

Esther Schipper

Anicka Yi

A Shimmer Through The Quantum Foam

September 15 - October 21, 2023



Anicka Yi, *sT&RtSn*, 2023 (detail). © Anicka Yi / VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn 2023

Esther Schipper is pleased to announce Anicka Yi's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Entitled **A Shimmer Through The Quantum Foam**, the exhibition features a series of unique animated pod sculptures that pulse and undulate, casting their flickering light across the surfaces of luminous algorithmically-generated paintings. Below this suspended constellation of bio-techno lifeforms, the soft glow of an aqueous ooze—indicative of life's marine origins—sprawls in a shallow crater in a built-up section across the gallery floor.

Anicka Yi has produced a unique body of work over the past decade, that operates at the intersection of politics and macrobiotics. Her practice questions traditional distinctions between what is human, animal, plant, and machine, and is the result of an alchemical process of experimentation that explores often incompatible materials. Yi collaborates with researchers to create materials and media that are often inherently political, delving into the cultural conditioning of sensation and perception in a way she describes as a „biopolitics of the senses.“ Yi's diverse installations draw on scientific concepts and techniques to activate vivid fictional scenarios, asking incisive questions about human psychology and the workings of society.

Informed by a profound understanding of biology and history, **A Shimmer Through The Quantum Foam** continues Yi's creation of hybrid ecosystems, evolving her notion of the “biologized machine” which she introduced in her critically-acclaimed presentation of kelp pod sculptures at the 58th International Venice Biennale in 2019 and expanded in her recent major solo exhibitions **In Love With The World** at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in 2021 and **Metaspore** at Milan's Pirelli HangarBicocca in 2022. Featuring semi-autonomous floating machines known as aerobes, which accrued an artificial physical intelligence through their interaction with other machines and with human visitors, **In Love With The World** attempted to dissolve conventional ideas around cognition. Refuting the human fantasy of a disembodied intelligence and seeking to expand humanity's capacity for compassion, Yi's notion of “biologizing the machine” asks: “Can we actively align machines to better reflect our biological reality?”

In 2022 Yi began a set of investigations into painting by training a machine learning model with images of her more painterly artworks. The artist worked in dialogue with the algorithm, deconstructing and manipulating her past work to prompt and guide the algorithm in unexpected directions. As Yi experimented with machine learning, she branched out to work in dialogue with several machine learning models at once. Yi conceptualized this process as hybridizing her own visual patterns and motifs with those of other ecological entities, living and non-living alike.

Premiering at Esther Schipper, Yi's new series of horizontal paintings depart from the veiled mystery of her previous painting series, providing rare glimpses into the sources from which these imagined skeletal forms emerged. Here the textures of blood cells and fish eggs, clumps of algae and ruptured skin, rise to the surface with glistening clarity. Slipping just beyond human comprehension and existing at the threshold of becoming recognizable or identifiable, real-world objects and hybridized abstractions swell and break in luminous waves and biomorphic impressions.

A series of new suspended animated pod sculptures emerge from similar territory, relatives of Yi's well-known kelp pods and floating aerobe sculptures. In the darkened exhibition space, they appear as magnified bio-techno lifeforms in a shadowy unknown. A close inspection of the sculptures—inspired by radiolaria, a type of protozoan zooplankton dating back to the Cambrian Period—reveals flickering pulsations of illumination that travel the length of their delicately interwoven fiber-optic bodies. The sculptures take the form of two species of radiolaria: one with a smooth shell and long tentacle appendages, the second species characterized by many accordion-like segments beset with small tendrils.

In the darkened exhibition space a sprawling pond-like structure with a reflective surface catches the light of the flickering pod sculptures and creates a vivid mis-en-scène for the elusive, evolving and incandescent ecosystem **A Shimmer Through The Quantum Foam** forms. Wafting unseen through the air, a fragrance by the French perfumer Barnabé Fillion takes its associations from Yi's darkly shimmering world to create a custom-made scent.

Anicka Yi is represented by Esther Schipper in collaboration with Gladstone Gallery.

Anicka Yi was born in 1971 in Seoul, South Korea. She studied at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Hunter College, New York. She lives and works in New York, NY. In 2016, Yi was awarded the Hugo Boss Prize and in 2019 her work was featured in the 58th International Venice Biennale, titled May You Live In Interesting Times. Anicka Yi was awarded the 2020 Tate Turbine Hall Hyundai Commission.

Yi's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at institutions around the world, including **Metaspore**, Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan (2022); **In Love With The World**, Tate Modern, London (2021); **Life Is Cheap**, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2017); **Jungle Stripe**, Fridericianum, Kassel (2016); **7,070,430K of Digital Spit**, Kunsthalle Basel (2015); **6,070,430K of Digital Spit**, List Visual Arts Center, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2015); **You Can Call Me F**, The Kitchen, New York (2015); and **Death**, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio (2014).

The artist's work is held by several public collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Aïshti Foundation, Jal el Dib, Lebanon; the Dikeou Collection, Denver; the Cleveland Museum of Art; Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette, Paris; the Julia Stoscheck Collection, Düsseldorf; the Los Angeles Country Museum of Art; the Rubell Family Collection; the Pinault Collection; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

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