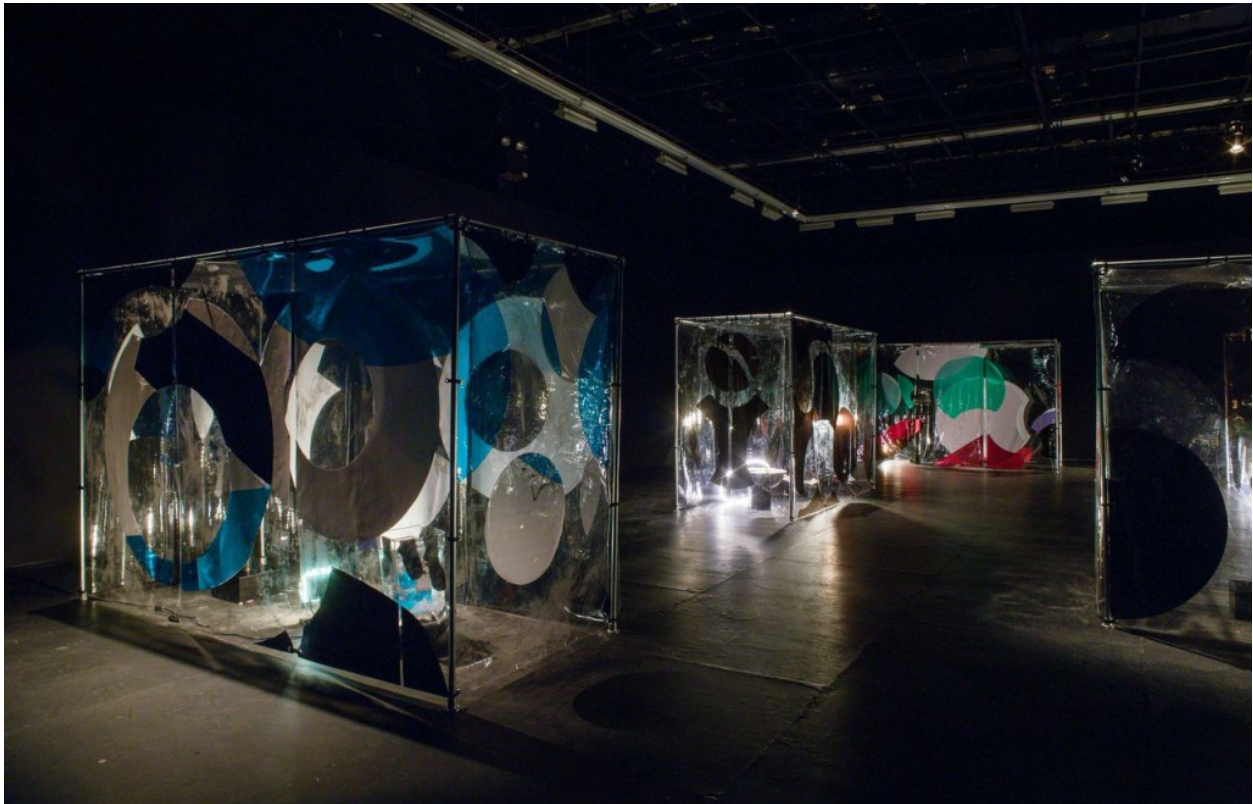


ARTNEWS

ART OF THE CITY

SHRIMP, FEMALE BACTERIA, AND THE SMELL OF GAGOSIAN: ANICKA YI AT THE KITCHEN

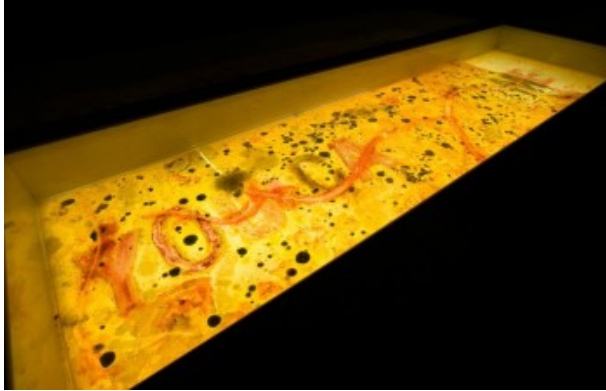
BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 04/03/15 3:17 PM



Installation view of 'Anicka Yi: You Can Call Me' at The Kitchen, 2015.

If even just a few more of today's artists had the guts of Anicka Yi, often-repeated complaints about the moribund, listless state of contemporary art would disappear in an instant. Yi uses a wild panoply of materials to make sculptures that are unstable and strange. She has simmered powdered milk, antidepressants, a watch, and other ingredients on an electric burner, slipped tempera-fried flowers through the top of a turtleneck, and set petri dishes in gelatin soap and resin. She makes quiet, poetic work that is concerned with the body and politics, and dashed with pathos, humor, sex, and anxiety.

Yi has become a masterful sorcerer, experimenting madly, twisting and turning, steadily getting better, and her current show at The Kitchen, "You Can Call Me F," sees her talents cresting to a new height. She has cloaked the gallery in darkness. Near the entrance, a Plexiglas shelf in one of the black walls glows a tangy yellow-orange. Its surface is scratched, grimy, covered with mold, the result of Yi swabbing it with bacteria from 100 women in her art circle. The words "YOU CAN CALL ME" are visible on it. I have visited twice, two weeks apart, and sample grew far funkier in that time. The show runs through April 11, and by then it will no doubt teem with even more life.



Anicka Yi, *Grabbing at Newer Vegetables* (detail), 2015.
JASON MANDELLA/COURTESY THE KITCHEN

A few feet away, a light points down to the black floor, illuminating the air in between. Take a whiff. I sensed hints of citrus, cleaning products, maybe leather—it was a little sterile but also slightly dread-inducing. As it happens, it is the scent of the Gagosian Gallery (“the ultimate patriarchal-model network in the art world,” a news release states), which was captured and manufactured by Yi with the aid of artist Sean Raspet, and is pumped into the air in The Kitchen’s main gallery through three rotating scent diffusers, each adorned with a motorcycle helmet on top. Those machines are housed in three of the five tent sculptures that are the core of the show, which was curated by The Kitchen’s Lumi Tan. Each has thick, somewhat transparent vinyl walls. They look like quarantines.

Curves of neon and bright lights illuminated those tents from within. Peeking in between the slices of scuffed vinyl, there were bowls filled with hydro-gel beads or plastic alphabet letters inside. Dried shrimps are scattered about in one. Bottles of a neon-blue liquid sit in another. (Reading the checklist reveals other peculiar objects.) The interiors resemble construction sites or experimental laboratories, the workers or scientists eerily vanished. There are precedents for these structures—Mark Dion, Tobias Rehberger, and Isa Genzken come to mind—but only in the very loosest sense. Yi has gamely, ingeniously engineered something that feels entirely new. Her interrelated sculptures form a tense, ghostly ecosystem in which genders skirmish, uneasy viewers hunt for clues, and unseen organisms are on the march.

Yi is currently in residence at MIT, working with scientists to develop new projects. It would seem wise to brace for the results.

“Art of the City” is a weekly column by ARTnews co-executive editor Andrew Russeth.