

The Top 15 Emerging Artists of 2015

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It took more than market momentum or critical acclaim to have a breakout year in 2015. As reflected by Eric N. Mack, Simon Denny, and Mira Dancy in the film above, tragedies like Charlie Hebdo and big shifts from Black Lives Matter to the legalization of gay marriage, have drawn artists to place renewed consideration into making work that resonates with not just the art world but the wider world, too. Here, we survey 15 of the most exciting practices this year, by artists who made great strides to cement themselves as part of the growing canon of contemporary art.

Anicka Yi

B. 1971, SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA. LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK.



*Installation view of 7,070,430K of Digital Spit , 2015. Photo: Philipp Hänger
"Anicka Yi: 7,070,430K of Digital Spit" at Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2015)*

Like her fellow New Yorkers, artist-cum-chemist Yi embraces germs. Following five years turning perishable substances (powdered milk, live snails) and, more recently, bacteria, into sculptures and installations, the conceptual artist made leaps and bounds this year. After her 2014–15 residency at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she worked with biologists to grow bacteria swabbed from 100 women in the art world (including artist Juliana Huxtable and gallerist Rachel Uffner), Yi debuted her cultures in a solo exhibition at Chelsea space The Kitchen in March.

But with June came the highlight of her year: Yi's solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, "7,070,430K of Digital Spit," an olfactory and sensory experience featuring the artist-made fragrance of "forgetting." According to Elena Filipovic, director of the museum and the show's curator, Yi's choice of media—deep-fried flowers, bacteria, and ultrasound gel among them—is more than a sum of ingredients. It's what they turn into when combined that matters: "charged, sensual things," she says. "Sexy, covetable, fragile, entropic, smelly, ugly, and sublime at once."

"At a moment when so many artists are looking to the so-called post-digital," Filipovic continues, "Yi manages to reflect on our contemporary condition and how we are transformed by digital technologies without forgetting that, as beings, we live and love and die—and rot along the way."