

ARTNEWS

With Anicka Yi Presentation in Basel, Metro Pictures and 47 Canal Inaugurate Collaboration

BY Andrew Russeth POSTED 05/18/17 11:04 AM



Anicka Yi, *Skype Sweater* (detail), 2010.
COURTESY 47 CANAL, NEW YORK

Just seven years after having her first proper show, at 179 Canal, a scrappy space in a nondescript building in Manhattan's Chinatown, Anicka Yi is on a wonderful roll. At the Guggenheim Museum, in conjunction with her 2016 Hugo Boss Prize win, she has a superb one-person exhibition that includes sculptures involving ants, scents, and bacteria—characteristically unusual media for Yi—and for the current Whitney Biennial she is screening a captivating 3-D video that features her as a disciplined scientist, deep in the Amazon, on the hunt for something called “the flavor genome.”

Now those who are curious about where her bewitching work began will have a chance to see, in the Unlimited section of Art Basel next month, which will include a reprisal of *Skype Sweater*, a central piece in that 2010 show at 179 Canal (a two-person affair with Josh Kline) that involves a billowing parachute, among other materials, and that alludes to breathing, orifices, and bodily and psychological secretions.

The presentation marks the start of a new collaborative relationship between Metro Pictures and 47 Canal (the name that 179 Canal took when its founder, Margaret Lee, partnered with Oliver Newton and moved to that address, opting to become a more commercially minded outfit). The two New York galleries will be presenting the work together. Other joint efforts are being discussed, but are not yet finalized.

As is often the case with Yi's sculptures, it can be a bit tricky to describe exactly what they are, but the artist was kind enough to explain a bit in an email: “The piece consists of a large white parachute and three pedestals with handbag and razorblades, new fried sculpture and new wax

sculpture,” she said. Those who saw the original work may recall that the parachute was green, and the color change is just one of the alterations for this 2017 display. Intriguingly, Yi added, “There is much more space and mass and volume to the 2017 version.”

“This collaboration is an exciting platform to expand the reach of both 47 Canal and Metro Pictures, who hope to instigate new productive models for gallery cooperation,” the two galleries said in a statement about their new relationship, which will focus on “special projects and exhibitions.” (They will remain separate galleries, working with distinct groups of artists.)

The new initiative is especially notable since it brings together two critically lauded outfits separated by more than a generation—Janelle Reiring and Helene Winer founded Metro Pictures in 1980 in SoHo (it’s now located in Chelsea), and Lee and Newton started 47 Canal in 2011 on the stretch of Downtown Manhattan that is generally referred to as Chinatown or the Lower East Side, depending on one’s vantage point. (179 Canal opened in 2009.)

The statement from the galleries added, “While Metro Pictures has the longevity, stability, and reputation that comes with the associated responsibility of advancing the demanding careers of established artists, 47 Canal has the vitality, incisive critical programming and flexibility that is only possible for a young innovative gallery. These shared and distinct strengths, along with mutual regard, are the basis on which this cooperative effort was initiated.”

The sprawling halls of the Messe Basel convention center are, to be sure, a long way from 179 Canal. “The mood was inclusive, friendly, and amorphous,” Yi said, when asked about that storied space. Beyond the Kline/Yi affair, 179 Canal also hosted early displays of work by KAYA (the first project from the collaborative duo, who are also featured in this year’s Whitney Biennial), BFFA3AE, Trevor Shimizu, and Antoine Catala, as well as a healthy number of experimental group shows.

“I didn’t really know what I was doing then,” Yi said about that early show. “Maybe I still don’t. I bought the parachute on eBay but most everything else I sourced locally in Chinatown, like the tripe and fishing lure”—other elements that figured in the work.

At the moment there are no plans to include tripe in the Unlimited showcase, Yi said, but she cautioned that she might change her mind at the last minute.