

ART F CITY

In Praise of the Virus: Anicka Yi's *You Can Call Me F* at the Kitchen

by CORINNA KIRSCH on MARCH 24, 2015



Installation view of Anicka Yi's *You Can Call Me F*. Photo courtesy of Jason Mandella.

Anicka Yi: *You Can Call Me F*
The Kitchen
512 West 19th Street
New York, NY 10011
Runs through April 11, 2015

Women don't smell great. Take a look at the range of feminine hygiene products on the shelf at any local Rite Aid, and you'll think every woman wants a vagina that's been douched to smell like summer rain, or legs that have been kissed with the scent of a raspberry bouquet. Anything to smell inhuman.

With that in mind, artist Anicka Yi's *You Can Call Me F* takes our obsession with feminine cleanliness to a science-fiction extreme: Women have been reimagined as a "virus," as a deadly problem. But it's really hard to know that, if you don't take a look at the press release first.

Here's the PR info: with the assistance of a synthetic biologist, Yi created a "collective bacteria" from women in her professional network, ranging from curators like Lauren Cornell and Bridget Finn, to dealers Rachel Uffner and Stefania Bortolami.

The result is a heavy, rotten sweetness that fills the Kitchen's front gallery. Instead of a clean female scent—the type peddled by Rite Aid and the like—we have the odor of disease. Brought to you by Yi's virus, and her (viral) network.

Overall, the exhibition has a cinematic feel to it, having the look—and smell—of sci-fi. The lights are out, the gallery undergoing a near black out. Several “contagion” tents covered in AbEx designs have been set up in the gallery, laid out along what appears to be an invisible grid. Given the contemporary-art treatment, though, this spectacle feels familiar, and much less terrifying than sci-fi can be. Still, despite its flaw of contemporary-art familiarity, I’m fine with any alternative to the clinical and antiseptic gallery space. Hasn’t anyone noticed that the white cube actually resembles a doctor’s office? There’s no room for dirt, stink, or anything other than a professional opinion. Praise be to the virus, then—at the very least, it’s another option.