* dinners and for hurricane shelters, as it rendered food spoil-proof for months with its tidy hydrovac seals.

Thus, there is a bit of the apocalypse in the way Yi analogises food with consumer goods, perversely altering both. Vacuum-sealing peanuts and pearls for *I'm Every Woman I Ever Met* (2011), she folds the flattened plastic over a Plexiglas disc protruding from the wall; or with *Table for One (At the Sad Café)* (2011), it's draped like a coat over a translucent Philippe Starck chair. Such humorous connotations underscore grossly misplaced priorities: good design for aesthetic survival; in an emergency, eat the peanuts, don't the pearls.

Or with *Sister* (2011), one could start with the tempura then move on to the turtleneck sweater, its neck a perch for a bouquet of pungent fried flowers. The piece imparts a delicious, gluttonous odour, as does the large, obtrusive room by the window, *Auras, Orgasms and Nervous Peaches* (2011). White drywall on the outside, tiled bathroom-cum-modernist grid on the empty inside, its exterior is pockmarked with holes obscenely dribbling cheap olive oil into shallow troughs.

While the olfactory delights of *Sous-Vide* can pique a crass hunger, Alison Knowles won't be serving any tasty salads. Rather, this is good food gone bad, subsumed by a nightmare 'everyday' dictated by cheap sweaters and even cheaper takeout – the end of the world at Olive Garden or, maybe, Alain Ducasse. If the avant-garde aimed to conjoin art and life, *Sous-Vide* is its dystopian endgame, as evinced by two older works in the office, *That Fork Feels Good Sliding in My Mouth* and *Oak-Raged* (both 2010), which recapitulate monochrome painting as fragrant soap blocks over stretcher bars. While I like soap that smells good, in this case I'll take my stretchers with canvas and paint, thank you.

DAVID EVERITT HOWE