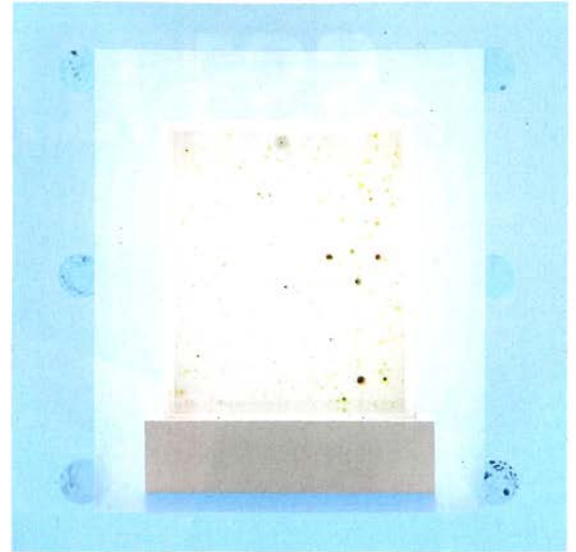


ALPHA

EXPERIMENTS

Anicka Yi's 2015 piece, 2666, is made from bacteria and agar.



Fine Art That Grows on You
Anicka Yi turns sweat and bacteria into art

A WHIFF OF CULTURE FINE ART THAT REALLY GROWS ON YOU

YOU BECOME AWARE of Anicka Yi's work before you even step into the gallery. The pungent odor of decomposing kombucha leather, the acrid tang of burning paper, or the cloying sweetness of deep-fried flowers wafts through the halls. The New York-based artist specializes in olfaction, evoking reactions through sense of smell. "I create scents based on a narrative," Yi says, "whether it's about capturing an elusive memory or trying to profile a human being." ¶ For her latest solo exhibition, which opens April 21 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Yi sought art in an unlikely place—the armpit—extracting the essence of human sweat as a meditation on identity. She translates the chemical compounds into scents, which are emitted alongside live bacteria sculptures. "I've always maintained that scientists and artists have a lot in common," Yi says. "There's a lot of experimenting—and failure—involved." ¶ There are also surprises. While interpreting her odorous sample set into a sweat-inspired fragrance, Yi experimented with notes of ginger, cypress, and coriander. Sounds enchanting enough to be a perfume: Armpit, by Givenchy. —ANNIE TITTIGER

From Armpit to Exhibition

Swab

Yi collects sweat and bacteria samples from subjects.

Isolate

A forensic scientist uses chromatography to distill each sweat sample into its chemical compounds.

Identify

A Parisian perfumer helps Yi translate the compounds into scents.

Support

Biologists regulate the temperature and nutrition for the bacteria to thrive.

Exhibit

With plexiglass and resin, Yi creates a petri-dish-like vessel to display her living sculptures. The representative scents waft through the room.